STUDENT GUIDE

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with any questions, concerns, or more fascinating Shakespeare trivia
THE TORMING
OF THE SHREW

quick facts.

MOST COMMON:
NOUNS ADJECTIVES VERBS

| love | old | say |
| father | sweet | love |
| daughter | fair | know |

John Fletcher became the house playwright for the King's Men after William Shakespeare's death in 1616. Now in 1611, while Will was still alive, he wrote a play titled 'THE WOMAN'S PRIZE' or 'THE TAMER TAMED'. It's a sequel to TAMING in which Petruchio remarries after the death of Kate and basically gets a taste of his own medicine; the tamer becoming the tamed.

THE WOMAN'S PRIZE

"THE BEST SHREW I EVER SAW..."

This is the reaction of English actress Sybil Thorndike in 1922 after seeing a mere 14 year old Laurence Olivier in the role of Kate in an all boy production of SHREW. This was Olivier's first performance in Stratford and he went on to be considered the greatest actor of the 20th century. If you can think of a major Shakespearean character, Olivier probably played him. Oh, and one more thing, the English equivalence of a Tony is an Olivier so that should tell you something about his talent.

Want to see a modern spin of this tale? if you're a fan of musicals, check out KISS ME KATE. Broadway musicals not your thing? Check out the 1999 movie 10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU. Both of these are re-imagined takes of Shakespeare's SHREW. Influence of this play is all over pop culture. SHREW is thought to be one of the great great granddaddys of the 'battle of the sexes' genre of entertainment. So, if you ever see that tag line associated with a movie, TV show, or challenge, you can thank Shakespeare for that.

901 WITH A TWIST

Though the trope of 'a taming' can be noted throughout history in both oral tradition as well as written word, Shakespeare found a way to turn his version up to an 11. His twist of Petruchio using Kate's own disposition ('killing her in her own humor') as the means of the taming aspect of the play added a layer of complexity to the story which made it stand apart from other, more simple, taming plots of the time.

The simple fact is that people sometimes don't realize history is being made so written historical record has a tendency to be a bit spotty. Like the year during which SHREW was written. We're just not sure. Scholars assume it was written sometime between 1590 and 1592 thanks to things like the death date of an actor associated with a production of A SHREW (more about this in a few pages) among other non-shrew related things like the plague. Along with this, we don't see a publication of THE SHREW until the First Folio (the original complete collection of his works) in 1623.

Turn of Phrase: Have you ever done an activity with a new group to 'break the ice,' or been given the advice to 'kill them with kindness,' or 'refused to budge an inch' on a matter in which you believe? Yes? Then you're using phrases coined by Shakespeare in this play!
The Taming of the Shrew

The Induction

We open with a scene that doesn’t really exist in the world of the play, which makes the actual play an inset play, or a play within a play. HAMLET and A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM also have famous plays-within-plays. In this prologue, a Lord decides to have some fun with a practical joke on a ne’er-do-well named Christopher Sly by making him think he is actually a Lord who has been in coma for 15 years. Some actors have also appeared to put on a play for the house, they agree to go along with it, and that is where our actual play begins, as Christopher Sly sits down to watch the play.

1

The play opens with some out of towners, Lucentio and his servant Tranio, arriving on shores of Padua just as a nobleman is walking by with his two beautiful daughters and wouldn’t you know Lucentio falls in love at first sight with Bianca, the younger of the two.

He soon learns that he is not the only suitor, and that no one will be allowed to marry Bianca until her older sister, Kate, is wed first. But Kate isn’t so nice. In fact, she is rather mean. But then Petruchio arrives in Padua intent on finding himself a rich wife and he is up to the challenge of wooing Kate. The other suitors all entangle themselves with multiple subplots involving disguises, trickery and hilarity.

Before Kate and Petruchio meet in one of the most famous scenes in Shakespeare, a few more comically confusing things need to happen, namely: Gremio, Lucentio (as Cambio the tutor), Hortensio (as Licio the tutor), Tranio (as Lucentio), and Biondello have to go to Baptista’s house to speak with him about his daughters. Petruchio says he will woo Kate, we have the famous scene, and then Petruchio comes back and announces that she was kind and gentle, loves him, and they are to be wed on Sunday to which Kate responds, “I’ll see thee hang’d on Sunday first.” Sound like love at first sight?

2

Act 3 beings with the disguised tutors trying to woo Bianca with their fake Latin and Music lessons. Lucentio reveals his identity and his plan to woo her to Bianca, and she seems pretty receptive to the idea; But, the wooing is interrupted by the wedding. Petruchio arrives in a weird and wacky outfit, gets married, goes to his own party but immediately say he has to leave with his wife, and then gives a fun, crazy speech and runs off with her. Everyone is confused but figures that crazy Kate just got married to someone just as crazy as she is...and her father is happy that she is no longer his problem.

3

The “Taming” from the title occurs in Act IV, as Petruchio & Company arrive in his country home, and he lays out his plan to tame Kate as if she was a wild bird. He says that he will starve her and deprive her of sleep until she breaks. He also challenges the audience to find a better way. Back in Padua, Bianca and Lucentio prank another suitor, Hortensio, and a solution is found to the problem of a missing father for Lucentio.

4

Petruchio arrives back in Padua with a now well behaved Kate for Bianca and Lucentio’s wedding but come to find out that they eloped earlier in the day, the missing father is no longer missing but that causes more confusion, the wedding celebration is joyous and Kate delivers a famous ending speech that closes the play. Curiously, we never return to the Lord’s house in the Prologue and never learn the fate of Christopher Sly... or do we?
**THE INDUCTION**

**CHRISTOPHER SLY**
Our mark

**LORD**
Our trickster

**BARTHOLOMEW**
Lord's page

**HOSTESS**
Alehouse worker
Also messenger, players, servingmen

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**HOUSE MINOLA**

**BAPTISTA**
The all-business dad

**KATHERINA (KATE)**
The fiery sister

**BIANCA**
The ideal wife

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**PETRUCHIO**
Kate's suitor
**GRUMIO**
His most trusted servant

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**HIS OTHER SERVANTS:**

**CURTIS NATHANIEL**

**JOSEPH PETER**

**NICHOLAS PHILIP**

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**SUITORS OF BIANCA**

**GREMIO**
The old one

**LUCENTIO**
The hopeless romantic

**HORTENSIO**
Also Petruchio's bestie

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**LUCENTIO'S CREW**

**TRANIO**
His most trusted servant

**BIONDELLO**
A servant

**VINCENTIO**
His dad

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**OTHER PLAYERS**

**WIDOW**
Woed by Hortensio

**PEDANT**
Disguises himself as Vincentio

**HABERDASHER**

**TAILOR**

**OFFICER**
A TALE OF TWO SHREWS
or
A SHREW VERSES THE SHREW

History can be tricky for a lot of reasons, one of which being the timely documentation of events...and copyrights. As mentioned in the Quick Facts, we're not sure when SHREW was written; it was first published in the First Folio in 1623. Now here's the rub: in 1594, an anonymous quarto titled A PLEASANT CONCEITED HISTORIE, CALLED THE TAMING OF A SHREW was published. This title has caused historical debate for centuries and scholars are STILL trying to make sense of how or even if A SHREW and THE SHREW are related. Let's take a peek at all of the theories behind the battle of the shrews.

OKAY... WELL MAYBE IT'S A DRAFT

So it has a lot of similarities...but also a lot that is different. THE is more complex than A. The theory? BOTH of these plays are reworkings of a third, lost SHREW. But how are they related? Is THE a reworking of the lost SHREW? Is A a retelling of the lost SHREW? Are BOTH drafts of the lost play? IS there a lost play?

OR. OR!

A SHREW IS A BAD QUARTO

This is the most accepted theory. A 'bad quarto' was quite common during Shakespeare's time. What is it? Someone or a group of people write and publish a play from memory. Actors did this quite a bit when they liked a particular play. One reason this is largely accepted is the fact that several sections of the play seem to only make sense in A SHREW if you also know the text of THE SHREW.

OR IS IT?!

Some people don't buy this. Compared to other bad quartos of Will's work, this one is TOO different than the Folio version. Different plot lines, different names, even the comedy is different: THE SHREW focuses more on the old school tradition of comedy with disguises and physicality...not super romance heavy; only 11 lines of romance. A SHREW, on the other hand, has full scenes focused on love and romance. Hmmmm...

IT WAS MARLOWE THE WHOLE TIME! (maniacal laugh)

Yes, the idea that playwright Christopher Marlowe drafted A SHREW using THE SHREW as his primary source is out there. Why? There are lines of dialogue in A SHREW that are almost identical to two of Marlowe's plays: TAMBURLAINE and DR. FAUSTUS.

BUT THEN AGAIN

This could suggest, too, the idea of a bad quarto...and the author just had a really bad memory and mixed some stuff together...or blended ideas from a few places and this is an original play...

...but it's probably a bad quarto.

HOLD ON!

Quarto? Folio? What are those, you ask? It basically means the number of folds a paper has to create a full text. A quarto is a paper folded four times to create 8 pages, while a folio is folded once to make four pages...or the pages bound together to create a whole book!
and a modern audience

STARTING A DIALOGUE

Let's face it: even though THE TAMING OF THE SHREW is a comedy, the whole taming story line is a difficult one for modern audiences to watch and discuss. Is this show meant to be a farce full of physical comedy? A cautionary tale about gender inequality meant to shed light on social issues? Don't worry, 2019, this show has been perplexing audiences since it first hit the stages back at the tail end of the 16th century. Below is a collection of opinions from notable theatre practitioners and critics throughout time on both sides of the debate. Which point of view speaks to you the most? Why? After seeing the performance of the show, has your opinion changed? How? In a world of #MeToo, how is this play still relevant to a modern audience?

Let the debate begin:

"I find it gobsmacking that some people see the play as misogynistic. [...] I don't believe for a second that the man who would be interested in Benedict and Cleopatra and Romeo and Juliet and all these strong lovers would have some misogynist aberration. It's very obviously a satire on this male behaviour. It's a cautionary tale [...] That's not how he views and a cautionary tale [...] That's not how he views and a cautionary tale [...]."


"The taming process is quite bearable, because the selfishness of the man is wanton cruelty, and it is good for the shrew to encounter a force like that and be brought to her senses....[But] the last scene is altogether disgusting to modern sensibility. No man with any decency of feeling can sit it out in the company of a woman without being extremely ashamed of the lord-of-creation moral implied in the wager and the speech put into the woman's own mouth."

--playwright George Bernard Shaw, 1897 from the Cambridge Shakespeare Library: Shakespeare Criticism

"[...] She expounds marriage as a non-tyrannical political hierarchy in which the partners have distinctive roles co-operating in mutual love. [...]"

[Professor John] Bean further admires the romantic thread of the play, "those elements that show Kate's discovery of her inward self through her discovery first of play and then of love."

What Bean finds hateful is the taming: the throwing about of food and bedclothes, the abuse of the tailor, and--though not the obedience speech itself--the way in which Katherine is induced to say it, responding to Petruchio's directions like "a trained bear."

--from the Cambridge Shakespeare Library: Shakespeare Criticism. Bean's quote is from an essay he wrote in 1980 that was featured in a volume titled The Woman's Part

"Whatever the "gender studies" folks may think, Shakespeare isn't trying to "domesticate women"; he's not making any kind of case for how they ought to be treated or what sort of rights they ought to have. He's just noticing what men and women are really like, and creating fascinating and delightful drama out of it. Shakespeare's celebration of the limits that define us--of our natures as men and women--upsets only those folks who find human nature itself upsetting."

--Elizabeth Kantor, Ph.D. from The Politically Incorrect Guide to English and American Literature, 2006.

...now let YOUR dialogue begin.
Think YOUR Dress Code is Rough?

TRY LIVING WITH SUMPTUARY LAWS IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND.

These days the only things keeping us from buying something are our own finances. Other than that, we’re pretty much good to go. Any color. Any style. Any cut of meat. All the organic your heart desires. Back in 1571, a series of sumptuary laws were implemented under the rule of Queen Elizabeth in an effort to better separate the classes. If you want to really dig into these laws and other things Elizabethan, check out the link below. In the meantime, here’s a little taste of what your life would be like:

LOWER CLASS

So, the working class got to choose from only the most plentiful materials; those provided by Mother Earth. Madder root was the number one go-to, depending on how long fiber was left in the dye pot, madder could give you a hue anywhere from brown, red, pink, yellow, and even a bluish color. Even the lower class was divided, the wanderers and very poor would wear very drab colors with dye names like “puke” (khaki), “rat” (gray), and “goose-lurd green” (I mean... gross). Though a variety of colors could be achieved, the poor quality of dye meant muted colors, white was too expensive. And fabric? Wool, sheepskin, and linen. That’s it. And how about a big leg of lamb? No. Fish. You get fish, lower class. The good news is your teeth won’t rot as quickly because sugar is right out for you. Oh, also, you have the most strict punishments and fines for any infractions... like receiving a fine if you are over the age of six and caught not wearing a wool cap every Sunday and Holiday.

So, the bad news is you can’t spend more than 100 pounds a year on your wardrobe, upper class. But the good news is, save the colors of the Monarchy, you are able to wear pretty much whatever you want. Indigo, rich yellow made from Saffron, black, and rich reds are great colors for you. As for fabric, you can choose from lovely textures like silk and velvet. Along with this, you can have flashy buckles and embroidery... even small amounts of silver and gold if you’re REALLY noble. And you get to wear SILK hats with a long feather. Speaking of feathers, you can show off to your friends by decorating your food platters with peacock feathers. And you can have meat! Hooray!

ROYALTY

If you Google Queen Elizabeth I, you will notice one dominating color: red. Super deep crimson red. The beetles used to make this dye had to be imported from the Mediterranean and were VERY expensive. Other Monarchy only fashion? Gold fabric, and fur. Oh, and purple. Again, a super expensive... like SERIOUSLY Monarchy-only-expensive this time. Along with this, anyone associated with the Queen could also have silver and gold threads and buttons to accent the beautiful fabrics and dyes. Oh, and did I mention all the sugar you could possibly want? It’s good to be the Queen.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?
CHECK OUT: elizabethanenglandlife.com

HOLD ON!

The colors of this guide mean something!

Of course they do. Along with status, colors were attributed to qualities as well. These may not be the colors you see on stage; they are simply the colors whose meaning stood out during the research process for this guide.

| authority and control | rejuvenation, treachery, and jealousy | (white) virtue, fire, authority, importance |