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The Taming of the Shrew
BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE


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All references come from the Dover Thrift Edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*, copyright 1997.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Research I****Objective:** Researching the author**Activity**

Many consider William Shakespeare to be the finest playwright in the history of drama. Using the library or the Internet, research the life of Shakespeare and try to identify factors in his life that contributed to his prolific career. Use the information to write a four-paragraph biography of Shakespeare.

The biography should include the following:

- Significant dates in Shakespeare's life
- Facts about Shakespeare's personal life
- Facts about Shakespeare's professional life
- Descriptions of Shakespeare's environment (his time, place, etc.)
- Examples of Shakespeare's most significant works
- People who influenced or inspired Shakespeare's work

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act I**Characterization****Objective:** Recognizing character traits**Activity**

While good drama is certainly classified as literature, readers must remember that plays are intended to be watched—not read. Plays such as *The Taming of the Shrew* contain few, if any, details of the physical appearance or behavior of the characters. Without the guidance of physical descriptions, readers must seek other clues in order to visualize the characters. These clues might materialize in the script, often in the way that characters interact, converse, or observe one another.

Use the chart to evaluate the characters in Act I. On the chart, briefly describe each character and determine whether you think he or she is or will be a major character. When you finish the chart, select the two most similar characters on the chart and write a one-paragraph comparison of them. Next, select the two least similar characters and write another paragraph, but this time, contrast them.

The first character has been completed for you. If there are no clues in Act I to describe a particular character, write *N/A* in the appropriate blank.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act II**Outlining****Objective:** Writing an outline**Activity**

Imagine that you are the marketing director for a popular city theater. To increase revenue, you have decided to offer framed photographs of scenes from the opening production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Audience members will have the opportunity to purchase the photos at the theater gift shop.

The photographs for *The Taming of the Shrew* have been selected, but each scene requires a description. Beginning with Act II, outline each act by scenes. Create an appropriate title for each act and scene, and include at least two details of the events of each scene. The Induction and Act I are completed for you.

Example:

- I. Induction: Sly Becomes a Nobleman
 - A. Scene 1: Sly meets the lord
 - 1. Sly argues with barmaid
 - 2. Sly passes out in front of tavern
 - 3. The Lord abducts Sly
 - B. Scene 2: Sly becomes the lord
 - 1. Sly insists that he is a tinker
 - 2. Sly meets his “lady”
 - 3. The play begins

- II. Act I: The Masquerade Begins
 - A. Scene 1: Baptista seeks a suitor for Katharina
 - 1. Lucentio and Tranio arrive in Padua
 - 2. Lucentio falls in love with Bianca
 - 3. Lucentio plans to charade as a teacher
 - B. Scene 2: Katharina’s suitor arrives
 - 1. Petruchio and Grumio arrive in Padua
 - 2. Hortensio warns Petruchio about Katharina
 - 3. Tranio (disguised), Gremio, and Hortensio agree to
 - a. friendly competition for Bianca

- III. Act II:

Continue the outline as you complete each act.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act III

Letter Writing

Objective: Writing to characters in the play

Activity

Katharina might be the Shrew in *The Taming of the Shrew*, but she certainly not the sole source of conflict in the play.

In Act III, some of the characters erupt into conflict. The same conflicts that help to build suspense in this comedy but have dreadful consequences in some of Shakespeare's other plays. For this exercise, interpret the major events of Act III at face value, and determine which characters require your intervention.

Choose two characters that you believe require attention in Act III. Write letters to both of the characters that will help them to overcome their situational or behavioral problems. Use your knowledge of the characters (from their prior actions, behavior, beliefs, etc.) to ensure that your letters will be effective.

Try to use language that simulates Shakespeare's Elizabethan English.

Example:

A letter to Lucentio, son of Vincentio:

Pray, repeal thy obsession with Baptista's daughter and cast off thy pedant costume; thou art no more a tutor of Latin than I the driver of flying oxen. Forget not what thy man, Tranio, hath said of this investment: "Redeem yourself from captivity as cheaply as possible." If wooing this jewel, Bianca, requires such masquerade, you should give pause to whether her sheen is truly that of an emerald and not a simple stained glass. Desist now, young Lucentio, for each step—each new disguise in this game—marks thy fate. You've now cast the names of two on your venture; give up now, before you wake the vengeance of our hosts.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Theme**

Objective: Identifying themes in drama

Activity

There are two predominant themes in *The Taming of the Shrew*:

- A. What is the relationship between appearance and personal identity?
- B. Marriage is an economic institution.
- C. It is legitimate of manipulate to achieve happiness

Explanation of themes:

- A. The first theme provokes questions about the degree to which physical appearance influences one's personal identity; for example, do the clothes make the man?
- B. The second theme explores the true function of the institution of marriage. To many, marriage has long been a venerated custom, but in the play, marriage appears to be a vehicle for business.
- C. The third theme suggests that the manipulation of others is, perhaps, a necessary step to obtain happiness.

One side of the chart lists the three major themes. The other side of the theme chart contains a list quotations that support the themes. Complete the chart by identifying the theme supported by each entry and writing an A, B, or C next to each quote.

The first three examples are completed for you. Follow this activity up by finding some examples of each theme and put them in the correct place in the blank chart that follows.