

The Taming of the Shrew

Induction, Scene 1

Christopher Sly

A poor vagrant who falls asleep drunk in front of a tavern at the beginning of the Induction. A Lord returning from hunting finds Sly asleep and plays a trick on him, carrying Sly to the Lord's house and ordering the servants to treat Sly like a lord when he wakes up. A group of actors who visit the Lord's house perform *The Taming of the Shrew* for Sly, which takes up the rest of the play. Sly is cantankerous and quarrelsome, more interested in drinking the beer and eating the beef jerky he is used to than in accepting the role of aristocrat. However, when he finds out that in his role as a lord he has a wife (actually the Page in disguise), he quickly changes his mind, anxious to get alone with her and take her to bed.

Lord

A very wealthy nobleman whose practical joke on Sly dominates the Induction and provides the set-up for the rest of the play. As the Lord carries out his joke, making Sly think that Sly is really a lord and doesn't remember it, we get to see all of the luxuries that an aristocrat of Shakespeare's day would enjoy—a pack of hunting dogs, numerous servants, a grand house, erotic artwork, imported wines and perfumes, preserved fruits, and so on.

Hostess

The proprietress of a tavern who gets in an argument with Sly in the first lines of the play.

Page

A boy servant to the Lord. The Lord has the Page dress as a lady and play the part of Sly's wife.

Players

A troupe of traveling actors who arrive at the Lord's house offering to perform, and who help the Lord carry out his joke on Sly. They perform *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Katherine

The shrew of the play's title, and the oldest daughter of Baptista Minola and sister of Bianca. Katherine, who is also called Katherina or Kate, is extremely strong-willed. She insists upon saying whatever she thinks and expressing whatever she feels. Her words are abusive and angry, and her actions are often violent. In Shakespeare's time, women like Katherine were called shrews, and they were strongly disapproved of as the worst possible kind of women. Petruchio undertakes the challenge of taming her, turning her into an obedient and pleasant wife.

Petruchio

A wealthy gentleman from Verona. Loud, boisterous, eccentric, and quick-witted, Petruchio comes to Padua to increase his fortune by marrying rich. All he wants is a bride with an

enormous dowry, and Katherine fits the bill. Though everyone else warns him against trying to marry Katherine, he sets out to tame her by pitting his own violent temper against hers.

Baptista Minola

A wealthy citizen of Padua, and the father of Katherine and Bianca. Though many men want to marry Bianca, Baptista refuses to allow Bianca to marry before Katherine, whom no one wants to marry. Baptista is good-hearted and generous toward his two daughters, lavishing expensive books and lessons upon them, but he is completely at a loss for how to deal with the strong-willed Katherine.

Bianca

The younger daughter of Baptista. The opposite of her sister Katherine, Bianca is soft-spoken, sweet, and unassuming, as well as beautiful. Because of her large dowry and her mild behavior, several men compete for her hand.

The Taming of the Shrew Induction, Scene 1 Summary

- The Induction begins in front of a bar in the English countryside, where the Hostess and the belligerent (and completely drunk) Christopher Sly argue about Sly trashing the tavern.
- When Sly threatens to beat the Hostess, she replies that Sly belongs in the "stocks" (a wooden restraining device used to publicly punish and humiliate criminals).
- Sly is indignant; he calls her a whore, claims he is the descendant of "Richard the Conqueror" (whoops – he's probably thinking of a *William* the Conqueror), and refuses to pay for some broken beer mugs. He also misquotes lines from Thomas Kyd's famous play, *The Spanish Tragedy* (we're not sure which offense is worse).
- When the Hostess runs off to fetch the law, Sly continues to talk trash to nobody in particular until he passes out cold.
- Along come the Lord and his posse, looking to kick back a few cold beers after a long day of hunting. The Lord and the Huntsmen talk about how awesome their hunting dogs are when they notice Sly asleep on the ground.
- The Lord, who basically owns the entire countryside, is totally disgusted. He calls Sly a "monstrous beast" and a "swine" and says he's going to play an elaborate prank to teach Sly a lesson.
- The Lord gives his crew orders to take Sly to his fancy country estate, clean him up, and surround him with delicious food, great music, and obedient servants. The plan, he says, is to trick Sly into believing he is a nobleman instead of a drunken beggar.
- While walking over to his place, the Lord continues to play director. He tells his crew to pretend Sly is a great lord whose recent illness has his wife super-upset. Everyone agrees that this is an awesome idea – if they play their roles right, Sly will have no choice but to believe he's the person they say he is.
- Sly is carried up to a bedroom. Meanwhile, a bunch of actors just happen to show up at the estate. Being a big theater buff, the Lord offers to let them crash for the night in exchange for some entertainment. He tells them he'd like them to put on a play for a fellow "Lord" but there's one small thing: the actors can't laugh at this guy when he acts like a hillbilly who has never seen a play before.
- This is no problem for the theater troupe – they *are* actors after all. Acting, however, is thirsty work, so they wander off to the pantry to get some drinks and to maybe grab a little snack before the private performance.
- This is nice for the actors, but the Lord's work isn't quite done – since he still needs someone to pretend to be Sly's wife, he tells one of his lackeys to fetch his best boy servant, Bartholomew, and to dress up Bart like a trophy wife.
- The Lord gives all sorts of pointers on how the role of an obedient nobleman's wife should be played – what she should wear, how she should speak and act, and what to do if Bart can't make himself cry on cue (use an onion, of course).
- The Lord is psyched about his practical joke and can't wait to see what will happen when Sly sees Bart dressed like a woman. Not wanting his servants to screw things up, the Lord runs off to the bedroom to supervise.

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The Taming of the Shrew Induction, Scene 2 Summary

- In a plush bedroom in the Lord's house, Sly demands a pot of "small ale." (Historical tidbit: "small ale" is the Elizabethan equivalent of cheap, light beer.)
- Sly is surrounded by servants who offer tasty snacks, expensive booze, and the coolest clothes, all of which Sly rejects on the grounds that he is *Christopher Sly*, the guy who eats discounted beef, drinks cheap beer, owns only one outfit, and often goes barefoot.
- When the Lord insists that Sly act like a nobleman, Sly objects again and identifies himself as "Old Sly's son," the guy who can barely hold down a series of low-level trade jobs (peddler,

card maker, bear keeper, tinker). If they don't believe him they can go ask "Marian Hacket, the fat ale wife," who will confirm that Sly isn't some rich guy.

- Undaunted, the Lord and his servants apply even more pressure, insisting that this behavior is upsetting Sly's wife, his servants, and all his rich friends. They offer him more luxuries and tell him he can have anything he wants – music, mid-day naps, riding, hawking, hunting, pornography – all the things that the average Elizabethan nobleman adores. The final enticement is news that Sly has the hottest wife in town, and she *really* misses her man.
- Sly wonders if he's dreaming and decides that no, he is awake and therefore he must be a nobleman. His first command as a "nobleman" is something like this: "Bring me my woman... and another pitcher of Coors light!"
- Bartholomew enters the room dressed like a woman and says all the things an obedient and loving noblewoman would say – "I'm obedient to you," and "not sleeping with you for the past fifteen years has been a real bummer." Sly orders everybody out of the room and tells Bart to take off her clothes and hop in the sack.
- Bart is in quite a fix, so he says Sly's doctor has put the kibosh on sex for at least 24 hours, because it might cause Sly to relapse. Sly responds with a lame pun on his erection and says he'll just have to wait a little longer.
- A messenger enters the room and announces that some actors want to perform for Sly as a "welcome back from your coma" gift. The messenger says that, according to the doctor, a play is just the right kind of medicine for a guy recovering from a fifteen-year-long nap.
- Sly tells his wife to slide her bootylicious self on over next to him so they can watch the play together.

Taming of the Shrew Act Summaries

Summary: Act I, scene ii

A brash young man named Petruchio, newly arrived in Padua, goes with his servant Grumio to see Hortensio, whom he knows from Verona. Grumio and Petruchio become embroiled in a comic misunderstanding at the door, but eventually Hortensio comes down to greet Petruchio and ask why he is in Padua. Petruchio responds that, upon his father's death, he set out to look for a wife, hoping to marry a rich man's daughter and thereby augment his family fortune. Hortensio, determined to find a potential suitor for Katherine so that he himself may marry Bianca, recognizes his opportunity and decides to convince Petruchio to marry the shrew. Being a friend, he first tries to offer a warning about her, but Petruchio does not care about her behavior. He pays attention to one thing only—the fact that she has a rich father. Full of confidence, he tells Hortensio to lead him to the shrew. Hortensio, for his part, plans to disguise himself as a schoolmaster so that he can court Bianca secretly.

Gremio and Lucentio enter on their way to Baptista's house, interrupting Hortensio and Petruchio. Lucentio has already disguised himself as a schoolmaster and has presented himself to Gremio, who gladly agrees to have him tutor Bianca. Gremio brags to Hortensio that he has found a schoolmaster for Bianca, unaware of the fact that Lucentio will be courting the girl himself. Hortensio then tells Gremio the good news—that Petruchio wishes to woo Katherine. Gremio can hardly believe it, but Petruchio confidently claims that he will be victorious.

At this point, Tranio enters, disguised as Lucentio, with Biondello as his servant. He very conspicuously asks the suitors to direct him to the house of Baptista Minola, vaguely implying that he might be interested in one of the women there. Hortensio and Gremio have a hard time restraining their anger, for now there will be three competing suitors for Bianca. Lucentio, of course, has arranged for Tranio to make this entrance in order to distract Hortensio and Gremio and give him more time for his own wooing. Tranio persuades the suitors that they can all be friends while they compete for Bianca, and he wins their good graces by offering to buy them a drink. The whole company considers this an excellent suggestion, and they all depart together.

Summary: Act II, scene i

Chaos rules at Baptista's house the next morning as Katherine chases Bianca, cursing at her in a fury. Katherine has tied Bianca's hands together and is trying to beat her sister because Bianca will not tell her which of the suitors she prefers. When Baptista comes in to try to break up the fight, he only angers Katherine more by showing that he favors Bianca. Both sisters leave in a huff, just before a group of visitors enters to see Baptista.

The group is composed of the gentlemen who were on their way to the pub at the end of the last scene: Gremio with Lucentio (dressed as a schoolmaster), Petruchio with Hortensio (likewise dressed as a schoolmaster), and Tranio (dressed as Lucentio) with Biondello (dressed as his servant). The introductions begin in a whirlwind of deception. Petruchio starts off, bluntly as always, by asking Baptista for the opportunity to see Katherine. In exchange, he offers a music instructor for her, the disguised Hortensio, whom he introduces as Litio. Baptista accepts the

present and intends to tell Petruchio as kindly as possible that Petruchio must be crazy to want to see Katherine, when Gremio, who cannot stand being upstaged, interrupts him. Gremio presents his own schoolmaster, the disguised Lucentio, whom he calls Cambio, a master of classical languages. Baptista accepts the gift and then hears from Tranio, who, pretending to be Lucentio, presents his own gift of books and a lute, in exchange for the permission to see and woo Bianca.

The two phony schoolmasters leave to ply their trades on Bianca, while Petruchio presses Baptista further for information about Katherine. After confirming that a substantial dowry will accompany his successful wooing of Katherine, Petruchio assures Baptista of his abilities. Hortensio cuts him off by returning, his head now bleeding—apparently, when Hortensio attempted to teach Katherine how to play the lute, she promptly took the instrument and smashed it over his head. Undaunted, Petruchio waits for Baptista to send Katherine out to see him. He decides to adopt the tactic of calling her “Kate” and good-naturedly contradicting everything she says.

Abrasive as always, Katherine tears into Petruchio from the moment he sets foot in her room. Petruchio’s quick wit, though, proves equal to hers, and Katherine, used to skewering the slower-witted men by whom she is surrounded, finds his aptitude for sparring highly frustrating. They engage in a lengthy verbal duel with elaborate puns, each one constructing a new metaphor from the other’s comments—Kate’s puns generally insult or threaten, but Petruchio twists them into sexual innuendo. Eventually, she becomes so enraged that she hits him, but he continues the game just the same, saying that he will marry her whether or not she is willing: “will you, nill you, I will marry you” (II.i.263).

When Baptista, Gremio, and Tranio enter to check on Petruchio’s progress, he claims that they have already agreed upon Sunday as the wedding day. Kate, shocked, contradicts him, but he ignores her objections and insists to the other men that Katherine cannot keep her hands off him. Strangely, Kate remains silent after this remark, and when Petruchio again claims that they will marry on Sunday, she says nothing, and they both leave.

After recovering from the shock of the hasty arrangement they have just witnessed, Gremio and Tranio immediately move to the matter of Bianca, who suddenly will be available after Sunday. Baptista says that whichever of the suitors can best ensure that Bianca will be provided for when she is a widow—in other words, whichever has the greatest wealth—may have her hand. Having assumed the false, unknown identity of Lucentio, Tranio is able to claim that he has limitless funding and simply guarantees ten times whatever Gremio offers. Baptista agrees to award Bianca to Lucentio as soon as his father can guarantee the wealth that he has claimed. Tranio, confident of his ability to play the part of Lucentio, believes he can produce Lucentio’s father as well.

Summary: Act III, scene i

It is now Saturday, the day before Katherine is scheduled to wed Petruchio. Lucentio and Hortensio, in their respective disguises as Cambio and Latio, are “instructing” Bianca somewhere in Baptista’s house, and the scene begins with the two of them battling for her exclusive

attention. Bianca clearly has begun to form a preference, and she ends the dispute by declaring that she will hear her Latin lesson from Lucentio first, while Hortensio tunes his instrument.

During the Latin lesson, with Hortensio out of hearing range, Lucentio conveys his true intentions to Bianca through a mock translation of a Latin paragraph. She replies to him, in the same way, that she distrusts him, and yet she does not hide the fact that she is taken with her young suitor. Hortensio tries to break in at intervals, but Bianca sends him off to tune again until she has finished her conversation with Lucentio.

Lucentio concludes and Hortensio returns to try his own hand at wooing Bianca. He gives her a sheet with a “gamut,” or scale, of notes on it, with romantic words cleverly inserted to indicate his true intention. Hortensio’s words take a different tone, though. While Lucentio was confident and coy, Hortensio pleads almost pitifully: “show pity, or I die” (III.i.76). Bianca resists his attempt more directly, failing to give the playful glimmer of hope she afforded Lucentio. Before Hortensio can respond, a servant enters, calling upon Bianca to prepare for her sister’s wedding the next day.

Lucentio also leaves, and Hortensio, alone, considers the signals he received from Bianca. He sees clearly that Lucentio is infatuated with Bianca. But he does not yet know what her intentions are, and he suspects that his own chances might be slim. Preparing for the possibility of rejection, his former enthusiasm dwindles, and he tells himself that he will simply find another wife if Bianca proves unwilling.

Summary: Act III, scene ii

On Sunday, outside Baptista’s house, everyone has gathered for the wedding of Kate and Petruchio. The groom, however, is late, and Baptista has begun to worry. Kate frets that Petruchio habitually woos women only to leave them standing at the altar, and she runs off in tears. Just then, Biondello rushes in to announce that the groom is on his way, dressed in a ridiculous, mismatched, and shabby costume, riding up the street on an old, broken-down horse riddled with diseases. Grumio rides at his side, similarly attired. When Petruchio finally arrives, the crowd, horrified, sees that Biondello’s description was accurate. Baptista begs him to change into a more fashionable outfit before marrying Kate, in order to avoid further public humiliation. Petruchio says he will do no such thing and rides off to find Kate at the church. Most of the crowd follows in a kind of horrified fascination.

Summary: Act III, scene iii

Tranio and Lucentio stay behind, alone. They briefly discuss the status of their plan to win Bianca. Tranio informs his master that they must find a father for him, and Lucentio suggests that the simplest solution may be for them to elope. They do not speak for long before Gremio returns to tell the story of what happened at the marriage. Apparently, Petruchio swore at the altar, struck the priest, threw food, and, in general, proved such an embarrassment that Gremio felt compelled to leave early. The marriage has been completed nonetheless, and the rest of the company soon arrives. However, before they can even begin the wedding feast, Petruchio announces that he must leave at once and take Kate with him, not even giving her time to receive

congratulations from her friends and family. At this ridiculous suggestion, Kate tries to draw the line, saying she will leave only when she wishes, but Petruchio remains as persistent as ever. He says that since she is now his wife, he claims her as his property, and, pretending to defend her from jealous thieves, exits quickly with her and Grumio. The rest of the party can only watch in amazement and laugh at the day's events, wondering how two such people could ever put up with one another. They resume the wedding feast, and Baptista moves to discuss the marriage of Bianca to Lucentio.

Summary: Act IV, scene i

Petruchio and Kate are about to arrive at Petruchio's country house. Grumio arrives first, however, complaining that he has been sent ahead to ensure that the servants prepare for the arrival of their master and his new wife. Curtis, another servant, greets him and hears his tale of the journey from Padua—Kate fell into the mud, Petruchio flew into a rage, and the horses ran away. Grumio then orders Curtis to assemble all the other servants, properly attired and on good behavior. Curtis calls for them, and a few arrive just as Petruchio and Kate return.

Petruchio immediately becomes enraged, claiming that his servants fail to attend him properly. They do their best, but clearly he is not pleased by anything. He demands dinner, and they prepare it as quickly as possible, but he claims that the meat is burned and pushes the whole meal off the table. In the meantime, Kate, visibly tired and hungry, pleads with him to be more patient with the servants. Petruchio cheerfully tells her that he demands much of them for her benefit—his new bride will receive nothing short of perfection, he says, pretending to ignore the fact that his new bride simply needs a hot meal. After taking her off to bed without food, Petruchio returns to the stage alone and announces his intentions. All his actions have been calculated to aggravate Kate and to keep her wanting, for he refers to her as a wild falcon that he must train to obey his call. He intends to prevent her from sleeping by making a fuss about the way the bed is made, just as he did with the food. This, he says, is the best way to “curb her mad and headstrong humour” (IV.i.190).

Summary: Act IV, scene ii

Back in Padua, Tranio (still disguised as Lucentio) and Lucentio (still disguised as the schoolmaster) are trying to conclude their scheme to win Bianca for Lucentio. Hortensio, distraught at having lost Bianca to his rival schoolmaster, takes it upon himself to inform Lucentio that he too is out of luck in his pursuit of Bianca. Tranio plays along, feigning surprise when he sees the real Lucentio and Bianca courting each other during their “lesson.” He pretends to be so angry that he decides to forswear Bianca's charms, and he convinces Hortensio to do the same—thus cleverly removing the competition.

Tranio informs Bianca and Lucentio of these events after Hortensio leaves. Hortensio has decided to marry a wealthy widow instead of Bianca and is leaving to go to Petruchio's to attend “taming-school.” He wants to see how Petruchio handles Kate so that he can apply the lessons to his own marriage. Just as Tranio finishes the story, Biondello rushes into the scene with encouraging news: he has just seen a man entering Padua who would make a convincing fake father for Lucentio.

Tranio approaches the newcomer, learning that he is a pedant schoolmaster from Mantua. He then comes up with a story to put the old man in his debt: the dukes of Mantua and Padua, he says, are at odds with each other, and the duke of Padua has proclaimed that anyone from Mantua found in Padua shall be put to death. The pedant, frightened out of his wits, promises a favor to Tranio in exchange for protection. Tranio says that, as it happens, he is in need of someone to act as his father (meaning Lucentio's father, Vincentio), and so they seal the agreement.

Summary: Act IV, scene iii

Back in Petruchio's house, Kate has had little food or sleep for several days now, and she entreats Grumio to get her something to eat. He refuses, and, like his master, claims that they are depriving her for her own benefit. Finally, Petruchio and Hortensio bring her a meal. (Hortensio has apparently arrived from Padua sometime in the last few days to educate himself at Petruchio's "taming-school.") Kate has little time to eat before Petruchio's tailor arrives. The tailor has prepared elegant and expensive clothes for their journey back to Baptista's house in Padua. Predictably, Petruchio finds fault with everything that Kate likes, from the cap to the gown, and he blames the tailor for poor craftsmanship. The tailor tries to deflect the blame onto Grumio, but Petruchio and Grumio indignantly force him to leave. Petruchio, however, secretly tells Hortensio to pull the tailor aside and tell him that he will be paid the following day, revealing that Petruchio's distasteful treatment of the tailor is in jest. Petruchio then tells Kate that they will leave at once for Padua in the clothes that they have on, planning to arrive at noon. But, when Kate tells Petruchio that noontime has already passed, he angrily responds that, yet again, she is contradicting him. He declares that they will not go that day, and that, when they do go, "[i]t shall be what o'clock I say it is" (IV.iii.189).

Summary: Act IV, scene iv

In Padua, Tranio has properly outfitted the pedant as Vincentio and rehearses his act with him to ensure that their stories match. When Baptista and Lucentio (still disguised as Cambio) enter, the pedant convinces Baptista that he is indeed Lucentio's father, and that he fully approves of the marriage between Bianca and his son. Baptista, the pedant, and Tranio then leave to find a private place where they can discuss the financial details of the marriage.

Summary: Act IV, scene v

Lucentio (disguised as Cambio) returns to the stage with Biondello, who informs him that Baptista has requested that Cambio bring Bianca to dinner. Biondello explains that he has personally arranged for a priest and witnesses to perform a hasty marriage in a church nearby. Lucentio agrees to the plan to elope, and they quickly leave to perform their respective tasks.

Summary: Act IV, scene vi

Petruchio, Kate, and Hortensio journey back to Padua. On the way, Petruchio continues his relentless attempts to coax Kate to submit to his authority as her husband. Though it is midday, Petruchio comments on how brightly the moon is shining, and when Kate responds that the sun

is shining, he refuses to continue the journey until she admits that it is the moon. Having no more energy or patience to put up resistance and anxious to return to Padua, Kate concedes. Then, however, Petruchio reverses his claim and says that it is in fact the sun. Hortensio finally persuades Petruchio that he has tamed her, and they continue the journey.

After they have gone a short way, a similar incident occurs. They pass an old man on the same road to Padua, and Petruchio claims that, in fact, the old man is a young maid. Furthermore, he entreats Kate to embrace the maid. This time, Kate immediately obeys, but Petruchio then says she is mistaken, for the maid is really an old man. Kate continues to play along.

The old man turns out to be Vincentio, the true father of Lucentio. He tells the trio that he has come to visit his son in Padua. Petruchio happily tells him of the marriage expected between Bianca and Lucentio and realizes that this will make Vincentio Petruchio's father-in-law. A bit confused, they all continue their journey to Padua together in order to sort things out there.

Summary: Act V, scene i

Back in Padua, Biondello hurriedly takes Lucentio and Bianca to the church, where the priest is ready to marry them. Lucentio is no longer disguised as Cambio the schoolmaster. Just as they leave, Petruchio's party enters along with Vincentio, and they knock on the door of Lucentio's house, where Tranio and the pedant currently reside in their respective disguises. When the pedant answers, Vincentio says that he is Lucentio's father, but the pedant claims to be the true father and calls for the imposter's arrest. Just then, Biondello arrives, turning white when he sees his old master, Vincentio, who recognizes him. Biondello pretends not to notice Vincentio, as Baptista, Tranio, and the pedant come out of the house. Vincentio also recognizes Tranio in Lucentio's clothing, and he is further enraged when Tranio pretends not to know him.

The crowd turns against Vincentio and prepares to escort him to jail, when Lucentio and Bianca, newly married, arrive from the church. Biondello, Tranio, and the pedant take this moment of confusion to run away from the scene, knowing that the game is up. Lucentio can do nothing but beg his father's pardon and disclose the scheme to everyone present. He explains that his deception stemmed from his love for Bianca, which pacifies the two fathers somewhat. Nevertheless, they depart to seek some small revenge on the men who fooled them.

Kate and Petruchio stand in amazement at the proceedings. They follow the rest inside to see the conclusion, but not before Petruchio demands one more thing of his wife. He asks her to kiss him, there in the middle of the street. Initially, Kate refuses, saying she is ashamed to do so. But when Petruchio threatens to turn them around and return to his home, Kate kisses him. Petruchio finally seems satisfied with her, and they go in.

Summary: Act V, scene ii

Lucentio throws a banquet to celebrate the three recent marriages in Padua: Petruchio to Kate, Lucentio to Bianca, and Hortensio to the widow he had spoken of before. As they sit around the table eating and chatting, Petruchio and the widow engage in some jesting (mostly at Hortensio's expense). Kate joins in, and she begins to argue with the widow. The argument nearly turns to

violence, with the men cheering them on to fight, but Bianca calms them, and the three wives go off together to talk.

Meanwhile, the men begin to chide Petruchio—Baptista, Lucentio, Tranio, and Hortensio still think that Petruchio has been stuck with a vicious shrew, and they give him some grief for it. Petruchio confidently suggests a test to see which of the three new husbands has the most obedient wife. Each of them will send for his wife, and the one whose wife obeys first will be the winner. After placing a significant amount of money on the wager, Lucentio sends Biondello to get Bianca, confident that she will obey at once. However, Biondello returns to tell them that she is busy and will not come. Hortensio receives a similar response from the widow. Finally, Grumio goes back to get Kate, and she returns at once, to the great surprise of all but Petruchio. Petruchio sends Kate back to bring in the other wives. Again, she obeys. Upon their return, Petruchio comments that he dislikes Kate's hat and tells her to throw it off. She obeys at once. Bianca and the widow, aghast at Kate's subservience, become even further shocked when, at Petruchio's request, Kate gives a speech on the duty that wives owe to their husbands.

In the speech, Kate reprimands them for their angry dispositions, saying that it does not become a woman to behave this way, especially toward her husband. A wife's duty to her husband, she says, mimics the duty that "the subject owes the prince," because the husband endures great pain and labor for her benefit (V.ii.159). She admits that once she was as haughty as Bianca and the widow are now, but that she has since changed her ways and most willingly gives her obedience to her husband. The other men admit complete defeat, and Petruchio leaves victorious—he and Kate go to bed happily, and Hortensio and Lucentio remain behind to wonder at this miraculous change of fates.

Staging the play

The Taming of the Shrew has always been a popular play. It is not only very funny, but it also reflects contemporary discussion of marriage and the role of women. The play has therefore always had strong appeal for audiences: the intrigues and disguises of the Bianca plot; the potential for knockabout farce; its continuing relevance as a play about the relationship between the sexes.

Adaptations

Like other Shakespeare plays, it has inspired many adaptations. While Shakespeare was still alive, John Fletcher wrote *The Woman's Prize or The Tamer Tamed*, in which, as the title suggests, Katherina gets her own back. Some adaptations heightened the violence and brutality in the scenes between Petruchio and Katherina. Other dramatists were more concerned to change the end of the play to avoid any suggestion of Katherina's defeat. In the eighteenth century, David Garrick rewrote the final lines of the play so that Petruchio promised to calm (town and looked forward to 'one gentle stream/Of mutual love'. Garrick's version held the stage for a hundred years.

The twentieth century

The liberation of women from traditional roles in marriage and society created new opportunities for challenging interpretations. Modern audiences find some parts of the play distasteful, so directors have sought different solutions. One answer is to concentrate on the play's potential for farce. This type of humour, often with an element of violence, comes from a long tradition of drama going back to Roman plays by Plautus. Punch and Judy shows are a part of this tradition, as are some modern television comedies. The Richard Burton/Elizabeth Taylor film of the play directed by Franco Zeffirelli in 1966 contained much of this kind of lively action. Jonathan Miller's 13BC television production was very different. There is plenty of full and life, but his interpretation is based on the way in which Miller views marriage in Shakespeare's time. It ends with peace and harmony as the characters sing a psalm around the table.

In strong contrast, Michael Bogdanov's 1978 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company emphasised the violence and cruelty of the play. So too did Charles Marowitz in his version *The Shrew*, which opened with Bianca and Katherina fighting, and ended with a hysterical Kate. The action was interwoven with a modern parallel which provided little optimism or light relief. The Royal Shakespeare's Company's 1982 production avoided such a serious emphasis and included all kinds of jokes and comic effects (for example, the four-person bicycle on page 146).

Some directors have tried to avoid both light-hearted romps and unrelievedly bleak interpretations. For them, the play is about two misfits who find true contentment with each other. In such productions, a feminist argument is not central. Meryl Streep, Katherina in a 1978 New York production, said: 'What I'm saying is, I'll do anything for this man ... Why is selflessness wrong here? Service is the only thing that's important about love'.