



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
2011 STUDY GUIDE



American Players Theatre
PO Box 819
Spring Green, WI
www.americanplayers.org

***THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE**

2011 STUDY GUIDE

Cover Photo: Jonathan Smoots, Tracy Michelle Arnold and James Ridge.

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If you have any questions or comments regarding the exercises or the information within this study guide, please contact Emily Beck, Education Coordinator, at 608-588-7402 x 107, or ebeck@americanplayers.org.

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Who's Who in *The Taming of the Shrew*
(From *The Essential Shakespeare Handbook*)



Baptista Minola (John Pribyl)



A lord of Padua, he is the father of the shrewish Kate, and dotes on daughter Bianca.

Katherine Minola (Tracy Michelle Arnold)



The eponymous shrew, Katherine is “renowned in Padua for her scolding tongue”.

Bianca Minola (Ashleigh LaThrop)



The younger sister, she is the victim of Kate’s violent temper and the love-interest of three suitors. She finally settles on Lucentio, “the wished haven of my bliss.” Maybe.

Petruchio (James Ridge)



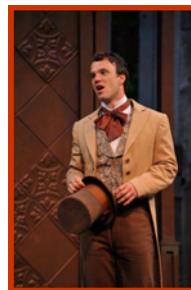
A flamboyant adventurer from Verona, he comes to “wive it wealthily in Padua”; he wins Kate’s hand but behaves outrageously until he is able to “tame” his bride.

Grumio (David Daniel)



Servant of Petruchio, his irreverence gives his master plenty of practice in the art of taming those of spirited disposition.

Lucentio (Eric Parks)



Suitor of Bianca, he disguises himself as “Cambio,” a poetry tutor, so that he may gain access to Baptista’s sequestered daughter, Bianca.

Tranio (Matt Schwader)



A witty servant of Lucentio, he pretends to be his master so that Lucentio may, for his part, pose as Bianca’s poetry tutor.

Hortensio (La Shawn Banks)



Suitor of Bianca and old friend of Petruchio, he warns the suitor that Kate is “intolerable curst”; he disguises himself as the music tutor “Litio” to gain access to Bianca, but a widow who has long loved him will eventually be his bride.



Who's Who in *The Taming of the Shrew*, continued
(From *The Essential Shakespeare Handbook*)



Gremio (Jonathan Smoots)



A “pantaloon” or capering fool, and veteran suitor of Bianca, he is wealthy, old and eager to include the pretty girl among his exotic treasures.

Curtis (Travis A. Knight)

Servant of Petruchio, he has a knack for double-entendres.

Widow (Greta Wohlrabe)

Wins Hortensio as a husband after he is reluctantly rejected by Bianca.

Biondello (Charlie Wright)



Second servant of Lucentio, he is not thrilled about having to pretend that his fellow servant is his master.

Vincentio (Brian Mani)

Father of Lucentio, he comes unexpectedly to Padua to visit his son and is outraged to discover that he is being impersonated by an old schoolteacher.

Pedant (Paul Bentzen)

A pedant or schoolteacher visiting Padua, he is persuaded to impersonate Vincentio.





ABOUT THE PLAY



ACT I

Lucentio, son of a wealthy merchant, arrives in the Italian town of Padua with his servant, Tranio. They come upon Baptista and his two daughters, Katharine and Bianca, and Bianca's suitors, Gremio and Hortensio. Baptista insists that Bianca will not marry until Katharine (who is known throughout town for her rudeness – or shrewishness, if you will) has a husband. Kate proclaims that she does not want a husband and the two suitors beg Baptista to make an exception. He will not change his mind but does mention that the girls are in need of tutors. Gremio and Hortensio plan to find these tutors and a man brave enough to marry Kate, while Lucentio falls instantly in love with Bianca. Tranio suggests that Lucentio pose as a Latin tutor while he pretends to be Lucentio. Another servant, Biondello, will serve as the **DISGUISED** Tranio's page.

DISGUISE is a common motif in Shakespeare's plays. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, it is telling that the happiest couple at the end of the play is the one in which neither partner has disguised themselves.

Petruchio, a man of Verona, arrives in Padua looking for a wealthy wife. When he and his servant, Gremio, arrive at the house of his old friend, Hortensio, he is told about rich, beautiful "Katherine the Curst, who no man dares marry." Petruchio agrees to court her for a fee and to present Hortensio, disguised as a music tutor, to Baptista.

ACT II

KATE has been featured in several remakes of *Taming of the Shrew* including a 1967 film with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor; *Kiss Me Kate*, an adaptation of Cole Porter's musical; and *10 Things I Hate About You* in 1999 starring Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles.

Meanwhile **KATE**, in a rage, has tied Bianca up, insisting that she admit which of her suitors she loves most. Bianca says that she has not yet felt true love for any of the suitors. Kate doesn't believe this and attacks her. Baptista enters, rescues Bianca and chides Kate, making her even angrier. She accuses Baptista of playing favorites before storming off.

Petruchio, his servant and the other male suitors arrive and Baptista is delighted (and shocked) when he hears that Petruchio wishes to court Katharine. Lucentio and Hortensio, disguised as tutors, are sent to work immediately. Almost instantly a crash comes from the house. Hortensio (disguised as the music tutor) enters howling because Kate hit him over the head with a guitar. This excites Petruchio and he demands to meet her. His game plan is to respond in turn with a sweet compliment for every curse she gives him. Kate enters in a fury. But Petruchio maintains his position as a flatterer. They begin a battle of wits that proves their compatibility. By the time Baptista reenters, Petruchio is smiling as if all is well. Kate, however, accuses her father of setting her up with a lunatic. Petruchio insists that the wedding will take place and saunters off.

Petruchio makes it very clear that he's (at first) interested only in Kate's **DOWRY**. Elizabethan dowries consisted of money—often a lot of money for noble families like the Minolas—but it also represented that a woman has become the "property" of her husband.



ABOUT THE PLAY

Continued



ACT III

Lucentio and Hortensio, disguised as tutors, fight for Bianca's attention. Eventually Lucentio quietly reveals his true identity and Bianca returns his affections.

GROOM: Elizabethan men wore their very best clothes at their wedding, usually including a doublet (fitted buttoned jacket), breeches, hose, neck ruff and a codpiece. So it's easy to see why everyone was so upset by Petruchio's strange ensemble.

Everyone has gathered for Petruchio and Kate's wedding – except for the **GROOM**. He finally enters dressed in ragged, dirty clothing and riding an old, sagging horse. During the wedding ceremony, Petruchio swears and yells so loudly that the priest drops his Bible in amazement. After the marriage, he insists on leaving immediately, scooping Kate up, explaining that she is now his personal property. The wedding party agrees that Kate has found a suitable match: a shrewish husband for a shrewish wife.

ACT IV

On the way to his home, Petruchio and Kate ride on the same old and weak horse. When it tosses them both into a ditch, Petruchio beats the horse and his servant, Gremio. When they finally arrive, Petruchio beats his house servants, lets his dogs run rampant and continues to work on Katharina. He claims that dinner is burned and throws it out, forcing them both to go **HUNGRY** for the remainder of the day. He goes to bed, planning to keep her awake for several nights by tossing, turning, kicking and yelling until daylight.

HUNGRY: Director Tim Ocel likens Kate to an actual animal version of the shrew. Shrews have such a high metabolism, that they will starve to death if left without food for half a day. By starving Kate (and himself), Petruchio may well have killed the shrews in them both.

Back in Padua, Bianca and Lucentio have fallen in love. Hortensio realizes he has lost the prize and finds a wealthy widow to marry, and Tranio enlists the aid of a traveling **PEDANT** to pretend to be Lucentio's father. After Tranio presents the fake father to Baptista, Lucentio tells of his plans to elope with Bianca.

PEDANT: a male schoolteacher.

ACT V

The 'taming' of Kate continues and after many tricks and trials, she is nearly at her wit's end. Petruchio finally tells her that they must set off immediately for Padua to attend a party at Baptista's home. Both are still dressed as vagabonds, Petruchio declares that clothing is not important and they set off. On the way to Padua, Petruchio begins yet another game. Kate catches on and plays along, much to Petruchio's delight. They meet Vincentio, Lucentio's real father, paying his son a surprise visit. Once they reach Lucentio's house, the imposter father answers the door and all kinds of confusion ensues.

Lucentio finally appears and reveals the deception after which everyone assumes their original identities.

At **DINNER**, the husbands compare their wives to make bets to see whose wife will come when called. Lucentio sends for Bianca, who refuses to return to the table. Hortensio sends for the widow who thinks that he is joking. Petruchio sends for Katharine, who – to the shock of the other guests – comes immediately. In a famous speech, Kate scolds Bianca and the widow for not pleasing their husbands. Petruchio kisses Kate to show his pleasure, and everyone concludes that she is not a shrew after all.

DINNER: Elizabethan food was usually purchased from small markets or fairs. A dinner like the one at the Minola's would likely be elaborate, and garnished with exotic props such as peacock feathers.



APT'S *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*



A less-than-dream-wedding.

Every production of a play is different, and being on an outdoor stage is different than most. So plays at APT come with their own unique challenges (rain, heat, bugs) and amazing benefits (moonlight, birdsong, summer breeze). In every performance on the Up-the-Hill stage, nature actually plays a role.

Director Tim Ocel, who helmed *As You Like It* last season, says his biggest challenge to working on the outdoor stage was the heat, and vocally filling the large amphitheater. “But,” he continues “there’s also this huge payoff: I love working under the stars.”

As for the production itself, Tim says: “The designers and I looked for a period that would support the story... I wasn’t interested in placing the story during Elizabethan times and I wanted an Italian setting. I think it was B. Modern, our costume designer, who suggested we investigate 1860 and the time immediately following the Second Italian War for Independence. It was a turbulent period in Italy, which supports and parallels the turbulent natures of Kate and Petruchio, and it was important to me that Petruchio be seen as a soldier since he talks about combat and is so demanding of obedience, a very military concern.”



Tracy Michelle Arnold and James Ridge

While not set in Shakespeare’s actual time period, this production of *The Taming of the Shrew* gave costume designer B. Modern a lot to work with. From Petruchio’s first act Garibaldi clothes, to his ridiculous jester wedding tuxedo, the men’s costumes were not to be outdone by the ladies, specifically Bianca and Kate. While Bianca’s dresses become more ornate and showy over time, Kate’s become more and more minimal, portraying, respectively, women whose lives are becoming on one hand more pretense, and on the other, more real. By the last scene, Kate and Petruchio don’t even

exist in the same time period as the other characters, an idea that is portrayed in part through the costuming. According to Tim, “At the end of the play the final designs of Kate and Petruchio are 40 or 50 years in the future. Because in the end, they represent the new world.”



Costume rendering by B. Modern

While costuming holds beauty and meaning, it also has to be practical. To help protect actors from the sometimes extreme weather conditions, APT’s talented costume designers create wardrobe that functions as air conditioning, with pockets for ice packs built in to keep the company cool. Long-time APT costume designer Robert Morgan (who designed both the costumes and set for this season’s *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles’ Philoctetes*), says: “Costumes must be built like armor but look and function like clothing. Heat, wet, athletic activity, emotional distress—all these take their toll. Costume design involves dramatic insight. Satisfaction comes from the complex process of design, live audience, and,

selfishly, simply creating beauty.”



APT'S *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* CONTINUED



Model by Andrew Boyce

Just as complex is the work done on the set. With up to five different productions running on the outdoor stage at a given time, sets are often set up and torn down in the space of several hours. That's hard work for the production assistants, but it also offers a challenge to APT set designers. Fortunately, the theater works with talented scenic artists like Andrew Boyce. As Tim and his design crew made the decision to set this production in the 1860s in Italy, which makes for an interesting design project.

“One of the things we landed on early with this set is that it should look like a sculpture. Eventually I said to Andrew: we need this set to be an angry heart. And

of course he went ‘Oh, ok. I’ll do that.’ So he kind of bashed all these walls together, and I also said this is mostly the Baptista world, so it needs to be old money, and it needs to be disintegrating money, so we came up with this copper look with the copper tile on the floor, and it’s kind of disintegrating. But it’s Kate and Petruchio who really bring the brave new world to the stage .”

While the vision of the director and designers get the play started, much of the way a character is perceived has to do with the actors’ interpretation. *The Taming of the Shrew* can be a difficult play for a number of reasons, but beneath the surface it—like many of Shakespeare’s plays—is about a very simple concept: love and acceptance.

Tracy Michelle Arnold, who plays Katherine in APT’s production this year, put a great deal of thought into her portrayal of the infamous “shrew.”

“When (Associate Artistic Director) Brenda (DeVita) first offered me the part I thought, ‘oh no’. It’s a hard role,” says Tracy. “But Tim came to my house to talk about his ideas, and said ‘Well first of all I think this is about a contract between a man and a woman.’ As a married person with one of those contracts that I continue to forge every day, I got right on board with that.”

“And then he said ‘I also liken it to Helen Keller’s story. Annie Sullivan came into Helen Keller’s life and before she met Annie her family let her behave however she wanted to. She was essentially like a wild animal. “And they let her behave that way because they loved her, but they didn’t know what to do with her. Obedience is a big theme in *Shrew*, which is part of what makes it so difficult to do in this day and age.”

“But when he said that my brain shifted a lot,” continues Tracy. “Because once Kate became more ‘obedient’ and learned the code that will allow her to function in her relationship and in society, she also became more lovable and easier to understand.”



James Ridge and Tracy Michelle Arnold in happier times.



APT'S *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW* CONTINUED



Unable to control her temper, Kate must be physically restrained...

much of her. Kate was maybe 12 or 13, at a more formative age where she'd already created a bond with her mother. So mother got ill, and dad sent Kate to go get the doctor. And Kate wandered off and meandered on her way, and by the time she got back with the doctor mother was gone."

"So we created that field around these characters so I have a big bucket of guilt at the beginning. And when I saw the costume rendering early on, I thought why does Kate wear black, and why does she look caged in her own clothing? And I think it's her choice. I think she is punishing herself. And I think that as Bianca grows up seeing the way Kate acts and seeing her dad get frustrated with her, she learns naturally to be the good one, and do what daddy says and things will go her way."

"Finally Tim pointed out that Petruchio is a soldier, and he really chose a specific time period in which to portray this play where Petruchio has just come from the Italian civil war. He is a soldier in command of other soldiers. And that's who the servants in that household are. They have a chain of command, they obey him and everything works perfectly."



...or things like this happen.



James Ridge and David Daniel lead the men and the household.

"So Petruchio needs obedience to make his life make sense. And when you think of it in terms of a soldier who just came back from a horrific place where if someone said get in the hole, and if you didn't get in the hole you were gone, I understand why a man like that needs someone to follow his lead."

On the other end of the relationship spectrum is Lucentio and Bianca. According to Tim, their courtship can be classified as: "Romantic and smitten; but ultimately only superficial. They don't ever know each other very well and at the end of the play they're squabbling; I'm wondering if Bianca shouldn't have married Hortensio...possibly she wonders that as well." So the happiest couple at the end of the play is the couple that put in the effort to make their marriage what it needed to be, even though it had unconventional beginnings.



The Taming of the Shrew

Photo Summary



Lucentio and his servant, Tranio, arrive in Padua looking for excitement while Lucentio's father is away.



When the Minola family arrives (along with some of Bianca's suitors) Lucentio becomes immediately smitten with the striking Bianca, and learns that she is not allowed to marry until her shrewish sister Kate weds.

"I firmly am resolv'd you know; that is, not bestow my youngest daughter before I have a husband for the elder."
- Baptista, ACT I, SC 1

"Since for the great desire I had to see fair Padua, nursery of arts, I am arriv'd for fruitful Lombardy."
Lucentio, ACT I, SC 1



Lucentio hatches a plan to pose as Bianca's tutor in order to win her hand. Tranio in turn poses as Lucentio in order to get him into the position.



Hortensio, another of Bianca's admirers, enlists the help of Petruchio to marry Kate, as he is "hoping to wive it wealthy". Hortensio poses as Bianca's music tutor.

"When I am alone, why, then I am Tranio, but in all places else your master Lucentio."
- Tranio, ACT I SC 1

"if you have a stomach to't a God's name, you shall have me assisting you in all.
But will you woo this wildcat?"
- Hortensio, ACT I SC 2



Kate and Petruchio's first meeting is not exactly love at first sight.



Baptista readily accepts Petruchio's proposal to Kate, and promises that they will wed. She is less than pleased.

"You have show'd a tender fatherly regard To wish me wed to one half lunatic, A madcap ruffian and a swearing Jack."
 -Katherine, ACT II SC 1

Petruchio: "I swear I'll cuff you if you strike again.
 Kate: "So may you lose your arms. If you strike me, you are no gentleman.
 And if no gentleman, why then no arms."
 - Duke Frederick, ACT II SC 1



With Kate promised to wed, Bianca's front-running suitors make their move



While Kate shows up on time for the wedding, Petruchio rides in late on an old nag, and dressed as a clown.

"Why, gentlemen, you do me double wrong, To strive for that which resteth in my choice."
 Bianca, Act III Scene 1

"First were we sad, fearing you would not come, Now sadder, that you come so unprovided,"
 Baptista, Act III Scene 2



Petruchio begins the process of de-shrewing his wife by depriving her of food, sleep and the lifestyle she's accustomed to. All the while he deprives himself of the same. Petruchio is unnecessarily cruel to his servants in order to show Kate how her nasty behavior affects the people around her.

“You logger-headed and unpolish'd grooms! What, no attendance?
No regard? No duty?
-Petruchio, ACT IV SC 1



Bianca chooses Lucentio, and the two secretly and hastily wed. Baptista is not happy about their deception, leaving Bianca to question her decision.

“But do you hear, sir? Have you married
my daughter without asking
my good will?”
Baptista, Act V Scene 1



Having said thank you for the first time in her life, Kate and Petruchio eat together. They then embark on a series of jokes that deepen their relationship.

Kate:
Husband,
let's follow
to see the
end of this
ado.”
Petruchio:
“First kiss
me, Kate,
and we
will.”
Act V
Scene 1



Everyone is surprised by Kate's transformation, so they make a bet about who's wife is the most obedient. Kate wins, and gives a speech about what's required to be a good wife. Petruchio kisses her, and they leave together as the other couples ponder their choice of spouse.

“Kate: In token of which duty, if he please, My hand is ready,
may it do him ease. “
Petruchio: Why there's a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate.”
- Duke Senior, ACT V SC 2



Classroom Activities



1. Research Elizabethan acting companies. How were they organized? How do their methods of rehearsing and producing plays differ from modern customs? Form an Elizabethan troupe to produce, practice and perform a short scene from the play.
2. Read II.1, paying particular attention to the bargaining with Baptista for the hand of Bianca. Work in groups of six: three people to put themselves on the “marriage market” and each selecting a “friend” or “parent” to advise them. Each candidate must choose an object of affection from the other two would-be spouses.
 - A. Have each marriage candidate honestly list his or her actual assets and goals (both personal and material) with the help of the “friend.” Candidates must present their cases to the objects of their affections (and their “friends”) in speeches no longer than one minute. Each should also determine what to ask from an intended spouse in both personal and material terms. The friends should present these lists to the involved parties.
 - B. Let the three friends decide which, if any, match should take place. Discuss the difficulties of determining assets and deciding what to ask for in return. Consider what criteria became most important in determining matches. Does the group feel this way of finding a mate harder or easier than modern conventions?
3. Baptista provides his daughters with tutors. Research the way in which children were educated in Renaissance Italy or Elizabethan England. What distinctions were made between genders? Which educational opportunities were determined by class or wealth? Present a 16th Century curriculum for your age group to the class. Compare it to your own class’s curriculum. Explore how the theory of education has changed.
4. Read and discuss Katherine’s final speech. Once everyone seems to have a grasp on her argument, let each participant write a speech from his or her own perspective outlining the kind of behavior on his or her own part that would ensure a happy contemporary marriage. Discuss what practical considerations are necessary for a harmonious union, and which romantic ones? Is it possible for someone to teach his or her spouse how to behave for a good marriage?



Exercises



1. Examine Lucentio's progress throughout the play: naïve student, instant lover, servant and tutor, successful suitor, sober husband. How are these changes reflected in his language and actions?
2. Examine Katherine's progression. What do others in Padua say about her at or before her wedding? How does her behavior confirm or refute these descriptions? Consider the images that Petruchio offers to and about her. Which of them are reflected in Kate's words or actions? How does she change in the play?
3. Compare two major images associated with Katherine: the shrew and the falcon. Cite instances where these images are used in Shakespeare's text. (Hint: the first three acts contain references to the shrew, the last two focus on falcons/hawks and their training.) Describe the characteristics of each animal. What analogies can you see between them and Kate's behavior or personality?
4. Trace another motif through *Shrew*:
 - A. The search for food (III.2, IV.1, IV.3, V.2)
 - B. Education and learning (I.1, II.1, Act IV)
 - C. Commerce and possessions (I.2, II.1, III.2)

Does a pattern of meaning emerge from the instances in which each motif occurs?

5. Petruchio's wooing of Katherine is very unconventional both in Elizabethan and contemporary terms. Read II.1, paying attention to the ways in which the two characters describe each other (even satirically). What can you discern about each person's ideal of the opposite sex? Do you think they will be able to make a happy marriage? In what ways do you think they are/are not compatible? Is Petruchio unfair to his wife? Are there ways in which he might improve his own behavior? Compare your vision of their marriage on their tenth anniversary to that of Bianca and Lucentio.
6. If you lived during the Renaissance, would you mind the custom of arranged marriages? List its advantages and disadvantages. Why would it be important to discuss the material possessions you and your intended spouse would bring to the marriage? Would you want to choose your children's spouses? What criteria would you set?
7. There are several master-servant relationships in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Compare the Tranio-Lucentio partnership to the relationship of Grumio or Biondello with Petruchio. Pay particular attention to the way they speak to each other and to what they say about each other. Which do you consider the most effective partnership?