

# THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

by William Shakespeare



PRESTWICK HOUSE LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS



UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

# THE TAMING OF THE SHREW



William Shakespeare



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# STRATEGIES

## Strategies for Understanding Shakespeare's Language

1. When reading verse, note the appropriate phrasing and intonation.

DO NOT PAUSE AT THE END OF A LINE unless there is a mark of punctuation. Shakespearean verse has a rhythm of its own, and once a reader gets used to it, the rhythm becomes very natural to speak in and read. Beginning readers often find it helpful to read a short pause at a comma and a long pause for a period, colon, semicolon, dash, or question mark.

Here's an example from *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene i:

The quality of mercy is not strain'd, (*short pause*)  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: (*long pause*) it is twice blest; (*long pause*)  
It blesseth him that gives, (*short pause*) and him that takes; (*long pause*)  
'Tis mightiest in the mighties; (*long pause*) it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown; (*long pause*)

2. Read from punctuation mark to punctuation mark for meaning.

In addition to helping you read aloud, punctuation marks define units of thought. Try to understand each unit as you read, keeping in mind that periods, colons, semicolons, and question marks signal the end of a thought.

Here's an example from *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act I, Scene i:

LUC. Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move,  
And with her breath she did perfume the air;  
Sacred, and sweet, was all I saw in her.  
TRA. Nay, then, 'tis time to stir him from his trance.  
I pray, awake, sir: if you love the maid,  
Bend thoughts and wits to achieve her.

The first unit of thought is from "Tranio" to "air":

# POINTERS

R E A D I N G P O I N T E R S

## Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

Consider the following as you read *The Taming of the Shrew*:

**Gender Roles**—Some critics have seen this play as a sexist critique of women who were gaining too much power (the ruler of England, of course, was a woman). Others believe that Kate’s final speech is ironic, and that she has found a way to rule her husband while appearing to be ruled.

**Induction, Plot and Subplot**—*The Taming of the Shrew* begins with an *Induction* (a brief prologue).

The play that follows interweaves a main plot—Petruccio’s “taming” of Kate—with a subplot involving the schemes of Bianca’s suitors-turned-tutors. The characters of the Induction do not appear in the play itself.

Try to trace the main and subordinate plots. Where do they branch off, and where do they come together? How does Shakespeare build up to major events in the play, and how does he conclude the action?

Also, look for a thematic connection between the Induction and the main play. It may help you to know that some critics believe part of the play has been lost, and the Induction actually is concluded in Act V; others see the play as complete without a return to the Induction. What do you think?

**Contemporary and Classical Models**—This is one of Shakespeare’s early comedies. It, therefore, takes elements from other authors’ plays. The model for *The Taming of the Shrew* was the Italian farce, itself based on Greek and Roman comedies by authors such as Plautus and Terence. These comedies usually contained common and predictable plot devices and stock characters.

# DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CHRISTOPHER SLY, a beggar  
HOSTESS, PAGE, PLAYERS, HUNTSMEN, and SERVANTS.  
A Lord.

LUCENTIO, son to Vincentio

TRANIO            } servant to Lucentio.

BAPTISTA, a rich gentleman of Padua.

KATHARINA, the shrew    }  
BIANCA                    } daughters to Baptista.

GREMIO            }  
HORTENSIO         } suitors to Bianca.

BIONDELLO         }  
                       } servant to Lucentio.

PETRUCHIO, a gentleman of Verona, a suitor to Katharina.

GRUMIO            }  
CURTIS             } servants to Petruchio.

Servants attending Petruchio

TAILOR  
HABERDASHER

A PEDANT (TEACHER)

VINCENTIO, an old gentleman of Pisa.

WIDOW

SCENE: Padua, and Petruchio's country house.

# INDUCTION

T H E T A M I N G  
O F T H E S H R E W

## INDUCTION

### SCENE I

[Before an alehouse on a heath.]

Enter beggar [Christopher Sly] and Hostess.

SLY: I'll pheeze<sup>1</sup> you, in faith.

HOS: A pair of stocks,<sup>2</sup> you rogue!

SLY: Ye are a baggage:<sup>3</sup> the Slys are no rogues; look in the chronicles;<sup>4</sup> we came in with Richard<sup>5</sup> Conqueror.<sup>†</sup>

5 Therefore paucas<sup>6</sup> pallabris; let the world slide: sessa!<sup>7</sup>

HOS: You will not pay for the glasses you have burst?

SLY: No, not a denier.<sup>8</sup> Go by, St. Jeronimy:<sup>9</sup> go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.

HOS: I know my remedy; I must go fetch the third-borough.<sup>10</sup>

[Exit.]

10 SLY: Third, or fourth, or fifth borough, I'll answer him by law: I'll not budge an inch, boy: let him come, and kindly. Falls asleep.

[Horns winded. Enter a Lord from hunting, with his train.]

LOR: Huntsman, I charge thee, tender<sup>11</sup> well my hounds:

15 Brach<sup>12</sup> Merriman, the poor cur is emboss'd;<sup>13</sup>  
And couple Clowder with the deep-mouth'd brach.<sup>14</sup>  
Saw'st thou not, boy, how Silver made it good  
At the hedge-corner, in the coldest fault<sup>15</sup>?  
I would not lose the dog for twenty pound.

20 HUN: Why, Belman is as good as he, my lord;  
He cried upon it at the merest<sup>16</sup> loss  
And twice to-day pick'd out the dullest scent:  
Trust me, I take him for the better dog.

LOR: Thou art a fool: if Echo were as fleet,  
25 I would esteem him worth a dozen such.  
But sup them well and look unto them all:  
To-morrow I intend to hunt again.

<sup>1</sup>fix

<sup>2</sup>a device for punishment<sup>†</sup>

<sup>3</sup>worthless person

<sup>4</sup>recorded histories

<sup>5</sup>Sly's mistake for William the Conqueror

<sup>6</sup>Sly's version of pocas palabras, Spanish for "few words"

<sup>7</sup>French cessez, "cease"

<sup>8</sup>a French coin of little value

<sup>9</sup>St. Jerome<sup>†</sup>

<sup>10</sup>night policeman

<sup>11</sup>take care of

<sup>12</sup>rest

<sup>13</sup>foaming at the mouth from exhaustion

<sup>14</sup>a female hound

<sup>15</sup>loss of scent

<sup>16</sup>total

<sup>†</sup>Terms marked in the text with (†) can be looked up in the Glossary for additional information.



HUN: I will, my lord.

LOR: What's here? one dead, or drunk? See, doth he  
30 breathe?

2ND HUN: He breathes, my lord. Were he not warm'd with  
ale,

This were a bed but cold to sleep so soundly.

LOR: O monstrous beast! how like a swine he lies!

35 Grim death, how foul and loathsome is thine image!  
Sirs, I will practise on this drunken man.

What think you, if he were convey'd to bed,  
Wrapp'd in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,  
A most delicious banquet by his bed,

40 And brave attendants near him when he wakes,  
Would not the beggar then forget himself?

HUN: Believe me, lord, I think he cannot choose.

2ND HUN: It would seem strange unto him when he waked.

LOR: Even as a flattering dream or worthless fancy.

45 Then take him up and manage well the jest:  
Carry him gently to my fairest chamber  
And hang it round with all my wanton<sup>17</sup> pictures:  
Balm his foul head in warm distilled waters  
And burn sweet wood to make the lodging sweet:

50 Procure me music ready when he wakes,  
To make a dulcet and a heavenly sound;  
And if he chance to speak, be ready straight  
And with a low submissive reverence  
Say 'What is it your honour will command?'

55 Let one attend him with a silver basin  
Full of rose-water and bestrew'd with flowers,  
Another bear the ewer,<sup>18</sup> the third a diaper,<sup>19</sup>  
And say 'Will't please your lordship cool your hands?'  
Some one be ready with a costly suit

60 And ask him what apparel he will wear;  
Another tell him of his hounds and horse,  
And that his lady mourns at his disease:  
Persuade him that he hath been lunatic;  
And when he says he is, say that he dreams,

65 For he is nothing but a mighty lord.  
This do and do it kindly, gentle sirs:  
It will be pastime passing excellent,  
If it be husbanded<sup>20</sup> with modesty.

<sup>17</sup>erotic

<sup>18</sup>pitcher

<sup>19</sup>napkin

<sup>20</sup>handled

HUN: My lord, I warrant you we will play our part,  
70 As he shall think by our true diligence  
He is no less than what we say he is.

LOR: Take him up gently and to bed with him;  
And each one to his office when he wakes.

*Sound trumpets.*

Sirrah, go see what trumpet 'tis that sounds:  
75 Belike, some noble gentleman that means,  
Travelling some journey, to repose him here.

*Enter Servingman.*

How now! who is it?

SER: An't<sup>21</sup> please your honour, players  
That offer service to your lordship.

*[Enter Players.]*

80 LOR: Bid them come near.

Now, fellows, you are welcome.

PLAYERS: We thank your honour.

LOR: Do you intend to stay with me tonight?

2ND PLAYER: So please your lordship to accept our duty.

85 LOR: With all my heart. This fellow I remember,  
Since once he play'd a farmer's eldest son:  
'Twas where you woo'd the gentlewoman so well:  
I have forgot your name; but, sure, that part  
Was aptly fitted and naturally perform'd.

90 A PLAYER: I think 'twas Soto that your honour means.

LOR: 'Tis very true: thou didst it excellent.

Well, you are come to me in happy time;  
The rather for I have some sport in hand  
Wherein your cunning can assist me much.

95 There is a lord will hear you play to-night:  
But I am doubtful of your modesties;  
Lest over-eyeing of his odd behavior,—  
For yet his honour never heard a play—  
You break into some merry passion

100 And so offend him; for I tell you, sirs,  
If you should smile he grows impatient.

A PLAYER: Fear not, my lord: we can contain ourselves,  
Were he the veriest<sup>22</sup> antic<sup>23</sup> in the world.

<sup>21</sup>and it or if it

<sup>22</sup>most absolute

<sup>23</sup>fool

you hear, sir? To leave frivolous circumstances, I pray you, tell Signior Lucentio that his father is come from Pisa, and is here at the door to speak with him.

PED: Thou liest: his father is come from Padua and here  
25 looking out at the window.

VIN: Art thou his father?

PED: Ay, sir; so his mother says, if I may believe her.

PET: Why, how now, gentleman! why, this is flat knavery, to take upon you another man's name.

30 PED: Lay hands on the villain: I believe a' means to cozen somebody in this city under my countenance.

*Enter Biondello.*

BIO: I have seen them in the church together:  
God send 'em good shipping! But who is here? mine  
old master Vincentio! now we are undone and brought  
35 to nothing.

VIN: Come hither, crack-hemp.<sup>2</sup>

BIO: I hope I may choose, sir.

VIN: Come hither, you rogue. What, have you forgot me?

BIO: Forgot you! no, sir: I could not forget you, for I never  
40 saw you before in all my life.

VIN: What, you notorious villain, didst thou never see thy master's father, Vincentio?

BIO: What, my old worshipful old master? yes, marry, sir: see where he looks out of the window.

45 VIN: Is't so, indeed? *He beats Biondello.*

BIO: Help, help, help! here's a madman will murder me.

*[Exit.]*

PED: Help, son! help, Signior Baptista! *[Exit from above.]*

PET: Prithee, Kate, let's stand aside and see the end of this controversy.

*Enter Pedant [below] with servants, Baptista, Tranio.*

50 TRA: Sir, what are you that offer to beat my servant?

VIN: What am I, sir! nay, what are you, sir? O immortal gods! O fine villain! A silken doublet! a velvet hose! a scarlet cloak! and a copatain<sup>3</sup> hat! O, I am undone! I am undone! while I play the good husband at home,  
55 my son and my servant spend all at the university.

<sup>2</sup>gallows-bird; one who should be hanged

<sup>3</sup>high-crowned