**Table of Contents**

Preface ................................................................. 3
Art That Lives ......................................................... 4
Bard’s Bio .............................................................. 4
The First Folio .......................................................... 6
Shakespeare’s England ................................................ 6
The Renaissance Theater ............................................ 7
Courtyard-style Theater ............................................. 9
Timelines ..................................................................... 11

**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE’S THE TAMING OF THE SHREW**

Dramatis Personae .................................................. 13
The Story ................................................................. 13
Who’s Who .................................................................. 14
Act-by-Act Synopsis .................................................. 15
A Scholar’s Perspective: Frances E. Dolan .................... 17
A Scholar’s Perspective: Wendy Doniger ....................... 19
To Have and to Hold .................................................... 20
Something Borrowed, Something New ......................... 21
What the Critics Say ................................................... 22

**A PLAY COMES TO LIFE**

A Look Back at *The Taming of the Shrew* in Performance ... 30
What’s in a Frame? ..................................................... 34
A Conversation with Director Josie Rourke ..................... 35
When Shakespeare Gets “Ugly” ..................................... 39
Who Is Neil LaBute? ................................................... 40

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

Theater Warm-Ups ................................................... 42
Before You Read the Play .......................................... 46
As You Read the Play ................................................. 48
After Reading the Play ................................................. 56
Preparing for the Performance You’ll See ....................... 59
Back in the Classroom ................................................. 59
Techno Shakespeare .................................................. 61
Suggested Readings ................................................... 64

Cover illustrations: Original renderings by Scenic and Costume Designer Lucy Osborne for CST’s 2010 production of *The Taming of the Shrew*

**Acknowledgments**

This Teacher Handbook grew out of a team effort of teachers past and present, Chicago Shakespeare Theater artists, educators, interns and scholars, past and present. Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully acknowledges the work of Dr. Rex Gibson and the Cambridge School Shakespeare Series, and The Folger Shakespeare Institute, whose contributions to the field of teaching have helped shape our own ideas through the years.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater is Chicago’s professional theater dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. Founded as Shakespeare Repertory in 1986, the company moved to its seven-story home on Navy Pier in 1999. In its Elizabethan-style courtyard theater, 500 seats on three levels wrap around a deep thrust stage—with only nine rows separating the farthest seat from the stage. Chicago Shakespeare also features a flexible 180-seat black box studio theater, a Teacher Resource Center, and a Shakespeare specialty bookstall.


Chicago Shakespeare Theater was the 2008 recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award. Chicago’s Jeff Awards year after year have honored the Theater, including repeated awards for Best Production and Best Director, the two highest honors in Chicago theater.

Since Chicago Shakespeare’s founding, its programming for young audiences has been an essential element in the realization of its mission. Team Shakespeare supports education in our schools, where Shakespeare is part of every required curriculum. As a theater within a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to a young and ethnically diverse audience of nearly 50,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare’s programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of mainstage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year for student and family audiences. Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools.

The 2009–10 Season offers a student matinee series for Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s productions of Shakespeare’s *Richard III* in the fall and *The Taming of the Shrew* in the spring, as well as Noël Coward’s *Private Lives* this winter. Also this winter, Chicago Shakespeare presents especially for students a 75-minute abridged adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*, at its theater on Navy Pier and on tour to schools and theaters across the region.

We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare’s creative genius brought to life on stage.

Marilyn J. Halperin, Director of Education
Andie Thomalla, Education Outreach Manager
Rachel Hillmer, Education Associate
Ashley Hall, Education Intern

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Part of the problem, if it is a problem, is that many modern readers do not want Shakespeare to hold, or to have held, views that are socially or politically incompatible with their own; this is “our Shakespeare”…

—Marjorie Garber, 2004

The Taming of the Shrew is William Shakespeare, the entertainer, at his theatrical best. It’s also Shakespeare at his most controversial, as we rediscover his story and the people who inhabit it from a twenty-first century perspective.

This early comedy shows the young playwright as a lover both of words and the artifice of performance. The sheer power of language and a fascination with the craft and creativity of theater will be brought to life for a contemporary audience in Chicago Shakespeare’s production.

Comedy creates a world where things seem to be something other than what they are—a world of disguises, role-playing and “supposes.” We see in it people at play, and watching them, we’re invited to take another look at ourselves.

The Taming of the Shrew has received support from a competitive grant opportunity administered by the National Endowment for the Arts, using funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

Original renderings by Scenic and Costume Designer Lucy Osborne for CST’s 2010 production of The Taming of the Shrew
Drama is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and together experience a play. Ancient cave paintings depict men disguised as animals. Since ancient times, impersonation and imitation have served man in his effort to express himself and to communicate his experience. The drama of western civilization has its roots in the ancient Greeks’ religious rituals and observances. Until the Renaissance, when Shakespeare wrote, drama was closely tied to religious beliefs and practice.

Drama not only depicts human communication, it is human communication. In theater, unlike television or film, there is a two-way communication that occurs between the actors and their audience. The audience hears and sees the actors, and the actors hear and see the audience. We are used to thinking about the actors’ roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing an important role in this living art. Because the art lives, each production is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience’s response. Live drama is the sharing of human experience, intensely and immediately, in the theater, which momentarily becomes our world.

A live theater production depends upon its audience. The best performances depend upon the best actors—and the best audiences. When the actors sense a responsive, interested audience, their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest, they, too, are distracted, and the play they create is less interesting.

The experience of live performance is of a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller in the experience of live theater. We hope you’ll enjoy your role—and help us give you a dramatic experience that you’ll always remember.

[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely-knit group, make it easy for the performance to ‘take you out of yourself.’ This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play…to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday. —Tyrone Guthrie, 1962

**Bard’s Bio**

Some have raised doubts whether Shakespeare, with his average education and humble origins, possibly could have written what has long been considered the best verse drama composed in the English language. Was this man “Shakespeare” a mere decoy for the true author who, for his (or her) own reasons could not reveal his (or her…) true identity—someone, at least, who could boast of a university education, a noble upbringing, and experience in the world outside England’s borders? There are worldwide
societies, eminent actors, as well as a few scholars who insist upon the existence of a “Shakespeare conspiracy.” But not until 1769, 150 years after Shakespeare’s death, did these theories arise. To all appearances, Shakespeare’s contemporaries and immediate successors never seemed to question whether William Shakespeare wrote the celebrated works attributed to him.

The exact day of William Shakespeare’s birth is not known, but his baptism, traditionally conducted three days after a child’s birth, was recorded on April 26, 1564 and consequently, his birthday is celebrated on April 23.

His father John Shakespeare was a tanner, glover, grain dealer and town official of the thriving market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother Mary Arden was the daughter of a prosperous, educated farmer. Though the records are lost, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended Stratford’s grammar school, where he would have acquired some knowledge of Latin and Greek and the classical writers. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

At 18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. They had one daughter Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare’s only son, died at age 11. From 1585, the year in which the twins were baptized, until 1592, when he is first referred to as a dramatist in London, we know nothing of Shakespeare’s life. Consequently, these seven years are filled with legend and conjecture, and we do not know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of theater. The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright appears in 1592 and was made by Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, who attacked Shakespeare as an “upstart crow” for presuming to write plays (when he was a mere actor) and copying the works of established dramatists.

Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and playwright, but also a partner in a new theater company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, which soon became one of London’s two principal companies. The company’s name changed to the King’s Men in 1603 with the accession of James I, and it endured until the Puritans closed the theaters in 1642. From 1599 the company acted primarily at the Globe playhouse, in which Shakespeare held a one-tenth interest.

During his career of approximately 20 years, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated in what most scholars now agree upon as 38 plays. His earliest plays, including Love’s Labor’s Lost, The Comedy of Errors, Richard III, King John and The Taming of the Shrew, were written between 1589 and 1594. Between 1594 and 1599, Shakespeare wrote both Romeo and Juliet and Julius Caesar as well as other plays, including Richard II, The Merchant of Venice, and As You Like It. His great tragedies, Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, and Macbeth, were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last play traditionally categorized as comedy, Measure for Measure. The earlier histories, comedies and tragedies made way for Shakespeare’s final dramatic form—the so-called “Romances,” which were written between 1606 and 1611 and include Cymbeline, Pericles, The Winter’s Tale, and The Tempest. These were the works of a playwright no longer bound in any way by the constraints of historical and tragic conventions.

Although single volumes of approximately half his plays were published in Shakespeare’s lifetime, there is no evidence that he oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death, that 36 of his plays were published in the First Folio. Dramatic scripts were only just beginning to be considered “literature” as we understand it today, and so it is not at all surprising that so little attention was given to Shakespeare’s plays in published form until seven years after his death. However, we do know that Shakespeare oversaw the publication of three of his narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets.

By 1592, Shakespeare had emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright and part-owner of London’s leading theater company. After nearly 20 years in the theater, in 1611 he retired to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare was the man, who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.

—John Dryden, 1688
Chicago Shakespeare Theater utilizes the First Folio as its script and acting “blueprint.” The First Folio serves as the most authentic and effective manual available to Shakespearean actors nearly 400 years after its publication. Its punctuation gives clues to our actors about what words to emphasize and about which ideas are important. In Shakespeare’s own theater company, with only a few days at most to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential. Today, they can still help actors make the language much easier to understand—even though you’re hearing language that’s 400 years younger than ours.

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, not for publication. In Shakespeare’s day, plays were not considered literature at all. When a play was published—if it was published at all—it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a “quarto,” the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperbacks. It was not until 1616, the year of Shakespeare’s death, when a contemporary of his, dramatist Ben Jonson, published his own plays in an oversized book called a “folio,” that plays were viewed as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was chided as bold and arrogant for his venture.

Shakespeare, unlike Jonson, showed absolutely no interest or involvement in the publication of his plays, and during Shakespeare’s own lifetime, only half of his plays were ever printed—and those quartos. It was only after the playwright’s death when two of Shakespeare’s close colleagues decided to ignore tradition and gather his plays for publication. In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death, the First Folio, a book containing 36 of his 38 plays, was published. The First Folio was compiled from stage prompt books, the playwright’s handwritten manuscripts, various versions of some of the plays already published—and from the memory of his actors. Its large format (much like a modern atlas) was traditionally reserved for the “authority” of religious and classical works.

Shakespeare’s First Folio took five “compositors” two and one-half years to print. The compositors manually set each individual letter of type by first memorizing the text line by line. There was no editor overseeing the printing, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected but, due to the prohibitively high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the First Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, each slightly different. Chicago’s Newberry Library contains a First Folio in its rich collections (and it can be viewed in small groups by appointment).

A key to understanding Shakespeare’s language is to appreciate the attitude toward speech accepted by him and his contemporaries. Speech was traditionally and piously regarded as God’s final and consummate gift to man. Speech was thus to Elizabethans a source of enormous power for good or ill… Hence the struggle to excel in eloquent utterance.

—David Bevington, 1980

Elizabeth I ruled England for 45 years from 1558 to 1603 in a time of relative prosperity and peace. “Few monarchs,” says Shakespearean scholar David Bevington, “have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp on it so permanently.” The daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child—and an illegitimate monarch. The politics of religion constantly threatened Elizabeth’s reign, even though it was one of the most secure that England had known for hundreds of years. Religious conflict during the Tudors’ reign pervaded every aspect of English life—particularly its politics.

Elizabeth had no heir, and throughout her reign the politics of succession posed a real threat to the nation’s peace—and provided a recurrent subject of Shakespeare’s plays. While Shakespeare was writing Julius Caesar, the Earl of Essex, one of the Queen’s favorite courtiers, rebelled against her government. Shakespeare’s
..
change history. Burbage skirted rigid restrictions governing entertainment in London by placing his theater just outside the city walls, in a community with the unglamorous name of “Shoreditch.” The name reflected the position of his theater, on the shore of the Thames River and just beyond the ditch created by the walls of London.

Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council by setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including London’s brothels and bear-baiting arenas. Actors in Shakespeare’s day were legally given the status of “vagabonds.” They were considered little better than common criminals—unless they could secure the patronage of a nobleman or, better still, the monarch.

Shakespeare and his fellow actors managed to secure both. They became popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth’s court as the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and continued to enjoy court patronage after King James came to the throne in 1603, when they became the King’s Men. Their success at court gave Shakespeare and his fellow shareholders in the Lord Chamberlain’s company the funds to build the Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city’s jurisdiction as the first public theaters in England.

Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching traveling acting troupes temporarily transform the courtyard of an inn or town square into a theater. When he was a boy growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon, acting troupes traveled around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, storage for props and costumes, and as stage. Their horses pulled the cart into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college. People gathered around to watch, some leaning over the rails from the balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

Many of these traveling performances staged religious stories, enacting important scenes from the Bible—the form of theater that endured throughout the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, the enacted stories became more secular. Public officials scorned the theater as immoral and frivolous. The theaters just outside London’s walls came to be feared as places where physical, moral and social corruption were spread. They were frequently shut down by the authorities during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the city was menaced by the plague or by political and social rioting. Even when the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word in a new play. The show could not go on until he gave his permission.

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers. A full house in the Globe numbered about 3,000 people. Though the same dimensions as the original structure, the reconstruction of the Globe holds 1,500 at maximum capacity—an indication of just how close those 3,000 people must have been to one another. They arrived well before the play began to meet friends, drink ale and snack on the refreshments sold at the plays. An outing to the theater might take half the day. It was more like tailgating at a football game, or going with friends to a rock concert than our experience of attending theater today.

Affluent patrons paid two to three pence or more for gallery seats (like the two levels of balcony seating at Chicago Shakespeare Theater) while the “common folk”—shopkeepers and artisans—stood for a penny, about a day’s wages for a skilled worker. They were diverse and demanding group, and Shakespeare depicted characters and situations to appeal to every level of this cross-section of Renaissance society. The vitality and financial success of the Elizabethan theater is without equal in English history.

There was no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. A throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during
the action since Elizabethan plays were written to be performed without scene breaks or intermissions. When the stage directions for *Macbeth* indicate that “a banquet is prepared,” the stage keepers prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare’s plays were performed primarily in “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare’s time—regardless of their historical setting. The actors wore the same clothes on the stage as their contemporaries wore on the street. Hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy provided the elegant costumes for the play’s royalty.

Most new plays were short runs and seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows but, due to the number of ongoing and upcoming productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a few days.

It was not until 1660 that women would be permitted to act on the English stage. Female roles were performed by boys or young men. Elaborate Elizabethan and Jacobean dresses disguised a man’s shape and the young actors were readily accepted as “women” by the audience.

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**Courtyard-Style Theater**

David Taylor of Theatre Projects Consultants has devoted a great deal of energy and imagination to the question of what kind of space is best suited to presenting Shakespeare’s plays. Taylor, who worked as one of the primary consultants on the design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater, feels that this unique performance space reflects elements of both the Globe playhouse and the courtyards-turned-theaters, in which the young Shakespeare might first have acquired his love of the stage.

The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599, was simple and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area with three galleries, one above the other. Both theaters use a thrust stage with an open performance area upstage; basically, the entire performance space is in the shape of a capital “T.” The audience sits on three sides of the thrust stage, so the play is staged in the middle of the audience—much like the Elizabethan Swan Theater’s design, for which a traveler’s careful sketch still remains. This immersion of the stage and the action performed on it creates a three-dimensional theater that demands three-dimensional directing, acting, and design elements.

The people sitting in the side seats have the closest interaction with the performers, and the performers with them. The play unfolds between the audience members seated along the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform. “The backdrop and the scenery for Shakespeare is the human race,” Taylor notes, “so we’re putting Shakespeare into its proper context by making human faces the backdrop for those sitting in any seat in the theater.”

“This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience,” according to Taylor. “The courtyard experience was about leaning out of windows. It was about throwing
open the windows in the courtyard when the stage was brought through on a cart and leaning out and interacting.” Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the “leaning rails” to watch the players below—like those watching from an inn’s balconies centuries ago when a traveling troupe set up its temporary stage.

The actors and the audience share the experience of seeing and interacting with one another. Taylor thinks that actors benefit tremendously from the courtyard design: “They’re not looking at people sitting in straight rows, disconnected from everybody around them in big seats. There’s a sense of community in the space, a sense of embracing the performer on stage.” Actors are always “fed” by the energy generated from their audience. The design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater offers a feast of feedback to the actors on its stage.

As an audience member, your facial expressions and body language serve both as the focal point of the actors’ energy and the backdrop for the other audience members seated across from you. “It’s important that we don’t lose the performer among the faces, but it’s essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what’s going on,” Taylor reflects. “That’s the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design.”

Speaking of his experience directing on a similarly designed stage in Stratford, Ontario, Tyrone Guthrie once said: “Theatrical performance is a form of ritual; the audience is not asked to subscribe to an illusion but to participate in the ritual… The attraction for me of the ‘open stage’ as opposed to the proscenium is primarily this: that it stresses the ritual as opposed to the illusionary quality of performance.”

Other theaters have been modeled upon the Elizabethan experience of courtyard theater, perhaps most notably the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan served as a model for Chicago Shakespeare Theater. With their deep thrust stages, both were designed to create an intimate relationship between actors and audience. Prominent architectural elements in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience and natural wood that creates a feeling of warmth. Brick is an aesthetic choice, but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustical choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls help diffuse sound, sending it in different directions throughout the theater. The sound, lighting and rigging systems are all state-of-the-art. Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s design accommodates a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space.

Shakespearean theater is about people. As Taylor concludes, “You’re the scenery. You’re the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front of, and out of, you.”
**World History**

### 1300
- 1326: Founding of universities at Oxford and Cambridge
- 1348: Boccaccio's *Decameron*
- 1349: Bubonic Plague kills one-third of England's population
- 1387: Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

### 1400
- ca.1440: Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press
- 1472: Dante's *Divine Comedy* first printed
- 1492: Christopher Columbus lands at Cuba
- 1497: Vasco da Gama sails around Cape of Good Hope

### 1500
- 1501-4: Michelangelo's *David* sculpture
- 1503: Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
- 1512: Copernicus' *Commentariolus* published, theorizing that Earth and other planets revolve around sun
- 1518: License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorenz de Gomionzot
- 1519: Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world
- 1519: Conquest of Mexico by Cortez
- 1522: Luther's translation of the New Testament

### 1525
- 1531: Henry VIII recognized as Supreme Head of the Church of England
- 1533: Henry VIII secretly marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated by Pope
- 1539: Hernando de Soto explores Florida
- 1540: G.L. de Cardenas “discovers” Grand Canyon
- 1541: Hernando de Soto “discovers” the Mississippi

### 1550
- 1558: Coronation of Queen Elizabeth I
- 1562: John Hawkins begins slave trade between Guinea and West Indies
- 1564: Birth of William Shakespeare and Galileo
- 1565: Pencils first manufactured in England
- 1570: Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth
- 1573: Francis Drake sees the Pacific Ocean

### Shakespeare’s Plays

**Comedies**
- Love’s Labor’s Lost
- The Comedy of Errors
- The Two Gentlemen of Verona
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- The Taming of the Shrew

**Histories**
- 1, 2, 3 Henry VI
- Richard III
- King John

**Tragedies**
- Titus Andronicus
- Romeo and Juliet

**Sonnets**
- probably written in this period

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1588</td>
<td>Destruction of the Spanish Armada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1592</td>
<td>Shakespeare listed with the Lord Chamberlain’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1593-4</td>
<td>Plague closes London playhouses for 20 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1595</td>
<td>Coat of arms granted to Shakespeare’s father, John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1596</td>
<td>Death of son Hamnet, age 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1597</td>
<td>Shakespeare, one of London’s most successful playwrights, buys New Place, one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Globe Theatre opens, as home to the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, with Shakespeare as part-owner</td>
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**1600**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Shakespeare, one of London’s most successful playwrights, buys New Place, one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon</td>
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<tr>
<td>1602</td>
<td>Oxford University’s Bodleian Library opens</td>
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<tr>
<td>1603</td>
<td>Death of Queen Elizabeth, coronation of James I; Lord Chamberlain’s Men become the King’s Men upon endorsement of James I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1603-11</td>
<td>Plague closes London playhouses for at least 68 months (nearly 6 years)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Cervantes’ <em>Don Quixote Part 1</em> published</td>
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<tr>
<td>1607</td>
<td>Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall; Founding of Jamestown, Virginia, first English settlement on American mainland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1608</td>
<td>A true relation of such Occurances and Accidents of Note as hath passed in Virginia by John Smith</td>
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<tr>
<td>1609</td>
<td>Galileo constructs astronomical telescope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>Blackfriars Theatre, London’s first commercial indoor theater, becomes winter home of the King’s Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>The Authorized “King James Version” of the Bible published</td>
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<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>Globe Theatre destroyed by fire</td>
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<tr>
<td>1614</td>
<td>Globe Theatre rebuilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1615</td>
<td>Galileo faces the Inquisition for the first time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1616</td>
<td>Judith Shakespeare marries Thomas Quinney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1618</td>
<td>Copernican system condemned by Roman Catholic Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1619</td>
<td>First African slaves arrive in Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1623</td>
<td>The First Folio, the first compiled text of Shakespeare’s complete works published</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ca. 1596-1600**

**COMEDIES**
- The Merchant of Venice
- Much Ado About Nothing
- The Merry Wives of Windsor
- As You Like It
- Twelfth Night

**HISTORIES**
- Richard II
- 1, 2 Henry IV
- Henry V

**TRAGEDIES**
- Julius Caesar

**ca. 1601-1609**

**COMEDIES**
- Troilus and Cressida
- All’s Well That Ends Well

**TRAGEDIES**
- Hamlet
- Othello
- King Lear
- Macbeth
- Antony and Cleopatra
- Timon of Athens
- Coriolanus
- Measure for Measure

**ca. 1609-1615**

**ROMANCES**
- Pericles
- Cymbeline
- The Winter’s Tale
- The Tempest
- The Two Noble Kinsmen

**HISTORIES**
- Henry VIII
Shakespeare's Dramatis Personae

A Lord*, who tricks Christopher Sly
Christopher Sly*, a drunken tinker who awakens to find himself a “nobleman”
Petruchio, an adventurer from Verona, looking to “wife it wealthily in Padua”
Grumio, Petruchio’s servant
Curtis, another of Petruchio’s servant
Katharina, the unruly “shrew”
Bianca, her younger sister
Baptista Minola, a wealthy merchant of Padua, father to Katharina and Bianca
Hortensio, one of Bianca’s suitors, and friend to Petruchio
Lucentio, one of Bianca’s suitors
Vincentio, Lucentio’s father
Gremio, an elderly suitor to Bianca
Tranio, Lucentio’s servant
Biondello, another servant to Lucentio

*The Christopher Sly induction is not included in CST’s upcoming production

Neil Labute’s Frame

Stage Manager
Director
Actress (playing Kate), long-time partner of female director
Jasmine (playing Bianca), actress to whom “Kate” is attracted
The Company of Actors, Technicians

The Story

The Induction (cut in CST’s production)

At a country inn, the local lord stumbles upon a drunken tinker named Christopher Sly, and decides to play a joke on him. Sly is led to believe that he is a nobleman, who, fallen ill, has only imagined himself to be a poor drunkard all these years. For the “nobleman’s” entertainment, a comedy will be performed by a troupe of traveling players. And here begins the story of this play-within-a-play…

The Frame

A company of actors, in the midst of “tech” rehearsal, prepares for a production of Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew, soon to open. The Director and the actress playing Kate have been partners, personally and professionally, for years. The Director confronts “Kate’s” promiscuous behavior with the actress playing the role of Bianca. The two women argue about the nature of their partnership and their two, very different interpretations of commitment. As they rehearse, members of the cast react to the issues that Shakespeare’s play evokes in a twenty-first century context.

The Taming of the Shrew

In Padua, Italy, a wealthy merchant named Baptista is resolved: his lovely daughter Bianca will not be wed until her elder sister, Katharina “the curs’d,” is married off. The field of frustrated suitors for Bianca’s hand is crowded already with local gentlemen like Hortensio and Gremio when Lucentio arrives in town to pursue his studies. Like the others before him, he is driven to leave all learning behind after taking one look at Baptista’s younger daughter. To gain access to Baptista’s treasure, Hortensio dons the robes of a music teacher, while Lucentio disguises himself as a tutor, passing off his own identity to his servant Tranio. Just when it seems as though Bianca will never be free to wed, another suitor comes to town. His name is Petruchio—an adventurer undaunted by danger, and one determined to shore up his financial future through marriage. Katharina will fit the bill.

After a sudden and stormy courtship, Petruchio manages to escort his “Kate” down the aisle, and sets out to tame his new wife. By outbidding Gremio, Tranio manages to convince Baptista that he (that is, his master Lucentio) is
the man for Bianca. When Baptista requires assurance from
the young man’s father, a suitable imposter is found to play
the part, and still another disguise baffles Baptista—not to
mention Lucentio’s real father, who arrives in Padua at just
the wrong moment. In the end, true identities are revealed,
three marriages are celebrated, and a wager is placed as the
newlyweds roll the dice on married life.

**Shakespeare’s Who’s Who**

**PETRUCHIO** is a gentleman of Verona (and a self-
admitted fortune hunter) who, following his father’s death,
comes to “wive it wealthily in Padua.” What he is *not seeking*
is love, so he is quite surprised when that is exactly what he
finds. He meets his match in Katharina, the feisty daughter
of Baptist Minola, and Petruchio understands that the
spirit underlyng her temper is a force to reckon with, but an
asset as well. He has brilliant instincts and tries to become
Katharina’s teacher, and the instrument of dramatic change
in her. His methods are unconventional and harsh as he
mirrors Katharina’s own behaviors.

**KATHARINA** (nicknamed “Kate” by Petruchio) is the
elder—and headstrong—daughter of Baptista. Without
a mother, and living in a family where the younger,
more demure sister is the clear favorite of her father,
Katharina is quite alone. She is renowned throughout the
community for her bad temper, and seems doomed to a
life of spinsterhood. Unlike her sister Bianca, Katharina
has not learned to play games, and her honesty and
verbal fluency frighten prospective suitors. But when
Petruchio arrives on the scene and is attracted to the
same traits that have deterred others, Katharina comes
to see herself mirrored in his wild behavior; she gains
self-understanding, the capacity to trust and love, and she
is freed from her own defensive attitude.

**BIANCA** is the younger daughter of Baptista and her
father’s spoiled favorite, admired by all for her “beauteous
modesty.” She is the desired object of many suitors but
is prevented from marriage until her elder sister is wed.
Because of their father’s favoritism, Bianca is often
the victim of Katharina’s rage. But Bianca’s demure
submission is no more an indication of her true character
than bad temper is of Katharina’s. The *coy femme* is a role
Bianca knows well how to play and her admirers are quite
taken in by the disguise that Bianca quickly discards once a
husband is secured.

**BAPTISTA** is a wealthy merchant and widower of
Padua who is quite overwhelmed by his household of
daughters. He favors the younger Bianca because she is
easier to manage than the elder, headstrong Katharina.
Although he expresses concern for his daughters’
feelings, Baptista is a traditionalist, and approaches the
matter of their marriages as a business intended to join
together families and amass fortunes.

**GREMIO,** the elderly suitor of Bianca and a wealthy
merchant of Padua, is a stock comic character, “the
Pantaloon,” from the Italian comedy tradition of
Commedia dell’Arte. He is old, greedy and silly, and
his efforts to win Bianca are entirely ludicrous and
ineffective. It is he, in fact, who introduces to her the
disguised Lucentio, the handsome young suitor who
steals her from Gremio and her other pursuers.

**LUCENTIO** is a young and eager scholar who comes to
Padua to attend university. He is an idealist: first in love with
the pursuit of knowledge and then, quite smitten by Bianca
at first sight, with the pursuit of love. Attracted by Bianca’s
well-studied modesty (and by his own idealized image of
women), Lucentio goes to great lengths to win Bianca’s
heart by disguising himself as a tutor to Bianca. Lucentio
elopes with Bianca still knowing very little about her, and
realizes after their marriage that the object of his love has been wearing her own subtle disguise. Their courtship is cut out of the cloth of romantic tradition, in contrast to the unconventional courtship of Petruchio and Katharina.

**Act-by-Act Synopsis**

**The Induction** (cut frequently in production, including CST’s upcoming performances)

Christopher Sly, a tinker, is found drunk and unconscious at a Warwickshire inn by the local lord. For his own amusement, the lord decides to convince Sly that he is not a poor tinker, but rather a nobleman who has fallen ill and forgotten his true identity. A troupe of traveling players arrives and is put to use: to perform a play for “the nobleman’s” entertainment. When Sly awakes from his drunken stupor at the lord’s manor house, he is clothed in finery and surrounded by attendants and his “wife,” a servant of the lord. Sly is more inclined to enjoy his wife than the play, but is warned that sex will prompt a relapse into illness. The players are announced and Sly prepares to watch.

**Act I**

Baptista Minola, a rich merchant of Padua, has two daughters: Katharina, the elder, is notorious far and wide for her “devilish spirit,” while her younger sister Bianca is greatly desired for her “beauteous modesty.” As the play-within-a-play opens, Lucentio, an enthusiastic young scholar, has just arrived in town with his servant Tranio to attend university. The two watch as Baptista tells Hortensio and Gremio, both eager suitors of Bianca, that his younger daughter cannot marry before a match is found for Katharina. Though the suitors believe this to be an impossible feat, they agree to Baptista’s terms so each can continue to pursue the lovely Bianca.

Watching the family scene play out in front of him, Lucentio falls in love at first sight with Bianca. Tranio suggest that the two of them exchange clothes so that Lucentio, presenting himself as a tutor for Bianca named “Cambio,” can gain access to Baptista’s terms so each can continue to pursue the lovely Bianca.

Meanwhile, Petruchio, a worldly and self-admitted fortune hunter, arrives in Padua on the heels of his father’s death to repair his fortune—seeking a bride with a substantial dowry. His friend Hortensio has faint hopes that Petruchio may be the answer to the Katharina problem that stands in the way of Bianca. He tells Petruchio about Katharina, but warns him of her shrewish ways, but Petruchio is resolved: he will marry Katharina and secure a fortune. Hortensio now disguises himself as a music teacher named “Litio,” and offers his services to the Minola family. Tranio, dressed as his master Lucentio, becomes yet another suitor to Bianca in disguise. As “Lucentio,” he intends to secure an agreement with her father while the real Lucentio (as “Cambio,” the tutor), wins Bianca’s love.

**Act II**

The exasperated Baptista intervenes as Bianca once more suffers her sister’s abuse. Baptista shows his favoritism for Bianca, and Katharina responds with hurt and more verbal abuse. Petruchio, Hortensio (disguised as “Litio”), Gremio and Lucentio (disguised as “Cambio”) all arrive at the same moment to the home of Baptista. Without ceremony, Petruchio introduces himself as a suitor to Katharina. Gremio presents “Cambio” (Lucentio) as a tutor for the girls; and “Litio” (Hortensio) offers himself as a music teacher. Tranio, dressed as his master Lucentio, arrives and declares himself another suitor to Bianca. Petruchio says that he has no time to lose and hastens a marriage agreement with Baptista before he ever sets eyes upon his intended. Baptista agrees conditionally: Petruchio, he says, must first win Katharina’s affection. Hortensio returns to report that the broken instrument he now wears over his head is the work of his unruly new pupil, Katharina. Petruchio prepares himself to meet her…

Katharina appears and Petruchio immediately adopts a familiar tone, addressing her as “Kate,” and lavishly and unconvincingly complimenting her. She responds with a violent tongue-lashing, but Petruchio is undaunted; Katharina has at last met her verbal match. Petruchio concludes their first meeting by proclaiming that their wedding day is set for Sunday, and Baptista returns to consecrate the match.
With Katharina’s marriage all arranged, Bianca becomes available. Gremio and “Lucentio” (that is, Tranio) bid for Bianca’s hand by demonstrating their comparative wealth to Baptista. Tranio outbids Gremio by exaggerating the fortune of “his” father, Vincentio. Baptista agrees to the match with Lucentio—provided the young man can present his father to vouch for the agreement. Tranio plans to recruit an elderly stand-in.

**Act III**

Lucentio (as “Cambio”) and Hortensio (as “Litio”) vie for their pretty pupil’s attention. Through the Latin lesson, Lucentio reveals his true identity to Bianca, who does not discourage his advances. Hortensio pronounces his love, too, to a dismissive Bianca.

Sunday arrives, and Petruchio arrives so late to his wedding that everyone, including Katharina, is sure he has stood her up. When at last he makes his appearance, he is dressed so outrageously that Baptista and Tranio plead with him to change his clothes before the ceremony. He refuses, determined that Kate will marry him for who he is rather than for the clothes he wears. Gremio describes the ceremony and Petruchio’s antics, which occur off stage. The wedded couple and their party return from church, but Petruchio insists that he and his bride depart immediately before their wedding banquet. Furious, Kate resists, but is carried off against her will to Petruchio’s country house.

**Act IV**

Grumio arrives at Petruchio’s country house ahead of the couple, and to the other servants reports his master’s outrageous behavior throughout the journey home. Katharina arrives mud-soaked, hungry and cold. Ordering dinner for his exhausted bride, Petruchio then does not allow her to eat. They retire to bed, where he continues to rant and rave, and deprives her of much-needed sleep. Petruchio confides his plan to “tame” Kate, and admits his own uncertainty.

Back in Padua, Hortensio witnesses the attention Bianca pays toward Lucentio, and angrily ends his pursuit, vowing to marry a rich widow instead. Tranio, encountering a stranger on the road traveling to Padua, fabricates a story of imminent danger and offers the traveler safe disguise—as Lucentio’s father, Vincentio—who can now assure Baptista that the marriage terms that his “son” has promised are binding.

Meanwhile, at Petruchio’s home, the education of Katharina continues. He offers her beautiful garments to wear to her father’s home, then takes back his gifts, asserting that Katharina will have gentlewoman’s clothes when she becomes a gentlewoman. The couple’s journey back to Padua is halted each time that Katharina crosses her husband. The lesson learned at last, she proves her obedience by agreeing with her husband that the sun is indeed the moon and that the old man they meet along the way (as it turns out, Lucentio’s real father) is, in fact, a young maiden.

Tranio introduces his shill to Baptista, and the marriage between Lucentio and Bianca is settled. Lucentio’s other servant, Biondello, meanwhile, encourages his master to elope with Bianca while her father is otherwise occupied.
ACT V

The real Vincentio arrives in Padua to visit his son, and finds an imposter pretending to be him and his own servant, Tranio, pretending to be his son. Vincentio fears foul play. But the Paduans, believing the imposters, doubt Vincentio’s identity and are about to cart the old man off to jail, just when the real Lucentio appears with his new bride. Both fathers are amazed, but Vincentio promises Baptista satisfaction of the terms of the marriage agreement made with an imposter.

All retire for a wedding feast honoring the marriages of Baptista’s two daughters and of Hortensio to his rich widow. The ladies withdraw and the husbands place a wager on whose wife will prove the most obedient. Petruchio wins. He then asks Kate to tell the other women of their wifely duties. She does so, much to everyone’s amazement—and Petruchio’s pleasure.

Whenever I see a production of The Taming of the Shrew I cannot wait to see how the director and actors have chosen to handle several key moments in which the text leaves us guessing. It’s not hard to figure out why Katharine (whom I so call because she says imperiously that “they call me Katharine that do talk of me”) might prefer marriage to staying at home with her father and playing second fiddle to her annoyingly popular little sister, Bianca. It’s also fairly obvious why she might prefer Petruchio’s swaggering, intimate confrontation to the way that everyone else in the play shrinks from her. But despite the fact that Katharine seems to be bursting with emotion and opinions, despite the fact that she is criticized for talking too much, she falls silent when I, for one, long to hear what she has to say.

When Petruchio reports to her father on his success in wooing Katharine and their plans to marry, she says she’ll see him hanged rather than marry him. But as he goes on to insist on her love for him, and to explain the bargain they have struck, she says nothing. I’ve seen productions in which he holds her hand over her mouth, productions in which she’s too busy biting him to talk, productions in which she simpers in complicity, and productions in which she’s dazed and muzzled by her own desire. In the Zeffirelli movie version of 1967, Richard Burton as Petruchio literally locks Elizabeth Taylor (who was, of course, his off-screen wife) into a closet while he went on speaking the lines of the text; the camera then lingers on Katharine’s thoughtful face as the scene ends. The text leaves all of these options open.

In an earlier play whose relation to Shakespeare’s Shrew has been much debated, A Pleasant Conceited Historie, called The Taming of a Shrew (1594), she says in an aside “But yet I will consent and marry him, / For I methinks have lived
to long a maid.” When the eighteenth-century actor-manager David Garrick adapted the play as *Catharine and Petruchio* (the version most often performed throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century) he assigned his Catharine her own agenda: “I’ll marry my revenge, but I will tame him.” That other versions of this story supply Katharine with a covert gameplan makes it all the more noticeable that Shakespeare’s play does not.

**Despite the fact that Katharine seems to be bursting with emotion and opinions, she falls silent when I, for one, long to hear what she has to say.**

While many Shakespearean comedies end in weddings, *Shrew* edges into darker territory by placing its wedding in the middle of the play, thus leaving us several acts in which to explore the unsettling fact that marriage is not a happy ending as much as it is an uncertain beginning. After Petruchio has refused to attend the wedding feast and Katharine has defied him, she has no lines during his closing remarks and their departure. Petruchio’s lines provide what amount to stage directions for Katharine: “Nay, look not big, nor stamp, nor stare, nor fret; / I will be master of what is mine own.” But what is she thinking?

Finally, Shakespeare’s Katharine never has a speech in which she explains her decision to submit to Petruchio or her attitude toward that decision. However Garrick gives Catharine a soliloquy at the end of Act I.

*Look to your seat, Petruchio, or I throw you.*
*Catharine shall tame this haggard [wild hawk];—or if she fails,*
*Shall tie her tongue up, and pare down her nails.*

The 1929 film directed by Sam Taylor, starring real-life wife and husband Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, lifts these lines from Garrick, and thereby fills a gap in the text by giving Katharine her own scheme to try for mastery but submit to Petruchio if he can best her. Taylor’s film also elaborates on the stage tradition of having Petruchio carry a bull whip, a tradition that seems to have begun in the eighteenth century, by having Mary Pickford crack her own rival whip. In this film, Petruchio and Katharine achieve a curious kind of equality as they face off, whip to whip.

According to the minimal stage directions in early editions of the play, Katharine initiates physical violence by, among other things, tying her sister up and hitting her and “striking” Petruchio. Performance and editorial traditions have tended to exaggerate Petruchio’s violence, adding actions that are not made explicit in Shakespeare’s First Folio, which leaves us free to imagine a Petruchio who is routinely violent or one who, in collusion with his servants, stages his violence to taming effect. Whatever his means, Petruchio’s end is clear. It is hard to watch the play without reflection on the very idea of taming. The goal of taming a spouse assumes that spousal equality leads to endless conflict as each spouse strives for dominance. Husband and wife can only achieve peace when one emerges victorious—and the other knuckles under. This is a strikingly violent and pessimistic vision of equality!

Whether we see Petruchio as the triumphant tamer, or Katharine as a sly tamer who gets her way by acting the part of the proper wife, the play’s conclusion suggests that both spouses win when one is on top. The battle of the sexes can only be resolved when husband and wife decide which one that will be. Whichever one we think triumphs or tames at the end of *Shrew*, the question remains: why does there have to be one tamer and one tamed? (This, by the way, is what makes Coward’s *Private Lives* such a remarkable contribution to the long battle of the sexes tradition. One spouse never tames the other. Coward wryly suggests that to be perfectly matched is to be in a perpetual, passionate duel, lustily breaking things over one another’s heads.)

For me, the most satisfying production of Shakespeare’s *Shrew* is one that does not try to resolve its ambiguities. I think that most of Shakespeare’s comedies are “problem” plays in the best sense, in that they draw us into interesting, irresolvable conundrums and leave us with loose ends and reservations.

By the end, Katharine has learned not to hit or contradict her husband. But her rewards for good behavior include a chance to lord it over the other women. Triumphing over others in the game of *So You Think You’ve Tamed Your
Shrew?, this couple offers us a funny, sexy and somewhat scary picture of what it might look like to find a mate and stand together against the world. The ending leaves the question open of what marital “peace and love and quiet life” cost and who pays that price. My nagging doubts pull me into the theater to see Shrew yet again and keep me on the edge of my seat wondering how that supposedly happy ending will make me feel this time.

Contemporary audiences who would rather not burn The Taming of the Shrew at the feminist stake must go beneath its apparent assumptions to unearth the romance of Kate and Petruchio. The play does indeed present what we would call gender stereotypes (guilty as charged), but it goes on to challenge them, play with them, make fun of them, and use them in a comedy of courtship. And male as well as female stereotypes are at stake: the talk is of taming, but the action is more properly the transformation of a woman who cannot love a man into one who can, and the simultaneous transformation of a man who is sexually stymied by a brilliant woman into one who finds that very brilliance exciting.

Kate and Petruchio do not take false names, as most of the other characters in the play do, but they masquerade in more serious ways, cutting down through their public personae, their gendered positions in the world, to find out who they really are. They must find their private love within the frame of their public hate. As the play progresses, Kate pretends that she does not love Petruchio, when she does; and he counters by pretending that she does love him, which is ultimately the truth, when he thinks he is lying. Peeling off the construction of their separate selves in other people’s eyes, they reconstruct one another in their mutual gaze.

When they meet, both have found marriage to be corrupted by money. Kate sees that her father is trying to sell off his two daughters in marriage; and Petruchio is trying to sell himself as little better than a gigolo, a fortune-hunter marrying only for money. Kate’s response to her mercenary father is a shrewish hatred of men, and Petruchio’s reaction to his own self-mocking shame is a disregard for the qualities of women. Each must tame the other. He must help her to find out what she is really like, what she can be in the care of a better man than her father; and she must make an honest man of him by making his initial lies about his love for her, and hers for him, come true.

To effect this double transformation, each becomes the other; they play one another’s roles, changing places, until at the end they can take off one another’s masks to find that they have lost their own. She acts the part of the loving, submissive spouse that he, at first, merely pretends to be, and he acts the part of the male equivalent of a shrew, a domineering partner, as she at first appears to be. This is a kind of play within the play: Kate in the role of Petruchio, Petruchio as Kate. More than pretending, they are playing, trying it on for size. The outer layer, the sparring layer of antagonism, never vanishes, but another, inner layer of love emerges.

FROM A SCHOLAR’S PERSPECTIVE:
THE SHREW TAMES, TOO

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Contemporary audiences who would rather not burn The Taming of the Shrew at the feminist stake must go beneath its apparent assumptions to unearth the romance of Kate and Petruchio.
Their exchange of roles involves a gender switch. Grumio asserts that, “Petruchio is Kated.” Kated in the literal sense of being married by Kate, but also Kated in the sense of being made like Kate, more precisely like what Kate seems to be, making a woman of himself: a shrew, Kate. Kate must also become Petruchio-like in a crucial way: she must want him sexually, as he wants her. At the start, she does not; she is a man-hater. She changes her clothes from the black of a sexless woman to the colors of an awakened woman, but on her this gay apparel appears almost like transvestite drag, for there is not yet a sensual heart beating within it. And so he will not allow her to wear it, remarking, in jest but also very much to the point, “tis the mind that makes the body rich.” Even at the end, he admits that she is “ashamed to kiss.” He must awaken her from her dream of bitter celibacy.

In fact, there is a sexual stalemate, or perhaps a gridlock: she won’t kiss him, but he won’t bed her. Their reasons are different: she is loath to give up her freedom to a man, and he is afraid of climbing into bed with her until he has awakened her to him. It is Petruchio, not Kate, who postpones the actual consummation of the marriage, ostensibly to starve her out just as he denies her the pleasures of food, pretty clothes, and sleep, reversing Lysistrata’s theme of the sexual strike of women against men. Only after her last, notorious, feminist-inciting speech of submission, when he for the last time asks her, “Kiss me, Kate,” do they kiss, wordless at last. And only then does he say, “Come, Kate, we’ll to bed.”

\textbf{To Have and to Hold: The Elizabethans and Their Bonds of Marriage}\textit{ }

During the Tudor period of Queen Elizabeth’s reign when audiences first watched The Taming of the Shrew, long-held traditions and social values were very much in a state of flux. For centuries, the marriage contract was exactly that: a financial agreement by two parties (the parents or guardians of the bride and groom) that constituted a “merger,” not unlike corporate mergers of today. Such a contract was based upon movement of property and the resulting power that accompanied the new combined wealth of two families. The trading of goods between the two parties was not, however, symmetrical. The bride’s dowry was transferred to the groom, who administered it. His parents provided financial backing to the new “merger,” too, but it remained under the husband’s care and did not pass to the woman or her family.

Modern audiences might be disturbed by Baptista’s auctioning of his younger daughter to the highest bidder, but his methods were customary, and were meant to assure the financial future of his daughter—and his own heirs. But with the Renaissance and its more exalted view of the individual, “property” marriage was challenged by “companionate” marriage—that is, a bond of marriage based upon the free choice of two individuals. But the unfixing of any long-held belief comes slowly, and with much public debate and social anxiety. Elizabethan society—and its literature—reflected this unsettling of tradition and the contradictions that existed side by side in a culture in flux.

\textbf{For centuries, the marriage contract was a financial agreement that constituted a “merger,” not unlike corporate mergers of today.}\textit{ }

The ambiguity apparent in The Taming of the Shrew (“Is Kate sincere in her speech of obedience?” “Does Shakespeare believe in two partners equally matched?”) reflects a time of social transition in Early Modern England with its contrasting images of marriage: its nostalgia for the old order on the one hand, versus a growing awareness of the individual, his passions and emotions on the other. It is quite possible to imagine a William Shakespeare who set out not to endorse a particular dogma via his Shrew, but rather, one who understood the anxieties of his Elizabethan audience, as diverse ideologically as it was socially.
SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING NEW

Shakespeare spun his intricate web of plot and subplot in *The Taming of the Shrew* from threads of old stories—and a brilliant imagination. No specific source for the Kate/Petruchio plot is known, though stories of shrewish wives and husbands’ efforts to tame them have existed in folklore since the Christian mystery plays (when Mrs. Noah refused to heed her husband’s bidding to board his ark). Chaucer’s Wife of Bath was a shrew well known to Shakespeare and his Elizabethan audiences.

For many years, scholars looked at an anonymous play published in 1594, titled *The Taming of a Shrew*, as Shakespeare’s primary source. “A Shrew” is similar to Shakespeare’s *The Shrew* in plot, but not in language. In recent years, however, scholars have taken another look at this anonymous play and agree that, because of its intricacies, it could not be the work of any known contemporary of Shakespeare. Instead, “A Shrew” has come to be viewed as a poor rendering of Shakespeare’s own play, transcribed from an actor or rival director’s memory of a staged production of Shakespeare’s own play. Such transcriptions (“memorial reconstructions”) were common in a day when plays were not typically published or sold until a theater company viewed their popularity waning. The few handwritten copies were held closely by the acting company as precious collateral.

Plays were not looked upon as “literature” at all in the way that we view them today. Instead, a play to the Elizabethans was an active—and ever-changing—form of entertainment. It is quite likely that with each production of his plays, Shakespeare the writer/director/actor changed them, and, in certain cases (*King Lear* being the prime example) more than one text considered to be authentically Shakespeare still exists. Theater was an ongoing act of cultural creation, and its words were heard, not read. If this more recent theory is true, then Shakespeare’s play was probably written before 1592, when *A Shrew* was first compiled. The many references in the play to Shakespeare’s native Warwickshire suggest that perhaps he wrote this early comedy soon after he arrived in London from his home in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1588 or 1589.

The Bianca subplot of *The Taming of the Shrew* also appears in “A Shrew,” though altered. This, too, was a well-known story to Shakespeare’s audiences and was based upon a popular play entitled *Supposes*, first performed in London in 1566 and published in 1573. Its author, George Gascoigne, based his play on a popular Italian drama. Both these earlier works portray male suitors who adopt disguises and false behaviors (“supposes”) to pursue a beautiful but unavailable young woman.

But it is in the weaving of the two plots—the taming of Kate and the wooing of Bianca—that Shakespeare’s creative genius discovered new ground in this early play. To these he added yet a third story—the “lording” of Christopher Sly that frames the play-within-a-play and announces its themes before we ever meet the main characters. It is Shakespeare who takes these very different stories and traditions and creates his own themes, their separate worlds now as one.

Why did he use others’ stories so freely? In the Renaissance, stories did not “belong” to an individual. There were no copyright laws and material was borrowed freely. But more important was the fact that stories were meant to be told and retold—as they had been for centuries and centuries before. Because so few people were yet literate (the printing press was invented only a century before Shakespeare’s lifetime) much of the history and the tales that people knew were communicated in speech, and passed from one generation to another. Stories belonged, in a sense, to a common pool for all to reach into and create their own story. Creativity was based not upon new stories but on new tellings and re-workings of the old stories.
What the Critics Say

1500s

God hath given to the man great wit, bigger strength, and more courage to compell the woman to obey by reason or force: and to the woman, beauty, a faire countenance, and sweete wordes to make the man to obey her againe for love. Thus each obeyeth and commandeth other, and they two together rule the house. —Thomas Smith, 1583

1700s

Catharines harangue to her sister and the widow on the Duty of Wives to their Husbands, if the ladies wou'd read it with a little regard, might be of mighty use in this age. —Charles Gildon, 1710

The part between Catharine and Petruchio is eminently spritely and diverting. At the marriage of Bianca the arrival of the real father, perhaps, produces more perplexity than pleasure. The whole play is very popular and diverting. —Samuel Johnson, 1765

It has been observed that the most haughty tyrants become, on a reverse of fortune, the most abject slaves; and this from a like principle, in both cases; that they are apt to impute the same spirit of despotism to the conqueror, they were before impress with themselves; and consequently, are brought to tremble at the apprehension of their own vice. —Elizabeth Griffith, 1775

Catharine takes an occasion...of reproving another married woman in an admirable speech; wherein the description of a wayward wife, with the duty and submission which ought to be shewn to a husband, are finely set forth. —Elizabeth Griffith, 1775

1800s

The Taming of the Shrew is almost the only one of Shakespeare’s comedies that has a regular plot, and downright moral. It is full of bustle, animation, and rapidity of action. It shews admirably bow self-will is only to be got the better of by stronger will, and how one degree of ridiculous perversity is only to be driven out by another greater still. —August Wilhelm Schlegel, 1811

The situation of poor Katherine, worn out by [Petruchio's] incessant persecutions, becomes at last almost as pitiable as it is ludicrous, and it is difficult to say which to admire most, the unaccountableness of his actions, or the unalterableness of his resolutions. —August Wilhelm Schlegel, 1811

For the actress of Katharine, the wooing scene is the difficult point; for the actor of Petruchio, the course of the taming. The latter might appear wholly as an exaggerated caricature: but he who is capable of giving it the right humour will impart to this extravagance something of the modesty of nature. —G.G. Gervinus, 1849

It might be suspected that ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ was not altogether the work of Shakespeare’s hand. The secondary intrigues and minor incidents were of little interest to the poet. But in the buoyant force of Petruchio’s character, in his subduing tempest of high spirits, and in the person of the foiled revoltress against the law of sex, who carries into her wifely loyalty the same energy which she had shown in her virgin savagerie [wildness], there were elements of human character in which the imagination of the poet took delight. —Edward Dowden, 1881

Unfortunately, Shakspear’s own immaturity...made it impossible for him to keep the play on the realistic plane to the end; and 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 feeling extremely ashamed of the lord-of-creation moral implied in the wager and the speech put into the woman’s own mouth. —George Bernard Shaw, 1897
The doctrine of the equality of the sexes, as an ethical principle, would not have meant very much to an
Elizabethan. And [Ben Jonson's] saying that Shakespeare ‘was not of an age, but for all time’ is about as true
as many another mortuary phrase. Like every other vital writer, he is instinct with the spirit of his age, and vital
largely because he is instinct with it; and without the historic sense, his ethical standpoint is in many respects
incomprehensible to those who come after him.

—E.K. Chambers, 1905

The Merchant of Venice and The Taming of the Shrew, although Heminges and Condell classed them
both as comedies, belong to wholly different dramatic types... The Taming of the Shrew is not a drama of
the emotions at all. It is a comedy, or more strictly a farce, in the true sense. It approaches its theme, the eternal
theme of the duel of sexes, neither from the ethical standpoint of the Elizabethan pulpit nor from that of the
Pioneer Club. It does not approach it from an ethical standpoint at all, but merely from that of the humorous
dispassionate observation.

—E.K. Chambers, 1905

The trouble about The Shrew is that, although it reads rather ill in the library, it goes well on the stage.

—Arthur Quiller-Couch, 1928

To call The Shrew a masterpiece is not only to bend criticism into sycophancy and a fawning upon
Shakespeare’s name. It does worse. Accepted, it sinks our standard of judgment, levels it, and by leveling
forbids our understanding of how a great genius operates; how consummate it can be at its best, how flagrantly
bad at its worst.

—Arthur Quiller-Couch, 1928

The Taming of the Shrew has comparatively few images, but, rather the contrary to what we should expect,
a high proportion—nearly one half—of poetical ones, counterbalancing the farce and roughness of the play, which
touches of beauty. These are largely due to Petruchio, who uses close on one half of all the images in the play (40
out of 92), for he is a young man of keen perceptions, and observation of nature, and, when he chooses, he speaks
with a poet’s tongue.

—Caroline F. E. Spurgeon, 1935

The trouble here is that Shakespeare over-reached himself—a noble error to which he was always prone—and
that (as later with Shylock [in The Merchant of Venice]) humanity is always disconcertingly breaking in.
Farce is no place for the depiction of human beings as they are in the round, only for types and embodied foibles
and the grotesque features of the clown; nature must be thrown out with a pitchfork, and the window barred for
the duration of the play.

—M. R. Ridley, 1937

Our secret occupation as we watch The Taming of the Shrew consists of noting the stages by which both
Petruchio and Katherine—both of them, for in spite of everything the business is mutual—surrender to the fact
of their affection. Shakespeare has done this not by violating his form, not by forgetting at any point to write
farce, and least of all by characterizing his couple. He has left them man and woman, figures for whom we can
substitute ourselves, and that is precisely what we do.

—Mark Van Doren, 1939

The Taming of the Shrew belongs in its major plot to a... popular type of comedy of which there are traces
in Shakespeare’s early work, comedy for the popular rather than for the courtly portion of his audience. The
major plot is a refined treatment of the old farcical theme of the taming of the curst wife, but it is a mistake to
conceive of the play in purely farcical terms. Petruchio is no wife-beater... He is a gentle, clever man of the world,
a profound humorist and the best of actors.

—Hardin Craig, 1948
While a large part of the action concerns match-making and marriage, it is plain that the predominating conception of marriage is Roman (and sixteenth-century). Marriage is primarily an economic and social institution, and love has little to do with it.

—E. C. Pettet, 1949

No less than Milton, Shakespeare accepts the natural subordination of woman to man in the state of marriage. Patience and obedience are the watchwords.

—Donald A. Stauffer, 1949

**Marriage is primarily an economic and social institution, and love has little to do with it.** —E. C. Pettet, 1949

It is not until [Petruchio] positively declares that the sun is the moon that the joke breaks upon her in its full fantasy, and it is then that she wins her first and final victory by showing she has a sense of fun as extravagant as his own, and is able to go beyond him... After that, victory is all hers, and like most human wives that are the superiors of their husbands she can afford to allow him mastery in public. She has secured what her sister Bianca can never have, a happy marriage.

—Nevil Coghill, 1950

The defense technique of shrewishness was no final solution of her troubles. It was too negative. Yet she had adopted it so long that it seemed to have become second nature to her. It is this which Petruchio is determined to break in her, not her spirit.

—Nevil Coghill, 1950

The play ends with the prospect that Kate is going to be more nearly the tamer than the tamed, Petruchio more nearly the tamed than the tamer, though his wife naturally will keep the true situation under cover... This interpretation has the advantage of bringing the play into line with all other Comedies in which Shakespeare gives a distinct edge to his heroine. Otherwise it is an unaccountable exception and regresses to the wholly un-Shakespearean doctrine of male superiority, a view which there is not the slightest evidence elsewhere Shakespeare ever held.

—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

The psychology of the Katherine-Petruchio plot is remarkably realistic. It is even ‘modern’ in its psychoanalytical implications. It is based on the familiar situation of the favorite child. Baptista is the family tyrant and Bianca is his favorite daughter. She has to the casual eye all the outer markings of modesty and sweetness, but to a discerning one all the inner marks of a spoiled pet.

—Harold C. Goddard, 1951

Though in marriage the dominant woman threatens proper ordering of a household, in courtship the woman enjoys a superior position. Courtship is not, then, very good training for marriage. Women who take seriously such lavish expressions of praise and worship as sonnet lovers heap upon them will not take easily to the altered marital situation.

—M. C. Bradbrook, 1958

The Induction clearly aims at providing the main comic plot a setting which at once limits it, isolating it from normal reality, and serves in some measure to comment upon it. Compared with Sly’s mixture of boorishness and ignorance, all the characters of the main action in Padua are creatures of the stage, instruments of theatrical illusion; and this, perhaps, is worth remembering.

—Derek Traversi, 1960
Against the spirit of much of its story, The Taming of the Shrew emerges as a civilizing effort on Shakespeare's part, one not essentially out of line with the spirit of his later comedies, which tend always to enhance human relationships, to provide for them a foundation of tenderness and mutual respect.

—Derek Traversi, 1960

There can be no question about the justice of his tactics, if measured by the end product, for he enables her first to see herself as others see her, and then, her potentiality for humor and self-criticism having been brought out, she is able to discover in herself those qualities he is so sure she possesses.

—Maynard Mack, 1962

It is well to remember that in the First Folio edition of The Shrew there is no mention at all of an ‘induction’ and that editors…have disregarded the Folio and have labeled the first two scenes of the play as ‘The Induction.’ To the editors of the first surviving edition of The Shrew, then, the prominence of an outer frame may have seemed less important to the play proper and the Sly material itself may have appeared as more intimately a part of the whole play.

—Cecil C. Seronsy, 1963

Along with The Comedy of Errors and The Merry Wives of Windsor, [The Shrew] has been classified as a farce and largely neglected. It does not fit in with the view that Shakespearean comedy is essentially romantic; it offers, or seems to offer, little encouragement to those who see characters and its development as the central interest in his writing; it can hardly be described as ‘lyrical;’ it even casts some doubt on the validity of the epithet ‘gentle’ as applied to its author.

—George R. Hibbard, 1964

The Shrew is a play about marriage, and about marriage in Elizabethan England. The point needs to be stressed, because its obvious affiliations with Latin comedy and with Italian comedy can easily obscure its concern with what were, when it was first produced, topical and urgent issues in this country, coming home to men’s business and women’s bosoms in the literal sense of both words…There is, in fact, nothing inherently farcical in the initial situation out of which The Shrew develops; it reflects life as it was lived.

—George R. Hibbard, 1964

What happens gradually in the course of the play is that Bianca and Lucentio become more and more realistic, and the Kate-Petruchio relationship moves further and further from reality. Eventually the two lines cross; at the end of the play Bianca is talking back to her husband like an ordinary realistic housewife, scolding him for laying a wager on her docility, and Kate makes a speech urging all women to submit to their husbands.

—Sears Jayne, 1966

To see either of these love relations as Shakespeare’s view of marriage we must conclude that he saw the most vital of all human relations either as the act of buying an animal or as the act of beating one into submission. But the real key to Shakespeare’s moral commentary on marriage may perhaps be found in the third story. The Christopher Sly induction is absolutely essential to The Taming of the Shrew because it furnishes the frame of reference in which the other two plots are to be seen, and in this perspective the wooing of Kate is as absurd as the wooing of Bianca. We do not have, as some suppose, a presentation of two views of marriage, the one finally to be judged more valid than the other; we have the holding up to ridicule of two views of marriage, and as the Petruchio-Kate relation receives the greater dramatic emphasis, it is the one found most wanting.

—Irving Ribner, 1967

The subject of the play, the breaking of the spirit of a woman or man who had an evil disposition, was evidently a popular one during the last quarter of the century and is really, in the words of Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, ‘as old as the hills.’

—W. B. Thorne, 1968

Petruchio, with his rags, demonstrates that roles on the stage of the world, like the clothing any person wears, may be used to disguise or to reveal a person’s true character.

—Richard Henze, 1970
The kernel of the play is, if one likes, a fairly brutal sex farce; the formula of man taming woman is one to agitate primitively the minds of all audiences. But the play contains also a subtle account of two intelligent people arriving at a modus vivendi.

—Ralph Berry, 1972

It would be simplistic to regard [Katharina’s] statement of total passivity at its face value, and as a prognosis. The open end of The Taming of the Shrew is Katharina’s mind, undisclosed in soliloquy. And so it is appropriate that the play should end on a faint, but ominous, question mark.

—Ralph Berry, 1972

If Petruchio’s conquest of Kate is a kind of mating dance with appropriate strutting and biceps-flexing, she in turn is a healthy female animal who wants a male strong enough to protect her, deflower her, and sire vigorous offspring... The animal imagery in which the play abounds is a prime reason for its disfavor with the critics, who find such terms degrading to Kate and to the concept of matrimony.

—Michael West, 1974

Petruchio, Katharina and the Lord have a special vision, an awareness of life as a play or a game, that gives them a power to control not only their own lives but other people’s.

—Alexander Leggatt, 1974

Criticism has generally misconstrued the issue of the play as women’s rights, whereas what the audience delightedly responds to are sexual rights.

—Michael West, 1974

The waking of Sly, to find himself provided with fresh garments, attendance, a new wife and a whole new identity, seems like a parody-in-advance of the waking of Lear. It is a dramatic moment of a kind that will continue to fascinate Shakespeare throughout his career, as a character poised on the brink of some unimaginable joy or horror, with his old sense of the normal crumbling, gropes to re-establish some kind of certainty.

—Alexander Leggatt, 1974

Petruchio, Katharina and the Lord have a special vision, an awareness of life as a play or a game, that gives them a power to control not only their own lives but other people’s. They have a sense of convention, and therefore a power to manipulate convention, to create experiences rather than have experiences forced upon them.

—Alexander Leggatt, 1974

The Shrew dramatizes the traditional Horatian view that the function of comedy is both to please and to instruct, achieving these ends not by directly imitating reality, but by creating exaggerated and distorted images of life which show Sly how wonderful the world could be and show Kate how terrible it could become.

—J. Denniss Huston, 1976

At the end of the Middle Ages and in early modern Europe, the relation of the wife—to her husband was especially useful for expressing the relation of all subordinates to their superiors... In the little world of the family, with its conspicuous tension between intimacy and power, the large matters of political and social order could find ready symbolization.

—Natalie Zemon Davis, 1977

This uneasy mixture of romance and farce suggests that Shakespeare’s own sense of purpose is unclear, that he is discovering possibilities of one kind of comic structure while working within the demands of another.

—John C. Bean, 1980
Kate’s shrewishness stands for the dark, obdurate elements in civilized mankind, for which rods are peeled and prisons erected. The taming also suggests the means by which a father’s own experience of being tamed is passed on to his children. Whatever revenge he could not take upon his father are inflicted upon his children as the fittest objects, being as weak as he once was, and as much in need of curbing.

—Katherine A. Sirluck, 1991

Bianca’s rebellion is perhaps the most optimistic sign the play affords us. Even the Good Child, in her new role as wife, calls such an exhibition of obedience ‘a foolish duty,’ and refuses to submit. We can see where Lucentio learned to require submission, and we can guess that Bianca has learned defiance from her sister. But Kate herself is a living sacrifice to the pedagogy of patriarchal rule that holds her culture in thrall.

—Katherine A. Sirluck, 1991

The Taming of the Shrew appears to tame the critic more than the shrew. Its ability to contain us is vividly evidenced both in its onstage containment of an audience and in its success in engaging critics in debate. Whether Kate is a shrew or merely a misunderstood young woman, whether Petruchio is a bully or a philosopher, whether the play upholds or undermines degree, is farce or philosophical comedy, should be staged with or without its Induction—all are matters of heated debate in Shakespearean scholarship.

—Barbara Freedman, 1991

Looked at with sober late-twentieth century eyes, this is a story in which one human being starves and brainwashes another, with the full approval of the community. Cruelty can be funny—it is the basis of the “practical joke”—as long as one is on the dominant side, and no lasting damage is done to the victim. The Taming of the Shrew argues that the cruel treatment is for the victim’s good, to enable her to become a compliant member of patriarchal society.

—Penny Gay, 1994

Power is indeed in Katherine’s hands when she commands the centre of the playing-space. Three leading actors who have recently played the role comment that Katherine’s ‘submission’ speech is the scene of her, and their, greatest theatrical power—’the play lands back in Kate’s hands. It’s her play at the end.’ So while there is no doubt that Katherine is subjected to power, it is also true that she wields an irreducible force of her own.

—Paul Yachnin, 1996

The pre-Shakespearean theatre tended to favour the production of allegorical meaning in relation to which the characters in plays such as Castle of Perseverance or Everyman represent a virtue or a vice or a certain state of becoming in a Christian narrative. Against this background, Shakespeare’s drama is remarkable for its elaboration of particularized characters, a new emphasis signaled, as Andrew Gurr suggests, by the emergence in 1599-1600 of the word ‘personation.’

—Paul Yachnin, 1996

The Induction invites the audience of 1592 to decipher an anti-play that is an Elizabethan subversion of the conventional shrew-taming story. But the Induction likewise cannily predicts the play’s reproduction and reception four hundred years after its original performance: in our own time, under feminist scrutiny, the ‘pleasant comedy’ announced by the Messenger in the Induction (authorized to call it a comedy, one supposes, by the players themselves) has increasingly been seen as a ‘kind of history,’ an intervention in and interrogation of women’s history, and not at all innocent of politics.

—Carol Rutter, 1997

There is Machiavellian real-politik in [Katherine’s final] speech (and a shrewd perception of husband-management); when one couples the nature of that insight of Katherine’s with the energy and relish of its delivery, it is difficult to see how an ironical reading can be resisted. And when Katherine offers to place her hand beneath Petruchio’s foot, the humiliation is complete—Petruchio’s, not Katherine’s. As Frances Dolan points out, this part of the wedding ritual had been officially prohibited for some forty years before the first production of The Shrew. It is a devastating final blow; Petruchio is sufficiently disconcerted, for the only time in the play, to have nothing to say, beyond a feeble ‘There’s a wench!’ with the offer of a kiss.

—Peter F. Heaney, 1998
When one plays Petruchio there are, I think, roads that it is important not to go down. The text seems to say that you can be as cruel as you like, but if you really start putting on the pressure, being really cruel—for which you have the language and the structure of the speeches to support you—it becomes simply too dark and bleak.

—Michael Siberry, 1998

Katharina is freed from habitual shrewishness by Petruchio’s unrelenting travesty of such waywardness—a robust mode of farcical comedy which is tolerable because Petruchio is clearly acting a part, because he imposes the same privations on himself as on her, and because his underlying delight in her buried self becomes clear.

—John Creaser, 2002

Kate is much more complex, much more layered, much more reminiscent of the later women of Shakespeare than anyone else in the play. I also think it’s important that she, too, has a plan.

—I. David H. Bell, 2002

I think these are two people fated to be together and they recognize it instantly. They are always inches away from falling madly in love and it is only Petruchio’s strategy that thwarts it. In his mind the shrew will be tamed by love rather than by abuse. I think it’s important that she not be a victim, that she not simply surrender to what’s happening to her.

—I. David H. Bell, 2002

Feminists’ long-standing obsession with The Taming of the Shrew might have been brought swiftly to an end if only they had known that John Fletcher had already relied to Shakespeare himself on their behalf. What is more, some 350 years ago the two plays used to be presented in a smug double bill—a dialectical take on the equality of sexes, whereby Petruchio eventually gets his comeuppance.

—Duska Radosavljevic, 2003

There is no longer a question of “taming”; this is a marriage, one consummated in couplets as well as quips. Attention now shifts to the unresolved elements of the love plot, and thus to the story of Bianca, who has been joined by a nameless (but wealthy) widow, the new bride of Bianca’s failed suitor Hortensio. And here we encounter the second reversal. For it is suddenly far from clear who is the real “shrew” of the play’s title—and even who is appointed to do the “taming.”

—Marjorie Garber, 2004

Part of the problem, if it is a problem, is that many modern readers do not want Shakespeare to hold, or to have held, views that are socially or politically incompatible with their own; this is “our Shakespeare”… Evidence in the plays of “antifeminism” or of a hierarchical social model in which husbands rule and control their wives is not the evidence many contemporary appreciators would prefer to find.

—Marjorie Garber, 2004

Katherine in The Shrew is the most obvious Shakespeare example of an abused woman. Although New Criticism may interpret Petruchio’s contradictions…as a game, a loving tease with the positive psychological aim of behavior modification, in the twenty-first century it is difficult to find the subjugation of a woman a suitable subject for comic treatment.

—Laurie E. Maguire, 2004

If Romeo and Juliet find selfhood to be independent of name, Katherine displays her selfhood by insisting on retaining her name.

—Laurie E. Maguire, 2004

What Katherine actually declares to the other wives is on par with arguments put forward by sixteenth-century Protestant reformers, who held that marriage should be a union of like-minded belief, not domestic tyranny.

—Andrew Dickson, 2005
Part of the problem, if it is a problem, is that many modern readers do not want Shakespeare to hold, or to have held, views that are socially or politically incompatible with their own; this is “our Shakespeare.” —Marjorie Garber, 2004

Beginning with The Taming of the Shrew, Shakespeare uses hawking metaphors to suggest that a husband tame his baggard like wife as a falconer would his bird.

—Sean Benson, 2006

On one hand, [The Taming of the Shrew] is a classic “battle of the sexes” comedy, a romantic fantasy in which true love tempers the most combative of pairs. On the other, it is an assault on assertive women, a misogynist fantasy in which the “hero” starves and mentally tortures his wife into submission.

—Ben Fisler, 2007

Rather than condemning Katharina’s violence or self-assertion entirely, Petruchio redirects her claims to mastery away from him. The two remain equals with regard to their desire to domineer over their own servants and the outside world. Katharina recognizes only Petruchio as her superior. In a fairytale logic, then, Petruchio seems to get a wife who is a sheep with him and a shrew to servants and other women.

—Fran Dolan, 2008

We might imagine a Petruchio who is routinely violent or one who, in collusion with his servants, stages his own volatility to taming effect. But there is no question that the violence the text describes and implies is directed largely at Petruchio’s subordinates. While it is “not aimed at Kate,” she responds as if she is under threat.

—Fran Dolan, 2008

TO BE CONTINUED...
A Look Back at “The Taming of the Shrew” in Performance

Though readers and scholars never lost sight of Shakespeare’s text since it was first published in the first Folio in 1623 (at least 30 years after it was first seen on stage), the stage history of The Taming of the Shrew has been less faithful to Shakespeare’s script. Shakespeare’s play was popular at least into the 1630s when it was printed again as a separate “quarto”—the equivalent of our paperback. John Fletcher, Shakespeare’s successor as the resident playwright for the King’s Men, offered a sequel to Shrew that he called The Woman’s Prize or the Tamer Tamed, in which Petruchio suffers “taming” by his second wife, Maria, who uses sexual denial to challenge his views of marriage. Between 1663 when Shakespeare’s version of The Taming of the Shrew last appeared on London’s stage as an “old revival,” and 1844, when it was finally restaged in its original, Shakespeare’s text disappeared in performance for 181 years. Its story, however, remained popular and was borrowed and adapted frequently by other playwrights.

In 1663, following the restoration of the monarchy and the reopening of London’s theaters—and a failed revival of A Midsummer Night’s Dream—the King’s Company made a final attempt to produce a Shakespearean comedy, using an adaptation of Shrew written by an actor named John Lacy. Renamed Sauny the Scot and set in London, this adaptation excluded the Christopher Sly Induction, and portrayed Grumio as a stereotypical Restoration Scotsman. Fifty-three years later in 1716, Charles Johnson produced a farcical version, The Cobbler of Preston, in which Christopher Sly would become the hero of this tale.

David Garrick, the famous actor and director of London’s Drury Lane, returned to an abbreviated version of Shakespeare in his Catherine and Petruchio, first produced in 1754. Garrick’s play, eliminating Christopher Sly, Bianca, and her suitors completely, remained popular for more than a century, serving as a “star piece” for famous lead actors. An opera written in 1828 was based on Garrick’s rendition of the story rather than Shakespeare’s—by then long silenced. It was not until Benjamin Webster revived Shakespeare’s text in 1844 that The Taming of the Shrew reclaimed its place in live performance—but still it competed against Garrick’s adaptation for the next 40 years.

Here in the United States, the play has evolved its own unique history. The Taming of the Shrew was the first Shakespearean film with sound to be made in America. It starred Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford—the leading couple in 1929. In 1930 the famous husband-wife acting duo, Alfred Lunt and Lynne Fontanne, toured The Taming of the Shrew throughout the United States. The production included a clown band, dwarves and acrobatics. It is commonly held stage lore that the offstage relationship of this famous thespian couple, as witnessed by stagehand-turned-producer Saint Subber, was the inspiration for the Cole Porter musical Kiss Me, Kate. Shakespeare’s text takes a backseat in the musical adaptation in which a divorced couple, cast as Kate and Petruchio, push each other’s buttons throughout the rehearsals for the play.

In the early 1900s, The Taming of the Shrew was considered the Birmingham Repertory Theatre’s most successful experiment in presenting Shakespeare in modern dress. In addition to the modern costumes, the 1928 production featured press photographers and a movie camera in the wedding scene, and a young Laurence Olivier in a small role.

As the twentieth century progressed, The Taming of the Shrew proved as popular as it was controversial. Franco Zeffirelli created his famous version for the screen in 1967, starring Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Like Pickford and Fairbanks before them, Taylor and Burton were the most famous Hollywood couple of the mid-Sixties; their tumultuous off-screen relationship brought new levels of ferocity to their on-screen battles. This work, like Zeffirelli’s Romeo and Juliet, is characterized by the relationship between
two characters: the Bianca subplot recedes into the background, and the Christopher Sly framework disappears entirely as a stage device of no use to Zeffirelli’s naturalistic vision as a director. Kate and Petruchio fall in love at first sight, and the subsequent taming plot is approached by the film’s stars as an elaborate game. Their battle is not one so much between the sexes as between two bohemian anarchists and the conventions of the hypocritical and repressed society in which they live. There is no submission by Kate in Zeffirelli’s eyes: she delivers her speech with knowing looks shared privately with Petruchio.

The same text is used to very different ends in another production readily available and widely known: Jonathan Miller’s The Taming of the Shrew filmed for the BBC television series in 1980. Like Zeffirelli, Miller banished Christopher Sly from his stage, but the similarity in interpretation stops there. In the hands of John Cleese as a cerebral, funny and rather gawky Petruchio, the taming of Katherine becomes more a studied lesson play or well-devised therapy process than a sexy game of mutual attraction. Miller’s Petruchio teaches rather than tames his Kate. Kate’s closing speech is portrayed as a statement of Elizabethan family and sexual values. The film ends with the wedding party joining in to sing a Puritan hymn extolling marital harmony.

Just two years earlier, in 1978 a very different interpretation of Shakespeare’s text, directed by Michael Bogdanov, appeared on London’s stage. Like much of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s work in this period, Bogdanov’s work was deeply influenced by Jan Kott’s groundbreaking book, Shakespeare Our Contemporary, which posits that the themes relevant in Shakespeare’s particular moment of history are equally relevant throughout human history. History repeats itself, and we return to the same problems wrapped in different circumstances (for example, the feud of the Capulets and Montagues as portrayed through the experience of rival gangs in New York City in West Side Story). Bogdanov’s Shrew made a strong and relentless statement against the repression of women by a capitalist society. The production began with a drunken Christopher Sly planted as an “audience member.” The innkeeper was played by a female “usher” who, in attempting to throw this rowdy “patron” from the theater, is victimized by Sly’s inebriated abuse. The Sly Induction was so realistic that at one performance audience members called the police to intervene. The struggle between Katherine and Petruchio was violent and abusive. Paduan society was portrayed as a cold, repressive bed of capitalism where women were bought, sold and used. In light of Bogdanov’s dark interpretation, Katherine’s final speech was a somber one—with evidence of the woman’s angry but suppressed resistance to the role she had been unfairly dealt in this society of males and money.

In the 1985 Royal Shakespeare Company tour, director Di Trevis used the play-within-a-play as a springboard for a commentary on property and poverty. The show began with the players crossing the stage in tattered costumes. Leading the procession pulling an oversized property basket on wheels was a young unwed mother, who would later take on the role of Kate. Both the players and the characters in the play were portrayed as needy. Like Sly, the players were playthings for the wealthy, and acting provided them with a life of fantasy and some income.
Turkish director Yücel Erten interpreted the play in 1986 as a love tragedy. In Erten’s production, Petruchio broke down Kate’s defensive wall as she fell in love, and subsequently his humiliation of her resulted in her emotional breakdown. After delivering her infamous speech of female submission, Kate removed her shawl to reveal her slit wrists and suicide.

_The Taming of the Shrew_ has appeared on Chicago Shakespeare’s stage as a full-length production twice before, and once as an abridged adaptation for Team Shakespeare and family audiences. David H. Bell’s full-length production (2003) was set in 1960 along the Via Veneto, an area in Rome made famous by Frederico Fellini’s _La Dolce Vita_. Bell created a world of glamour, wealth and high fashion. The set was filled with the balconies, fountains and marble arches of a glamorous Italian street. Around the café owned by Kate’s father, papparazi swarmed and Vespa scooters zoomed. To reflect the time period of the show, Bell updated certain lines: horse references, for example, were changed to motorcycles. Bell staged an optimistic view of Kate’s taming, and the “Kiss me, Kate” scene left the audience believing that Kate and Petruchio were very much in love. Kate’s final speech was delivered by actor Kate Fry as a woman changed by love, not tamed by torture.

A decade earlier in 1993 staged at CST’s previous home, the Ruth Page Theatre, Artistic Director Barbara Gaines directed CST’s first production of _Shrew_. Gaines retained the Christopher Sly framework of the original script and set the production in Renaissance Italy. Actors were dressed in ornate colorful costumes, with the warm woods of the set inviting the audience into this antique world. Gaines chose not make a political statement with Kate’s transformation from shrew to wife, but allowed the audience to interpret Kate’s final speech on their own.

Teen comedies dominated movie screens in the 1990s, so it was perhaps no surprise that a teen flick, called _10 Things I Hate About You_, premiered in 1999. What is surprising, however, is the fact that its story is based upon Shakespeare’s 400-year-old play. The setting moves to Tacoma, Washington. Kat (Katharina) is now an antisocial, Sylvia Plath-reading, ball-breaking, vicious field hockey-playing high school student, frequently called a “heinous bitch” by her sister Bianca, who is the most popular and sought-after girl in school. In the movie’s contemporary high school world, Bianca doesn’t want to get married. She just wants to go on a date with a boy, which her pregnancy-phobic father forbids until the older sister starts dating. Money is still the impetus for Patrick (Petruchio). Cameron (Lucentio) sets a plan in motion where Joey (Hortensio) pays Patrick to date Kat so that Cameron can have a chance with Bianca. Patrick, who is feared by fellow classmates, is the only one not deterred by Kat’s man-hating reputation.

Kat’s taming is, in fact, quite a bit tamer than her namesake’s. The famous speech of submission at the end of Shakespeare’s play is transformed in the film into Kat publicly reading a poem she has written about Patrick, first listing all his vile characteristics, and culminating with the line: “But mostly I hate the way I don’t hate you. Not even close, not even a little bit, not even at all.” True to both its derivative genres—teen movies and Shakespeare comedy—_10 Things I Hate About You_ delivers a happy ending.

ABC Family launched the sitcom _10 Things I Hate About You_ in 2009—loosely based off the movie. This time, however, Kat and Bianca are the new girls in town who are seeking to find their place in Padua High. Kat, a self-righteous feminist, prides herself on her independence but develops a crush on the leather-wearing school rebel, Patrick (Petruchio). Meanwhile, Bianca desperately longs for the popularity she had established at her old school. Taking a turn from Shakespeare’s original character, this
Bianca has only one suitor, Cameron (Lucentio), whom she labels her “GBF” (gay best friend), completely oblivious to his affections. While this sitcom has many deviations from Shakespeare’s original plot, it manages to capture many of the complex emotions found in *The Taming of the Shrew*, such as what it means to not conform to mainstream ideas, how it feels to be new in town, and what it’s like facing social hierarchies.

The twenty-first century has ushered in a trend in performance that faces *Shrew’s* gender politics through re-inventing a convention from the Early Modern English stage: single-gender casting. Of course, men played all roles in Elizabethan times, but in 2003 Shakespeare’s Globe started an all-female troupe called the Company of Women. In its inaugural season, the company performed *Shrew*, directed by Phyllida Lloyd. Lloyd did not feminize the story or characters in any way. The patriarchal structure remained firmly in place, the machismo of many of the male characters was highly exaggerated. Petruchio, for example, urinated on a pillar of The Globe’s stage. Kate’s final speech was presented as an obvious satire. She leapt on to a table and lifted up her dress, embarrassing Petruchio who couldn’t convince her to come down. Encouraging all the wives to place their hands under their husband’s feet brought only gales of laughter in response. The all-female cast of *Shrew* shifted the play’s controversial theme from female submission to male power in general.

In 2005, the BBC launched a new series of contemporary Shakespeare adaptations, entitled “Shakespeare Retold.” Screenwriter Sally Wainwright reframes Shakespeare’s story in modern-day Britain, where Katherine Minola is a successful, outspoken politician, poised to become the next leader of the opposition party. Her sister Bianca is a jet-setting model, who vows she’ll marry only when her older sister does—which means never. Bianca’s spurned boyfriend has a cash-strapped aristocrat friend named Petruchio, who decides that the unattainable, unlovable—and very wealthy—politician will be his. Petruchio traps Katherine at their honeymoon villa in Italy, slashing the car tires and hiding her phone and clothes. The two do, indeed, fall in love—just as Katherine wins the leadership of her party and kicks off her campaign to become prime minister. When Bianca insists that her boyfriend Lucentio sign a pre-nuptial agreement, Kate delivers an impassioned speech, declaring that wives obey their husbands, and that if her sister requires a pre-nuptial agreement, then she shouldn’t get married. In the end, the credits are run against a backdrop of blissful family photos of the new Prime Minister, her adoring husband and their triplets.

Rebecca Bayla Taichman’s 2007 production of *The Taming of the Shrew* at the Shakespeare Theatre Company, in D.C., embraced the troubling treatment of women in the play by setting it in a modern-day Padua, infiltrated with pop-culture and superficial ideas about beauty and success. Emphasizing how society today objectifies women, a large billboard hanging above the stage sported a shapely young woman in a red bathing suit—reminiscent of 1940s pin-up girls. The top of the billboard was lost behind the curtains, poignantly denying the audience a view of the model’s face. The production illuminated the persistent, problematic view of women’s place in society; a notion that in the twenty-first century might be viewed as no longer relevant.
but nonetheless gave a fresh perspective to the same theme Shakespeare’s 400-year-old play still reveals.

As part of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s Complete Works Festival in 2006, Propellor, an all-male English theater company, brought The Taming of the Shrew to the stage. Director Edward Hall (who directed CST’s production of Rose Rage: Henry VI, Parts 1, 2 and 3 here and subsequently in New York) chose to preserve the Induction with Christopher Sly and the play-within-a-play. In an interesting twist, Sly was eventually goaded into taking on the part of Petruchio in the play. The sets (moveable mirrored cupboards that allowed actors to appear and disappear) and the props and costumes (a mix of contemporary and traditional) created a dream-like world. This surreal world created by the director and the play-within-a-play framework helped to distance the production from the script’s politically incorrect issues. Hall’s Kate was broken by Petruchio’s taming tactics, and delivered her final speech as a brainwashed shell of a woman. Audiences may have been more able to witness Kate’s torture and engage in a production in which the character was played by a man. British theater critics saw correlations between the production’s disturbing tactics of taming to the tactics of torture being utilized in the current war on terror.

The same playwright and the same words have been understood and approached in countless ways through four centuries. Does this make Zefferelli’s vision “wrong” and Bogdanov’s “right”? Directors have cast Kate as a man, Petruchio as a woman, and have performed the show on stage and on screen. Actors will continue to explore the themes and gender politics of Shrew as the world and its attitudes continue to evolve.

A “frame story” is a literary technique that sets the stage for the primary story by first introducing the reader or audience to a typically complementary, brief story. In a sense, a literary frame is similar to a picture frame: both are intended to accompany and enhance a piece of art, while not overshadowing it.

Framing began as a storytelling technique for tying numerous tales together under one broad narrative. One Thousand and One Arabian Nights and The Canterbury Tales are both examples of frames that tie multiple stories together through an overarching, secondary story.

A frame story, however, is specifically crafted to accompany one main tale instead of stringing several separate narratives together. A successful frame story sets the scene and influences the reader’s attitude towards the main story. The movie Slumdog Millionaire is a recent example of a work that utilizes a frame to help tell a story. The main character relays his life story through answering questions as a participant on “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?” The game show has significance but it primarily serves as an occasion for the main character to share a larger story about his past.
Shakespeare utilizes the framing technique in *The Taming of the Shrew* with the Christopher Sly plot. The play opens with a nobleman tricking a poor drunkard named Christopher Sly into believing he is of noble lineage. To prove this to a doubtful Sly, the nobleman and his companions command a group of actors to perform a show in Sly’s honor. The play they perform is the story of Katharina and Petruchio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Once this play-within-a-play becomes the main story, Christopher Sly leaves the picture entirely. His inclusion in *The Taming of the Shrew* is to introduce, or frame, the primary story.

Another anonymously penned version of this story surfaced around the time scholars believe Shakespeare penned *The Taming of the Shrew*, which is called *The Taming of a Shrew* [emphasis added]. With similar plots, the frame is what distinguishes the two: Sly appears only at the beginning of *The Shrew*, but appears several times throughout “*A Shrew*,” as he interrupts the action of the play to make comments. While Sly serves as a framing mechanism in both versions, his appearance during and at the conclusion of “*A Shrew*” seems to complete the frame written by Shakespeare for his play.

Many directors throughout the centuries have chosen not to include the so-called “Sly Induction” on stage.

Because Sly only appears in the prologue of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew* and is not directly related to the main action of the play, many directors throughout the centuries have chosen not to include the so-called “Sly Induction” on stage. Director Josie Rourke did not want to abandon the use of a frame story altogether for her current production. Instead, she has collaborated with the provocative contemporary American playwright Neil LaBute, who has penned a contemporary frame specifically for CST’s production of *The Taming of the Shrew* in order to maintain the play-within-a-play convention established by the original production. LaBute’s newly imagined frame will allow a contemporary audience to approach Shakespeare’s original text through a uniquely twenty-first century lens, as it mirrors the play’s concerns about gender relations, possession and marital politics.

**A Conversation with Director Josie Rourke**

Director of Education Marilyn Halperin discusses CST’s upcoming production of *The Taming of the Shrew* with guest director Josie Rourke.

MH: Shakespeare’s so-called “Christopher Sly frame” is rarely staged in production. But can you briefly describe it and say why you decided to adapt it for your production of *The Taming of the Shrew*?

JR: The Sly frame appears at the very beginning of Shakespeare’s play and then doesn’t reappear. Christopher Sly, the town drunk, passes out. The lord of the manor rides by and thinks it would be really funny to convince the drunkard that, having fallen into a sort of coma, he has forgotten his true identity—as lord of the manor. A company of players (as in Hamlet more famously) turns up, and performs the play of *The Taming of the Shrew* to Christopher Sly. Shakespeare loved the idea of plays-within-plays. I think the problem is that Christopher Sly says (in most versions) very little after the story of *Shrew* gets going, and his absence makes you forget about the fact that the play is being performed within a frame. And I was interested in how you sustain that meta-theatrical element of Shakespeare’s *Shrew* without having Sly on the stage the whole time. It’s also worth adding that *Shrew* is the most adapted play in the Shakespeare canon, from *Ten Things I Hate About You* being the most recent, to *Kiss Me Kate* obviously being the most famous.

MH: How do you understand that?

JR: I think there’s a timelessness to people battling for power within a relationship. I think really (unlike other of Shakespeare’s plays) we must acknowledge that *Taming of the Shrew* is incredibly “dated” to use a modern term.
It explores what it is to tame a woman, and does not apologize for the act of her taming because it was a completely different cultural set-up when Shakespeare was writing this play. It was also, in thinking about the frame that Neil has written for this production, a period of history in which attitudes to homosexuality were completely different and arguably more relaxed.

CST: What are your thoughts about what a newly developed frame can contribute to this story?

JR: When I told people I was going to be directing The Taming of the Shrew, they generally had two responses: ‘Why?’ and then (often) ‘How?’ Some people got really angry about it. I thought, Wouldn’t it be wonderful if you could somehow find a way of capturing and harnessing what that anxiety is, why we are still so concerned about this sixteenth-century play. What if we could dramatize that feeling and that anger? This is what brought me to think about a contemporary frame for the play. Could we work with a playwright to create something that would release an interesting and sophisticated debate about what’s going in Shakespeare’s Shrew? And could that frame make the play more relevant to us now? The theater that I run in London focuses on new work and contemporary stories—work that does always invigorates debate.

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I began to think about keeping the notion that it’s a company of players putting on a play of The Taming of the Shrew—but a contemporary company of players—and then working with a dramatist to write a frame in which you can hear those actors and the director talk to each other and engage with the ideas in the play itself. What would a group of contemporary actors think about it, and what effect would it have on their lives? And maybe there is something within their relationships that mirrors or contrasts with Shakespeare’s text. The contemporary frame acts as a kind of counterpoint, allowing us to stage the play within it purely and straightforwardly and, I would hope, as true from the heart as it is written.

MH: Talk about your choice to collaborate on this project with Neil LaBute.

JR: Neil LaBute is one of America’s major living dramatists. His work is celebrated for his ability to take on big themes. He writes about what people do when they are in extreme situations, where the stakes are incredibly high. He writes with great speed of thought; his writing has a kind of classical energy to it, and sits interestingly with Shakespeare in that sense because his plays move very, very quickly and he’s able to communicate in a few lines what most dramatists can establish over a number of pages. He’s also a very funny playwright, and his frame for this play is very witty.
MH: How do you respond to people who view his writing as misogynistic?

JR: I don’t believe that Neil is a misogynist; I think he understands misogyny. It astonishes me how often people confuse the difference between portraying something and subscribing to it. Whether Neil is writing about gender or race or the body, he always pushes really deep into what the question is. And people are often challenged and get very angry. His work is driven by the courage to explore what takes people to extremes of behavior and how they justify or rationalize their actions.

MH: And how has the frame developed as the two of you have worked together with the cast?

What Neil has done, because it’s what playwrights do, is ask a more interesting question than I did originally: What if we can find a way of thinking about a twenty-first century version of marriage? What if it’s a relationship between two women, and one is seeking a marriage, while the other wants to lead a different kind of life? They also have a long-term, professional relationship as director and actor. The director is in essence trying to tame her partner, trying to get her to stop chasing after every ingénue who comes along. There’s a tension between the two women as they argue over the territory of their relationship and about how much each may own and control the other.

Shakespeare’s play is very much about money and about women as currency and chattels, and about bills of sale being drawn up for them. Neil has hit on something that’s probably the most interesting aspect of Shakespeare’s play: about how much you can own a person, and how marriage—either formal or informal—is on some level is both an act of owning and an agreement to be owned. How much are we willing to be owned, and how do we fight against that?

Within the context of rehearsing Neil’s frame, it’s become increasingly clear how the simple act of working on this particular play, The Taming of the Shrew, places the relationship of these two women, who are constantly striving to keep the personal and professional apart, into relief. It’s the fact of doing Taming of the Shrew that throws up all these questions about who they are and what the other one wants.

MH: What are you hoping will be the impact of the frame upon your audiences?

What I’m hoping the frame will do, primarily, is to give us a twenty-first century lens through which to look at a sixteenth-century play, allowing us to do the play within its own period, but at the same time reminding us of where we are now. I think it also respects the metadrama of Shakespeare’s original, and might help to highlight some more moments of metadrama within Shakespeare’s Shrew, such as Petruchio’s ‘taming’ of Kate in his house in Verona.

As you look at Kate struggling to have her own identity, to be herself, coming to terms with the idea of what it is to be in a marriage, there’s an extraordinary mirror for that in what Neil has written that in some way releases what most fascinated me at first when I came to this play. The conversation between Neil and Shakespeare has actually become something profound and really succinct.

I want the audience to see in the frame those themes about possession and our contemporary ideas of marriage. That’s what fascinates me within this play: we’ve got the greatest playwright who ever lived talking about possessiveness within marriage in a way that is funny and intimate and dark, as well. And if what Neil does helps us look at that, then that’s potentially quite exciting.

CST: As you work with Shakespeare’s script, how have you come to understand the relationship between Kate and Petruchio?

JR: For me it’s as dark as it is redemptive, because it’s about two people who go with each other on this incredibly intense, psychological journey—leaving aside for the moment the morality of trying to break another
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person which is absolutely what he tries to do to this woman who has incredible spirit. I think how he does that is by matching her behavior, matching her intensity, her ferocity, word for word and beat for beat. They slug it out, and I think out of that comes a lot of comedy. And I think that through it comes a kind of exhilaration that’s absolutely needed in production. I think that the relationship between them should be so intense that if you’re judging what’s going on, then the play is going too slowly. You should step back and go, ‘Hang on a minute, what just happened there?’ I think there are things we can do with the frame of the play that run shoulder to shoulder with that same pace. If we achieve that in the frame, it will just ramp up that intensity. For me that’s when Shakespeare’s writing in this play is most exciting.

MH: There is, of course, a way to “solve the play” by making them just mad for each other—in other words, that it’s all fun and games.

JR: That doesn’t solve the play for me. She’s still tormented, tamed, suppressed, exchanged as goods. It doesn’t matter if they’re hot for each other. Yes, I think they probably really fancy each other; but I don’t think it stops what happens being a problem.

MH: Are you hoping to hear the audience’s laughter?

JR: Always! However, I think that just because something is funny doesn’t mean it has to be good, and I mean ‘good’ in a moral sense. I think often a lot of the most intense comedy comes from places that are dark, or wrong, or about people saying things they shouldn’t say, and about contact with our nearest and dearest fears. I think there’s a lot of that within Shrew, as well. Although it’s a psychologically interesting kind of play, it doesn’t have, for example, the subtleties of a play like Twelfth Night. It’s a funny play and I think he was writing it in order for his audiences to enjoy it, but it’s not a romp and it’s not a farce.

MH: So why should we continue to stage a play that proves so problematic to us now?

JR: It’s a difficult play, but difficult isn’t necessarily bad. There’s some exceptionally fine writing in it, flashes of Shakespeare’s genius. I’ve always enjoyed directing legendarily difficult plays. When I was preparing to direct a production of King John for the Royal Shakespeare Company, everyone’s response was, ‘It’s a very problematic play.’ Well, what if it’s not a problem? What if there are difficulties within it, but you treat it as a good play and see what it yields up? I found myself asking the same question about Shrew: What if you don’t go, ‘There is this terrible issue in this play and therefore we can’t do it now.’ What if you went instead, ‘There is this terrible thing that happens in this play, which is what is done to this woman—that’s really interesting!’ Because a lot of the things that power those attitudes toward women have not gone away. They exist in different forms. I don’t believe that the struggle is completed, and all those questions are still there to be asked and there to be explored, I think.

And it’s very interesting when you work a lot with new writing, like I do. We’re always thrilled to get our hands on something interesting that explores a difficult issue or is tricky or says unpalatable things in winning and attention-grabbing ways, and I think that Shrew does that. We can ask those questions. It’s not that the attitudes expressed in the play have to be our attitudes. Sometimes, by being in that conversation, actually we’re challenged in our complacencies, in our received ideas.

What spurred me into this idea about the frame is to try and ask those questions. And I wondered what if rather than seeking to try and ‘solve it,’ you dramatized that question and let that be the force that deconstructed the ideas within the play? What if you dramatized the difficulty?
MH: You don’t subscribe to the interpretation that Shakespeare was writing a quietly subversive play to challenge his audience’s ideas about women, marriage and family?

JR: The play is the play. At the time Shakespeare wrote this play, shrew-taming narratives already existed; he’s taking a stock plot and creating his own version of it. I don’t think that he was doing a delicately subverted piece of writing about gender politics. Yes, I think there’s beautiful writing within it, but I don’t think that there is anything in it resembling a contemporary conversation regarding gender politics. Rather than try and rebalance it and make it okay with a wink or a nod at the end, what I think you’ve got to do is try and make it even more difficult and have the debate. What are the most difficult questions that this play can pose to us? Where will it touch us in our lives? How will it make us reflect on who we are and the choices we make? How we regard ourselves? Where our own society is at?

It was Shakespeare’s cronies who first divided his plays into three categories in the First Folio—comedies, histories, and tragedies. Four centuries of performance history (and performance criticism) have suggested another trio: the good (Hamlet), the bad (Pericles), and the ugly (Measure for Measure with its forced marriages, The Merchant of Venice with its anti-Semitism, Othello with its racism, and The Taming of the Shrew with its sexism, among others). Those ugly plays can often prove to be the best of the bunch, however, since there is immeasurable value in recognizing that cultural pressure points in Shakespeare’s world still cause strains in our own. Rather than simply shuddering at the vicious battle of the sexes waged in Shrew and Petruchio’s decisive win, perhaps we should be asking what it means about our culture that this fight still seems so relevant.

The Taming of the Shrew holds the record as the most frequently performed Shakespeare play that is most seldom performed in its entirety. Most stage and screen productions cut Shakespeare’s Induction and its frame story of a character named Christopher Sly completely. When the Christopher Sly frame is included, The Taming of the Shrew becomes a play-within-a-play, designed to entertain a drunken tinker who is tricked into thinking that he is a lord.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s production retains the concept of the frame, reworking it for our world as we encounter a group of contemporary actors staging a spot-on sixteenth-century production of Shakespeare’s Shrew. The resulting script may be innovative, but the concept of reworking this play is not; Shrew is also one of the most adapted and altered of Shakespeare’s plays. Internationally renowned playwright and filmmaker Neil LaBute replaces Shakespeare’s Lord of the Manor with a character named by the function she serves—the play’s Director, who enjoins her Kate to “tackle the problems of a text that’s outdated by looking them squarely in the eye.”

With a drunken tinker in a starring role, Shakespeare’s frame narrative quickly tends toward the earthy; so does the new one at Chicago Shakespeare. The bawdry of the frame narrative in both instances is resoundingly echoed in the play proper, where Petruchio famously baits Katharine—petulantly calling for his departure after a duet about her “waspishness”—with the line, “What, with my tongue in your tail?” The line zips across the centuries to us, its frisson of salaciousness flawlessly intact (but hardly tactful).
Shakespeare’s Kate demands of her father if he intends to make a “stale” (whore) of her. It’s her first line. It’s quite indecorous. Shocking, really. However, not to us. “Stale” is obsolete, and even if a director replaces it with “whore” it’s nothing any worse than what we might witness in a catfight on a primetime reality TV show, like The Bachelor. In order to be true to the spirit of the original play and its rude, crude Induction, LaBute faced the challenge of restoring the frame’s shock value in his adaptation in order to adequately set up the shocking spectacle of the main narrative: the methodical taming of a wife characterized as a “fiend of hell.”

Shakespeare, of course, would have depicted a male actor in the role of Katharine, repeatedly enjoined by the male actor playing Petruchio to “Kiss me, Kate”—a stage direction that is clearly followed. LaBute’s frame reverses the gender of the kissing couple, showing us two women kissing one another; and, as in Shakespeare’s play, Kate is resistant to the public staging of this intimate act. Shakespeare’s Induction, like the play itself, makes private business between a couple public. So, too, in LaBute’s frame developed for this production, which stages a couple’s ugliest intimate moments both to an onstage audience of other actors and to the theater audience.

The resulting script may be innovative, but the concept of reworking this play is not; Shrew is also one of the most adapted and altered of Shakespeare’s plays.

Perhaps The Taming of the Shrew poses problems not because it is “outdated” at all, but because it still holds a mirror up to our natures, showing us things that we would rather not see. Shakespeare seems to have been consistently drawn to the most troubling aspects of his world; he seemed to know, as we should, that the things we would rather not see are the precise things to which we should devote the most attention.

Neil LaBute is one of the most prolific, challenging and provocative stage and screen writer/directors working today. His latest directorial effort, Death at a Funeral, will be released worldwide by Sony Pictures on April 16, and stars an ensemble cast including Danny Glover, Luke Wilson, and Chris Rock. In a 1999 piece about LaBute’s work, John Lahr, theater critic for The New Yorker, called him “the best new playwright to emerge in the past decade.” Lahr has returned to LaBute as his subject in more recent years, describing him as an artist who “does not trivialize darkness but treats it with proper awe.”

LaBute’s career launched in 1997 when he adapted his play In the Company of Men into a screenplay, which he then directed and produced. The movie was a winner at several film festivals, including Sundance, and won the NY Critics’ Circle Award for Best First Feature. Some of his best-known plays include: Bash: Latter-Day Plays (2001), The Mercy Seat (2002), Fat Pig (2004), Some Girls (2006) and his Broadway debut Reasons to be Pretty (2009). His better known films include Nurse Betty (2000), Possession (2002), The Wicker Man (2006), and Lakeview Terrace (2008).

Nearly all of the ten feature and TV movies and eleven plays he has written and/or directed share characteristics that make each easily identifiable as his: an incessant desire to push boundaries and test the limits of taste and, decorum; and a profound fascination with the dark side of human nature, with the moral vapidity of contemporary men and women, and with the politics of sexual power and desire both sanctioned and transgressive.

LaBute has a nearly encyclopedic knowledge of pop culture and a deep interest in the theater, particularly...
the work of David Mamet, whose influence is unmistakable in LaBute’s often profane dialogue. He has also demonstrated a fascination with plays from earlier periods, such as Wycherley’s The Country Wife, which appears as a college production in his film Your Friends and Neighbors. This Restoration drama about a rake’s feigning impotence in order to enjoy partners other than his wife, among other bawdy adventures, was controversial when it was written in 1675 and too sexually adventurous to be produced for many years once the libertine values of the late seventeenth century had faded. All of LaBute’s ongoing fascinations, as well as more than a decade of exploring them in major and minor films and plays produced on and off Broadway in New York and London to significant acclaim, are evident in the new frame LaBute has written for CST’s production of The Taming of the Shrew.
Theater Warm-ups

A brief physical and vocal warm-up can help your students move from a “classroom mode” to a “studio mode.” It sets the tone for a student learning Shakespeare in a theatrical sense as well. And, perhaps most important, it helps students focus, as well as build community (“ensemble”).

Every actor develops his/her own set of physical and vocal warm-ups. Warm-ups help the actor prepare for rehearsal or performance not only physically, but also mentally. The actor has the chance to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and beginning to assume the flexibility required to create a character. The body, the voice and the imagination are the actor’s tools.

Physical Warm-ups

Getting started

- creates focus on the immediate moment
- brings students to body awareness
- helps dispel tension

Begin by asking your students to take a comfortable stance with their feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Ask them to inhale deeply through their noses, filling their lungs deep into their abdomen, and exhale through their mouths. Repeat this a few times and ask them to notice how their lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

Warm-up from the top of the body down (This should take approximately 7-10 minutes.)

- gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness,
- increases physical and spatial awareness

(a) Begin by doing head-rolls to the left and to the right, about four times each way, very slowly. Then do a series of shoulder rolls to the back and to the front, again very slowly, and emphasizing a full range of motion.

(b) Stretch each arm toward the ceiling alternately, and try to pull all the way through the rib cage, repeating this motion six to eight times.

(c) Next, with particular care to keep knees slightly bent, twist from the waist in each direction, trying to look behind. Again, repeat six to eight times.

(d) From a standing position, starting with the top of the head, roll down with relaxed neck and arms until the body is hanging from the waist. Ask the students to shake things around, making sure their bodies are relaxed. From this position, bend at the knees, putting both hands on the floor. Stretch back up to hanging. Repeat this action about four times. Then roll back up—starting from the base of the spine, stack each vertebra until the head is the last thing to come up.

(e) Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Ask the students to bring their feet together, bend their knees, and keeping their knees together ask the students to rotate their knees in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.

(f) Pick up the right foot, rotate it inward six to eight times, and then do the same with the left foot. Repeat with outward rotation of the foot. Take a few moments and shake out the entire body.
Vocal Warm-ups

Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly \((\text{Approx. 7 min.})\)

- helps connect physicality to vocality
- begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities

(a) Ask students to gently massage and pat the muscles of their faces. This will help wake up the facial muscles.

(b) Ask students to stick their tongues out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This process will probably seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. When students see you going through these exercises with commitment, that’s often all they need to draw them in.) Repeat this exercise once or twice.

(c) Ask students to put their lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a “raspberry.”

(d) Next, hum, quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Explore all the resonating spaces in the body, by moving the sound around. Humming helps to lubricate.

(e) Create the vowel sounds, overemphasizing each shape with the face —A, E, I, O, and U—with no break.

(f) Choose two or three tongue-twisters—there are some listed below. Again overemphasizing the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles, begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually speed up, repeating until the speed is such that the enunciation is lost.

Tongue twisters

- red leather, yellow leather … (focus on the vertical motion of the mouth)
- unique New York … (focus on the front to back movement of the face)
- rubber, baby, buggie, bumpers … (focus on the clear repetition of the soft plosives)
- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers … (focus on the clear repetition of hard plosives)

One of the actors at Chicago Shakespeare Theater likes to describe the experience of acting Shakespeare as the “Olympics of Acting.” Shakespeare’s verse demands a very flexible vocal instrument, and an ability to express not only the flow of the text, but the emotional shifts which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words, some of which are rarely—if ever—used in modern vocabulary, the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor acting Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. This can be a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.

Stage pictures

- show how varied interpretation is: there is no wrong answer
- encourage the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies
- begin to show how the body interprets emotion

You will need a list of very strong descriptive, colorful, emotional words from the script for this activity. Ask your actor-students to begin walking around the room. Ask them to fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like...
to be a different weight, a different height, and ask them to move the center of their body into different places. Encourage them to see if they feel any emotional differences within these changes. Giving them about three minutes to explore these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. Encourage these discoveries without necessarily drawing focus to individual students, as this is a self-reflective activity, but perhaps suggest to the group they might “Try what it feels like if you slow your pace, hunch your shoulders, droop your head, and move your center into your knees.”

After a few minutes of this exploration, ask your actor-students to find a “neutral” walk. Explain that they are going to create a stage picture as an entire group. You will give them a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, you will say freeze, and they must create a photograph of the word you have given them, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotions you feel from their stage picture. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, encouraging the audience’s reactions after each tableau. This might be a good time to discuss balance, stage direction, and the use of levels as effective variation for the audience’s visual interpretation. (This activity should take about 10 minutes.)

Shakespeare’s characters are often very physically broad: crippled characters, old people, clowns, star-crossed lovers, and more. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in a big fat belly? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character’s body.

**Mirroring**

- helps build trust within the ensemble
- encourages the students to “listen” with all their senses
- helps the students reach a state of “relaxed readiness,” which will encourage their impulses, and discourage their internal censors

Either ask your actor-students to partner up, or count them off in pairs. Ask them to sit, comfortably facing their partner, in fairly close proximity. Explain to them that they are mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. Explain to the actor-students that they must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that their partner can follow. Encourage the partners to make eye-contact and see each other as a whole picture, rather than following each other’s small motions with their eyes. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, ask the actor-students to stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, tell them that they should keep going, but there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss. (This activity should last about 10 minutes.)

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part; making it come out of their mouths as if for the first time is the hard part, especially with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can sound like a song, but how do you make it sound like real people talking to each other? Actors listen to each other, and try to respond to what they hear in the moment of the play. Listening is a very important part of acting; it keeps the moment real.

**Community Builders**

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand your students’ imaginations, increase their sense of “ensemble” or teamwork, and bring them “into the moment.” These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor’s training. Their imaginations will allow them to believe the situation of the play, their sense of ensemble will bring them together with their scene partners to create the relationships necessary to the movement of the play, and their willingness to be in the moment will allow them to live in the play in such a way as to make it believable to their audience. In each
of these exercises the use of students as audience, and constructive reflection from that audience, will be helpful to the ensemble of your classroom. Remember, there is no wrong answer, only different interpretations—encourage them!

**Zing! Ball** *(This exercise requires a soft ball 8-12 inches in diameter.)*

- helps the ensemble grow together
- helps the students let go of their internal “censor” and begin tapping into their impulses
- brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together

Ask the students to stand in a circle, facing in. Explain that the ball carries energy with it. This energy is like a feedback loop that increases the energy, speed, and focus of the entire group by the amount that each actor-student puts into the ball. The idea is to keep the ball moving in the circle without letting the energy drop. There should be no space between throw and catch. There should be no thought as to whom the actor-student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, the actor-student must make eye contact with the person he is throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the throwing actor-student should say “Zing!” Note: Encourage the actor-students to experiment with the way they say “Zing!” It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way they wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy. *(This activity lasts about five minutes.)*

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. An ensemble must have the trust in each other to make a performance believable, without any of the actors getting hurt. They must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure. Shakespeare wrote many clues about his characters in his text, but the actor must be given license to find his character, and his relationship with the rest of the characters in the script.

**Zing! Ball without a Ball** *(This activity takes 5-7 minutes.)*

- asks the students to make their imagination clear to the ensemble
- focuses the students on physical detail

This exercise builds on Zing! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zing! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using “Zing!,” toss the ball to an actor-student across the circle, and as it floats down, ask the actor-student to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then ask that actor-student to recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how they’ve changed it. In the same way as Zing! Ball, work around the circle.

The wide range of vocabulary in Shakespeare’s plays can often be intimidating as one reads the scripts. The actor's job is to make the language clear, and this is often accomplished by very specific physical gesturing.
**Classroom Activities**

To the teacher please note: While act and scene numbers generally remain consistent across varying editions of Shakespeare, line numbers indicated here are based on the Cambridge School Shakespeare edition—an edition we highly recommend.

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**Before You Read The Play**

**As a class**

1. (To the teacher: excerpt 30 lines from the play that are rich in Shakespeare's language or are descriptive of character. Distribute a line/s to each student on a slip of paper, not revealing the character who spoke them.) Look at your line/s and, as you walk around the room, say it aloud again and again without addressing anyone. Now walk around the room and deliver your line directly to your classmates as they do the same. Regroup in a circle, and each student reads his/her line aloud in turn. Sit down in the circle and discuss the lines. What questions do you have about the words? Imagine what this play is about based upon some of the words you’ve heard its characters speak. What do you imagine about the character who spoke your line? Did you hear lines that seemed to be spoken by the same character? All ideas are encouraged, and none can be wrong! This is your time to listen to the language and begin to use your imagination to think about the world of the play you’ve just entered... (*Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A3b, 1A4b, 1B3a, 1C3a, 1C4a, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 2B3a, 4A3a*)

**In small groups**

2. In groups of 5 or 6 practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—the insults below that the characters from *The Taming of the Shrew* sling at each other. If the meaning of a word is not clear, don’t get stuck! Keep repeating the insult aloud with feeling, and you’ll be closer to the meaning than you might think... Then, taking 8 quotes, imagine a contemporary situation that might prompt such a rebuke. (e.g. You’re given a choice by your parents: either stay home and baby-sit, or go with them to visit an old aunt. “There’s small choice in rotten apples...”) Reconvene, but stay in groups. Each group now presents, in turns, one insult-provoking situation at a time to the rest of the class. The other groups compete to come up first with an appropriate answer from the list and score is kept. (It need not be the same insult that the group had in mind, as long as it makes sense!) (*Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A4a, 1A5a, 1A4b, 1A5b, 1B4a, 2A4a*)

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*Y’are a baggage.*

*O monstrous beast, how like a swine be lies!*  
*How foul and loathsome is thine image!*  
*My care should be*  
*To comb your noddle with a three-legg’d stool.*  
*There’s small choice in rotten apples.*  
*Woo her, wed her, and bed her, and rid the house of her.*  
*Her only fault, and this is faults enough*  
*Is that she is intolerable curst,*  
*And shrewd, and froward, so beyond all measure.*  
*Will you woo this wildcat?*

*Ind. 1.3*  
*Ind. 1.32*  
*Ind. 1.33*  
*1.1.63-64*  
*1.1.134-135*  
*1.1.144-45*  
*1.2.87-89*  
*1.2.195*

continued...
Classroom Activities

3. Thou liest, thou thread, thou thimble,
Thou yard, three-quarters, half-yard, quarter, nail!

In the lines above, Petruchio cuts the tailor to size—with the tools of the tools of his trade. In your small groups, come up with similar lines of abuse for different professions. A football player, a teacher, a librarian, a student? Use your imagination! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A3b, 1A4b, 1B5a, 2A3a, 2A4b, 2B3c, 2B4c, 3B4b)

4. Working in pairs as an actor and understudy for a part, select a character from the Dramatis Personae to explore through the play. Skim through the play and mark out speeches or lines that seem like they might be characteristic. Select 3-4 small segments that seem to best portray your character and prepare to present to the class and defend your ideas! This is the way that Elizabethan actors learned their roles. They were given just their own lines with the cue lines that preceded theirs, and were never handed an entire script. (At the end of your study, go back and repeat this exercise with the same character. Present again, and as a class, discuss the differences now that you’ve read the play.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3a, 1C4b, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 2A3b, 2A4b, 2B3c, 2B4c, 4B3a, 4B4a)

ON YOUR OWN

5. Before you begin to read The Taming of the Shrew, it’s helpful to think about some of the play’s central themes as they may relate to your own life and personal experiences. Jot down some of your ideas about one of the following situations. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3A3, 3A4, 3B3a, 3B4a, 3C3a)

- Have you ever felt alone or isolated in your own family when everyone else seemed to be allied? How did you feel? Did it affect the way you began to act? Did your outward behavior seem different to you from the person you felt yourself to be inside? If so, how?
Think back to a time when you were a newcomer in a strange place—a new school, or a new country, perhaps. What did it feel like to be an outsider there, exposed to new rules and an unknown situation? Did the experience affect the way you acted? The way you viewed yourself? If so, how?

Have you ever changed your appearance intentionally to present yourself in a certain way to others? How did you do it? Did it have the effect on other people that you expected? What effect did it have on you?

Choose a character to follow through the play, and do exactly what actors do as they get to know the character they’ll be playing. Keep track of how other characters feel about you. What do you think about them? Keep a diary of these text references, citing lines. (This exercise can be followed up after reading the play with a small group and class activity.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d)

AS YOU READ THE PLAY
THE INDUCTION
IN SMALL GROUPS

1. As Sly drifts between uncertain identities and states of mind, Shakespeare gives him at times lines of prose and at other times, lines of verse. (It's easy to spot on the page: lines of verse begin with a capital letter and have a “ragged” right margin; prose has “justified” left and right margins, appearing like this text.) In your small groups, review the Induction scenes and make note of the points that Sly speaks in prose and verse. What might Shakespeare be communicating about Sly and his predicament by the way he has Sly speak? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3b, 1B4b, 1B5b, 1C4c, 1C5d)

2. The Sly Induction is one of the earliest proofs of the genius of a young playwright. Before we ever meet the play's main characters, we have been introduced in the space of a few short lines to some of the play's central ideas and interests: the roles of men and women in this society; madness, pretended madness, and sanity; the relationship between servants and their masters; the fine line between illusion and reality, and our dreams and waking state; the contrast between outward appearance and the inward self; the overuse of words; and the act of wagering. In small groups, review the Induction and pull out as many lines and phrases as you can find that begin to alert us to these issues that we'll return to again in different ways as the play progresses. Reconvene as a class and compare your lists of ideas. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3a, 1B4a, 1C3a, 1C4a, 1C5a, 1C4b, 1C5b, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

3. You've met Christopher Sly now. If you had to pick out one line that might serve as his personal slogan or sandwich board, which would it be? If the front of the sandwich board displays Sly's words, what would the back of the sandwich board say—as a subtitle in your own words? (You may wish to actually create these to display for the rest of your class.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A3b, 1A4b, 1B3b, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 3B3a, 3B4a)
ACT I

IN SMALL GROUPS

1. In groups of three, read and repeat these words aloud several times. Then, take turns sculpting your partners into a human statue. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A4a, 1A4b, 1B4a, 1C4a, 1C4b, 2B4b, 4A4b, 4B4b)

   Nay, then, ‘tis time to stir him from his trance./I pray, awake, sir. 1.1.168-9
   Nor can we be distinguished by our faces/For man or master. 1.1.191.2

2. Lucentio and Petruchio, both newcomers to Padua, arrive in town and tell companions what it is they're looking for on their travels. Compare the two men's speeches (1.1.1-24 and 1.2.47-55). In small groups, read aloud the lines of each, side by side, and repeat again, several times. Then discuss the two. What do you imagine to be their differences? Similarities? Compare their language. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3a, 1C4a, 1C5a, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 2B3c, 2B4c, 4B4b)

3. This is a play of multiple disguises. Masks conceal masks, and by the end of Act I, you might well be confused! In groups of four, return to Act I and review the various characters who put on masks. Taping a piece of paper to the front and back of each of you, write the name of the character's real identity on the back, and his assumed identity on the front. Lucentio, Tranio, Hortensio and Lucentio (for a second time) take on new identities. Once all four are labeled, move around and guess the name you can’t see on the front or back of your group members. Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3a)

ON YOUR OWN

4. There will be a lot of sexual stereotypes thrown around (and mocked) in this play. Get them out on the table. Write a list of 10 things that annoy you about the opposite sex. (You can also do a freewrite exercise rather than a list.) Come back together as a group and discuss your perceptions of gender stereotypes. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3a, 1B4a, 1B5a, 3B3a, 3B4a, 3C5a, 4A4a, 4B4b)

5. Metaphors have specific meaning to both the perceptions of others on a character and the perceptions of themselves. If you were to assign an animal's characteristics to your relationship with your boyfriend, girlfriend, or your friends, what animal would that be? Freewrite your answer. This is not to be collected, but shared by a few brave students. Then have a follow up conversation or freewrite: If your friends were to assign an animal to you, would it be different? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A4a, 2A3a, 2A4a, 3B3a, 3B4c, 4A4a, 4B4b)

6. An emblem is a common symbol we use to signify a well-known idea: “Death” is symbolized by a hooded, bent figure carrying a sickle; “Justice” is portrayed by a blindfolded woman who holds balanced scales in her hand. Gremio at one point comments: “O this learning, what a thing it is!” Imagine what an emblem would look like that you think sums up Gremio’s point of view about the process of education. Draw or write about it. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3A3a, 3A4a, 3A5a, 3B3a, 3B5a)
**ACT II**

**AS A CLASS**

1. Baptista has a job set out in front of him to select the best suitors for his daughters’ hands in marriage. Ask the class to write down some interview questions that they think would be good for Baptista to ask these suitors. Then, select a few students to role-play the suitors and put on your own Shakespearean version of “The Dating Game.” One student can play Baptista and pose the questions suggested by the class while the others answer the questions in character. Ask the class to predict which suitor should end up with which daughter. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ca, 1Cb, 2Ba, 3A)

**IN SMALL GROUPS**

2. A distraught Hortensio returns to safe male company to report Katharina’s abusive behavior. Baptista and Petruchio listen to his report. In groups of four, one person read aloud the lines of Hortensio, another, Baptista’s, another Petruchio’s in Act 2, scene 1, lines 138-158. As each speaks, improvise the unspoken, private thoughts of the other two men—and of Katharina, who may be overhearing this conversation from the next room. What is each thinking, but not saying? Then, experiment with different ways that Petruchio might deliver his response (2.1.155-158). (From the Cambridge School Shakespeare series.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3a, 1B4a, 1B5a, 2B3a, 2B4a, 2B5a, 2B3c, 2B4c, 4B5a)

3. Baptista lives in a very different world from ours: a world where it is the father’s responsibility to arrange marriage and financial security for his heirs. Yet Baptista tells Petruchio, a wealthy (and willing) suitor to Katharina that he must first obtain “that special thing...for that is all in all.” In small groups, discuss what you understand so far about Baptista as a father. What does he want? What does he not want? What are some different reasons that he might voice this condition to Petruchio? (Also, refer to his lines, Act 2, scene 1, lines 315-387, as he arranges Bianca’s marriage). Reconvene with the rest of your class to share your group’s ideas. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C4b, 1C5b, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 4A4a, 4B4d, 4B5b)

4. Shakespeare uses images repeatedly to “encode” a play with his themes. One helpful way to “decode” the play’s themes is to pick up the repetitions by echoing them aloud. In groups of five, read aloud Act 2, scene 1, lines 326-400 with three taking the written parts, one echoing every word that relates to age, and the fifth person echoing every word that relates to youth. As a small group, begin to discuss why Shakespeare might be playing with a theme of youth versus age in this comedy. What does the voice of each represent? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B4b, 1B5b, 1C3a, 1C4b, 1C5b, 2A3a, 2A4a, 2A5a)

5. The persuasive power of money in the choice of marriage partners is clear in this mercantile society of Renaissance Italy that Shakespeare depicts. But are we so different today in an age where marriage is based not on parental arrangement but free choice? In small groups, discuss your ideas. How important do you think money and social status are when we make marriage choices today? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A4a, 4B4b)
6. Shakespeare’s texts contained many clues to help his actors, who often had only a few days to learn and rehearse a play. He wrote much of his plays in blank verse—unrhyming lines containing typically 10 syllables (give or take a syllable here and there). Have you ever noticed lines that are indented, starting well to the right of other lines? Sometimes, the ten syllables are divided between two lines of text and are shared by two speakers. By sharing a line, Shakespeare indicated to his actors that the pace was fast and the two lines were meant to be delivered as one. Sometimes, a line is noticeably shorter than 10 syllables, with no other character meant to complete it because the next line again contains the full ten syllables. These short lines break the rhythm and often occur at a critical point in the play, alerting actors to take a dramatic pause, to think, listen, or perform an action. In the famous “wooing scene” between Kate and Petruchio, there are a series of shared lines—and in some cases, three lines making one complete line of verse. In groups of four, practice aloud Act 2, scene 1, lines 191-231, with two people speaking the lines, and two people listening and directing the action. Then switch the actors and directors and try the scene again. As you speak the lines, decide where they sound better with pauses inserted between the dialogue and where the cues should be picked up quickly—like running a relay race! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A3b, 1B3b, 2A3d, 2A4d, 2B4b)

7. A tableau is a wordless, still (or almost still) picture made by bodies assuming certain poses and conveying a particular mood or image. An enacted play often ends with a tableau that the director creates to leave a dramatic impression in the minds of the audience. Petruchio uses metaphor to describe the great energy of the impending meeting that he anticipates between him and Kate. In groups of five, take one of the following lines and speak it aloud several times to each other. Begin to move around one another, and create a tableau that expresses the imagery and mood of your line/s. Read your line/s to the class. Present each of the tableaux and complete Petruchio’s series of images through your pictures. Read your line/s again. Discuss your ideas and your classmates’ reactions. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A4a, 1A4b, 1B4a, 1C4a, 1C4b, 2B3a, 2B4a, 4A4b, 4B4b)

8. In groups of three, review Act 2 and highlight all the sentences you can find that refer to knowing, knowledge or being known. Now, say them aloud together. Discuss why Shakespeare might use so many words in _The Shrew_ about knowledge and education. Re-convene as a class and discuss your ideas. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3a, 1C4a, 1C5b, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 4A3a, 4A5a)

**ON YOUR OWN**

9. Shakespeare, like all great writers, uses metaphor to establish character and motivation (not to mention humor). Start keeping your own metaphorical personal catalog. Just to get you started… “If you were a time of day, what would you be? A period in history? A type of car? A song?” Volunteers will offer their best one and then discuss. Why is it a good metaphor? How could it be written? What does it imply? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Aa, 1Ba, 1Ce, 3A)
Classroom Activities

10. Now, in pairs, start your own metaphorical catalog for one or two characters in the play. Start your catalog with Shakespeare’s associations, but go on to include your own! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3a, 1C4a, 1C5a, 2B3a, 3B3a, 3B4a, 4A4a, 4A5a, 4B4b)

11. Many writers use visualization techniques to “get into a story.” It can also be helpful when you’re reading a play that does not have the type of setting description a novel does. Walk through Baptista’s house. Close your eyes and listen. “You are standing outside Baptista’s front door. What does it look like? What color is it? Does it need paint? Open the door—don’t worry, no one’s home and you’ve been invited to look around. What do you see?” Continue from there. Walk over to the couch, sit down and look around. Or walk into the kitchen. Or into Katharina and then Bianca’s bedrooms. What do they see? After you’ve spent some time in the house and discussing the possibilities with your classmates, now open your eyes and freewrite. Describe what you found most interesting about the house. Then come back together and discuss. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3a, 1C4a, 1C5a, 2B3a, 3B3a, 3B4a, 4A4a, 4A5a, 4B4b)

12. Kate and Petruchio’s first meeting is a battle of banter. Look at Act 2, scene 1 (they meet at line 177) for four kinds of clues that Shakespeare wrote into his script to help the actors with meaning: assonance, alliteration, antithesis and repetition. Using the following notations, mark up the text (or a photocopy) as you find these four clues:

- Assonance: circle the letters
- Alliteration: draw a square around the letters
- Antithesis: circle the words (or phrases) and draw a line connecting them
- Repetition: underline the first time a word or phrase appears with a single line, the second time with a double line, etc.

Discuss your findings as a group. What does each of these clues communicate to the actor and Shakespeare’s audience about the characters? As an additional and related activity, you can search for all these same clues in a children’s book, like Dr. Seuss, or a favorite piece of hip-hop music. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1Aa, 1B3b, 1Ce, 2Aa, 4Aa, 4Bb)

ACT III

IN SMALL GROUPS

1. Intrigue, secrets and private language abound in Shrew—and Act 3 with Bianca and her various suitors is a fun place to explore the theme. In groups of three, select one person with a secret, one person for whom the secret is intended, and a third person from whom the secret is to be kept. Try to communicate between the two of you without the third person’s understanding, using another language, code, mime or positioning. The third person can’t physically intrude. (From the Cambridge School Shakespeare series.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2B3a, 2B3c, 2B4c, 4B5a)

2. In groups of six taking the parts of those who enter in Act 3, scene 2, speak Katharina’s lines (3.2.8-20) and improvise the private reactions of the other five to Katharina’s plight. How sympathetic are Baptista, Gremio, Tranio, Bianca and Lucentio based on what you know of each of these characters and their relationship with Kate? (From the Cambridge School Shakespeare series.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3a, 1C4a, 1C5a, 2B3a, 2B5a)
3. Petruchio’s behavior at the wedding is extreme—by any account. Some directors and traditions choose to play it as evidence of a male tyrant. Others approach the scene quite humorously and interpret his behavior as part of a larger “lesson plan” for Kate. In groups, discuss Petruchio’s behavior: why he arrives late, dressed outrageously, and then creates such a scene at the church. What are some of the possibilities? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3a, 1C4a, 1C5a, 2B3a, 2B5a, 4A4a, 4A4a, 4B4b)

4. Petruchio has proved himself to be predictably unpredictable! He seems to change his course of action with each line he utters. Clear a space in your classroom, and everyone walk around the room reading aloud Petruchio’s lines, Act 3, scene 2, lines 174-8 and 180-7. At each punctuation mark, stop abruptly, turn at least 90 degrees, and then continue reading—and moving. Repeat several times. Use plenty of energy and enthusiasm. Talk as a class afterwards how Petruchio’s language matches his changing moods and decisions. (From Cambridge School Shakespeare series.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A3a, 1A4a, 1A5a, 2B3a, 2B5a)

5. “To me she’s married, not unto my clothes.” In groups of four, improvise a scene between parents and a newlywed couple. The scene should be in your words, but contain Shakespeare’s line above. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2B3a, 2B5a, 4A3a, 4a4b, 4B4b, 5C3b)

6. In groups of 10, pose for the Minola’s wedding album in such a way that gives a good idea about the wedding party and the guests. (From the Cambridge School Shakespeare series.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2B2a, 2B5a, 4B4b)

7. Tranio has some things to say about the absent Petruchio in Act 3, scene 2, lines 21-25. In pairs, read these lines aloud, alternating them between you. What do you think about Tranio’s view here? Look for evidence (not only in Petruchio’s character, but also in Tranio’s, the speaker in this case) to support or refute this view of Petruchio. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3b, 1C4b, 1C5b, 2B3c, 2B4c)

ON YOUR OWN

8. An actor can’t just get up on stage and repeat the lines—even with lots of feeling. She’s got to be figuring out—just like we do in real life—“What is it I want here?” So, list each character who appears in this act. Write a single sentence for each that begins, “What I want is...” Now, as a class, compare your sentences. How much agreement upon their motives is there? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 3B3a, 3C4a, 4A4a)

9. In Act 3, scene 2, Biondello gives a detailed description of Petruchio’s wedding garb and train. How does this imagery work for you? Draw a picture of what you think Petruchio looks like on his wedding day and then compare your drawing to some of your classmates’ creations. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cd, 2Ba)

ACT IV

IN SMALL GROUPS

1. As he did earlier on with the description of Kate and Petruchio’s outrageous wedding, Shakespeare uses report rather than live action to give us information about the journey home to Petruchio’s country home. Director Zefferelli chose to theatricalize this scene rather than report offstage action by way of Grumio. In groups of four, pair off and debate Zefferelli’s versus Shakespeare’s decision. What is lost? What is gained? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cc, 1Ce, 4Aa, 4B4b)
2. Soliloquies are important tools in Shakespeare's dramatic technique. The soliloquy is ideally suited to a thrust stage where the actors can approach the audience and speak intimately with it, as if one-on-one. On the proscenium stage where there is much greater distance between the actor and the audience, the soliloquy tends to become a moment when the character talks aloud to himself. The soliloquy allows the audience to learn about the character and his motivations privately—that is, without the knowledge of other characters. In your small groups, first read Petruchio’s soliloquy (4.1.159-182) aloud. Then, discuss what the effect of this partnership with the audience is. What responses to Petruchio’s question could you give back to him? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A3b, 1C4a, 1C3d, 1C4d, 2A3d, 2A4d, 2B3a, 2B4a)

3. Rarely is one of Shakespeare’s plays performed in its entirety. Most would last between three and four hours—even without an intermission! And so, very rarely in 400 years of performance have his plays been staged or filmed in their entirety. Directors have to cut the text based on the parts of story that they view as more or less significant. You can learn about Shakespeare’s use of language by reducing a long speech while trying to retain its original meaning and purpose. In your small groups, work together to edit Act 4, scene 3, making a 190-line scene into a 100-line scene. When you have finished, present your abridgment to the class and see how well each version works. What is lost by abbreviating, if anything? What might be gained? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 3A3, 3A4, 3B3a, 3B4c)

4. As actors prepare to perform their roles in Shakespeare, they must “decode” the text, finding clues in the way that Shakespeare uses language to communicate meaning. One guaranteed technique to help discover Shakespeare's focus in a long and complicated speech is to find the antitheses—all the opposing words, phrases or ideas that he sets up against each other. These pairs of opposites show the actor—and us—what Shakespeare wants to emphasize as an issue. In small groups, read aloud Petruchio’s speech to Kate, Act 4, scene 3, lines 163-177. Then highlight all the pairs of opposites you can find and read the speech aloud again, placing extra emphasis on the opposites you’ve found. What ideals might Shakespeare be suggesting here by emphasizing these pairs of opposites? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A3b, 1A4b, 1B3c, 2A3a, 2A4a, 2A5a, 2A3d, 2A4d, 4A4a, 4A4b)

5. Hortensio has a series of asides to the audience in Act 4, scene 4 and Act 4, scene 5. In your group, find these. How does Shakespeare use Hortensio’s asides? What effect do they have on the audience? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3a, 1C4b, 1C5b, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 2A3d, 2A4d, 2B3c, 2B4c)

6. “I know it is the moon.” Another shared line (4.5.16) at a critical moment in the play. In small groups, practice Act 4, scene 5, lines 12-22, speaking this shared line in different ways. Why do you think Shakespeare might have used a shared verse line here? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A4a, 4A4b)
ON YOUR OWN

7. Tell the story of Act 4 using newspaper headlines. Or, review each scene and come up with a title for each that:
   1) tells the reader what happens; and 2) conveys the mood of the scene. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3c, 1C4c, 1C5c, 3B3a, 3B4a, 3B5)

ACT V

AS A CLASS

1. A number of characters are behaving in surprising, or at least unpredictable, ways here in Act 5, scene 2. What is going on? With Bianca who “awakes” to a new role? With Kate as she delivers her famous and controversial speech? With Petruchio who wins the wager yet asks for more proof from his pupil? With the rest of the class prepared to ask questions, “hot seat” each of these characters and see what some of the possibilities might be. Repeat several times with different students on the hot seat and see if various explanations (that don’t always agree) come forward. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 2B3a, 2B4a, 2B5a, 4A4a, 4A4b, 4B5a)

IN SMALL GROUPS

2. In Act 5, scene 1, the plots and “supposes” of the younger generation are at last exposed to the elders. In your small groups, review the reactions of the fathers to the revelations in this scene. What’s the struggle between the two generations? Who wins? Improvise a situation from your own experience that parallels this struggle between the generations—and its outcome. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 4A3a, 4A4a)

3. Katharina’s final speech is the longest in the play, and full of some of the play’s most beautiful verse and imagery. With the class divided into six groups, each group take one of the short passages below, speak it aloud several times, and perhaps several different ways. Now, create a tableau—a still-life picture made of bodies—that graphically “speaks” Kate’s words. In presenting your tableau to the rest of the class, one of your group should stand outside the picture and speak the text. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A4a, 1A4b, 1A4c, 1B4a, 1B3c, 1C4a, 1C4b, 4A4b, 4B4b)

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And dart not scornful glances from those eyes
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor. 5.2.137-138
It blots thy beauty as frosts do bite the meads,
Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds 5.2.139-140
A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip, or touch one drop of it. 5.2.142-145
And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foul contending rebel
And graceless traitor to her loving lord? 5.2.157-160
I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love and obey. 5.2.161-164
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4. Katharina’s long speech poses a challenge to the director, actress and audience in our times. In groups of seven, one person reads the speech aloud (5.2.136-179). The others in the group choose particular aspects of the speech to listen for: reference to men, women, love, weakness, strength and rank. As the speech is read, echo aloud the words that reflect your “part.” Certain words may be echoed by several people at once. Then talk about the ideas in the speech. What do you think Katharina says about men and women? Or, in general, about human beings in their relationship with each other? (Adapted from the Cambridge School Shakespeare series.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B4b, 1B4b, 1C3a, 1C4b, 1C5b, 2A3a, 2A4a, 2A5a)

5. Actresses and their directors choose to perform Kate’s final speech differently. With three volunteers—female OR male students who don’t mind playing an exaggerated role—take turns reading Kate’s final speech. One should read it with sarcasm (mocking her own words), another with submission (complete belief so that she is preaching to the audience), and another as if a canned speech (a politician forced to make a concession/apology she does not want to make). Use gestures and movement to add color! The goal is to overemphasize, to get the class laughing but also to illuminate the vastly different ways of interpreting Kate’s problematic last speech. After the three readings, as a class discuss the differences. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 2A3b, 2A4b, 2A5b, 2B3a, 2B4a, 2B5a, 2B3c, 2B4c, 4A4a, 4B4b)

6. Petruchio’s wilful suppositions as to the character of Katharina, though they are grounded at the start in no detectable reality, are the first mental acts that bring character into being. ‘Love wrought these miracles.’ There is something deeper than humor, however, in Petruchio’s calling Katharina affable, modest, and mild: in the outcome, thinking makes it so. —Donald Stauffer, 1949

In your small groups, discuss Stauffer’s point of view. Is this your understanding of how Petruchio seems to succeed with Kate? Talk about situations you’re familiar with in your own lives where “thinking makes it so.” What might this suggest about our attitudes toward ourselves—and others—and the power they may hold in reflecting our experience of things? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 2B3a, 2B4a, 2B5a, 4A3a, 4A4a)

**After Reading The Play**

**As a class**

1. Men and women are treated quite differently in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Do you think this means Shakespeare was sexist? As a class, divide into two groups. One acts as the prosecution, creating a case proving that Shakespeare was sexist. The other group acts as the defense to create a case defending Shakespeare’s good name. Remember to use the text as your evidence. Now put on a mock trial using your teacher as the judge! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bb, 1Cb, 1Cd, 2Ad, 2Bc, 4Ab)
All the characters in *The Taming of the Shrew* seem to have different opinions of what is going on. As a class, divide into several groups and assign each group a character (Katharina, Petruchio, Bianca, Baptista, Lucentio, etc.). Summarize the story in as few sentences as possible according to your character, then compare the different points-of-views. *(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cd, 2Ab)*

**IN SMALL GROUPS**

3. In small groups, retell the story of *The Taming of the Shrew* from the point of view of a particular character. The others in your group will question you about your point of view—either from their own characters’ points of view, or from their own as classmates. *(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C4b, 1C5b, 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b)*

4. In groups of 4-5, choose a character from the play and find a series of lines that tell about him/her, either through the character’s own words, or through words said about him/her by other people. Cite the passages. As a group, decide how you will present your character to the class. You can recite the lines in a row, take parts, repeat and echo certain lines while others are being spoken, move around, etc. Then, be prepared to answer questions, and defend your choices of characteristic lines! *(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3b, 1C4b, 1C5b, 3B3b, 3B4c, 3C5b, 4B4b)*

5. In small groups, discuss the possibility of Sly returning at the end of the play-within-a-play. Improvise a scene with Christopher Sly after he has viewed the play. (You can compare your version with the one in *The Taming of a Shrew*, an anonymous play that scholars now believe to be a version of Shakespeare’s play as it was once performed.) *(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B5a, 4B4b)*

6. In small groups, become the directors of a new production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Half of you want to keep the Sly Induction intact. The other half, influenced by such famous versions as Zefferelli’s film and the BBC television production, argues to cut Sly out entirely. Argue between you about what is gained or what is lost by each approach. *(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B3a, 4B4a, 4B5a, 5C4b, 5C5b, 5C4c)*

7. But though in marriage the dominant woman threatens the proper ordering of a household, in courtship the woman enjoys a superior position. Courtship is not, then, very good training for marriage. Women who take seriously such lavish expressions of praise and worship as sonnet lovers heap upon them will not take easily to the altered marital situation. . . In *The Shrew* the theme is clearly presented in the wooing and wedding of Bianca. —Charles Brooks, 1960

In small groups, discuss Brooks’ distinction between the woman’s role, first in a dating relationship, and later in marriage. Based upon your experience, what do you think? *(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3b, 1C4b, 1C5b, 1C3c, 1C4c, 1C5c, 2B3a, 2B4a, 2B5a, 4A4a, 4B4b)*

8. In the popular television show *E! True Hollywood Story*, a presenter tells the story of a well-known person’s life. As the presenter narrates, various friends and relatives appear to tell their part in the story. In groups of 8 or more, choose a character in *The Taming of the Shrew* as the subject of the program. One person in each group takes the role of presenter while the other students take on the other supporting roles. Note to teacher: This activity usually works best over two lessons: one devoted to preparation, the second for each group to make its presentation. *(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cd, 4Aa, 4Bb)*
9. Looking back and reflecting upon the play, choose one question that’s of importance to you in The Taming of the Shrew and answer it, using the text and performance as your resources. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2B3a, 2B5a, 2B4b, 3A3, 3A4, 3A5, 3B3a, 3C5a)

10. Choose three of the main characters that you’d like to spend some time reflecting on. Just as actors do as they prepare for a role, consider these two questions: What is each character afraid of? What does each want most? Then, write an essay in which you discuss the three individually first, and then, taken as a social grouping, how did their competing or compatible personal issues impact the others around them? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1B4c, 1B5c, 3A3, 3A4, 3A5, 3B3a, 3B5a, 3C5a)

11. “What does that mean—‘tame?’” “It is an act too often neglected,” said the fox. “It means to establish ties.” “To establish ties?” “Just that,” said the fox. “To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world.” “I am beginning to understand,” said the little prince. “There is a flower... I think that she has tamed me...” “It is possible,” said the fox. “On the Earth one sees all sorts of things.” —Antoine Saint-Exupéry, The Little Prince

What is your definition of “taming”? Would you choose another word instead? Is it a necessary part of a relationship? How closely does the fox’s definition pertain to Petruchio’s definition? How do they differ? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Cb, 1Cc, 2Ba, 3A, 3Ba, 3C5a)

12. [Petruchio’s] aim is not the crude one of the traditional wife-tamer, or to pulverize the woman’s will as well as, in most cases her body. What Petruchio wants, and ends up with, is a Katharina of unbroken spirit and gaiety who has suffered only minor physical discomfort and who has learned the value of self-control and of caring about someone other than herself. —Anne Barton, 1974

What do you think? Using the text as your evidence, do you agree with Barton’s point of view? Has Kate been liberated from her own oppressive behavior or has she lost her identity and been the emotional victim of Petruchio’s force? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3b, 1C4b, 1C5b, 1C3c, 1C4c, 1C5c, 2B3a, 2B4a, 2B5a, 3A3, 3A4, 3A, 3B3a, 3B4a, 3C5a)

13. The new ABC Family sitcom 10 Things I Hate about You is based on Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew. The story is updated to take place in a modern-day high school. Imagine that you are directing an adaptation of this play. Where would you set it? Which actors would you cast? Would you delete or change any of the characters to better suit your adaptation? Get creative! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Cb, 1Cc, 2Ab)
Preparation for the Performance You'll See in Small Groups

1. Before you see the characters of *The Taming of the Shrew* brought to life on stage by the vision of a director, spend some time imagining your own versions. Then after you see the play, contrast your vision to that of Director Josie Rourke and the actors. In groups, imagine directing the play and casting these parts. What do they each look like? Who in your class could best play each? What stars would you cast in each role? When you see Chicago Shakespeare's production, how does its interpretation compare to yours? In what ways, specifically, do you notice the differences or similarities? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

2. In traditional Shakespearean theater, the audience (unlike that in a more modern auditorium) is always in view of each other. The experience of theater is one of community. We all are present and watching together a story that has been enacted many, many times for hundreds of years and in hundreds of cities all over the world. The thrust stage at Chicago Shakespeare Theater is much like the stages of Elizabethan theaters—and situates the action of the play with members of the audience facing each other around the stage. When during the performance do you become aware of other audience members? How does this affect your own experience? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

3. *The Taming of the Shrew* is a play that looks at the relationships between people in power and people with less or no power—masters and servants among them. In small groups, discuss as many ways as you can imagine to differentiate servants and masters for a theater audience that doesn’t yet know the cast of characters. Then reconvene as a class and compare your lists. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

Back in the Classroom in Small Groups

1. Working in groups of three, you are a team of copywriters for an advertising firm. Brainstorm your ideas and write an ad for the *Chicago Tribune* about the play you saw. Remember that you must characterize the play and attract a large audience in just a few words. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 1C3e, 2B3a, 3B3a, 3C3a, 3C4a, 4B4b, 4B5b)

2. Different productions treat Kate’s emotional response to Petruchio very differently. Some productions portray Kate as one who is never tamed, but pretends to be. Others portray her as a woman who by the end is broken, severely depressed and victimized. Still others depict an attraction between the couple immediately that is strong and mutual. Thinking back to the performance you’ve just seen, how would you describe Kate’s response to Petruchio? When does she become interested in him? How do you know? When does she accept her role? How do you know? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3c, 1C3b, 1C4b, 1C5b, 4B4b)

3. Petruchio presents himself as a worldly adventurer and a soldier. In reading the play, did you believe his story? In seeing the play, are you meant to believe him? What are the specific visual and verbal clues that you recall to support your position? Did the production in any way change your opinion of Petruchio? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b)
4. Baptista can be viewed in many lights, depending upon the director’s and actor’s interpretation. What kind of father is he in Chicago Shakespeare’s production? Does this interpretation differ from your own as you read the play? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b)

I wanted the play to be about Kate and about a woman instinctively fighting sexism. But I don’t really think that’s what the play is about. It’s not the story of Kate: it’s the story of Petruchio. He gets the soliloquies, he gets the moments of change. All the crucial moments of the story for Kate, she’s offstage.

—Paola Dionisotti

I think the play is about Kate being liberated. At the end that so-called ‘submission’ speech is really about how her spirit has been allowed to soar free.

—Sinead Cusack

Different actors and directors approach the role of Katharina in very different ways. Above are the comments of two actors who played Kate for England’s Royal Shakespeare Company. How do their viewpoints compare to the production you’ve just seen and its portrayal of Kate? How do they compare to your own point of view? (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 4A3a, 4A4a, 4B4b)

5. **ON YOUR OWN**

6. You are a drama critic for your school newspaper. Write a review of the performance for your paper. Briefly recount the plot. Discuss the parts of the production—including the casting, acting, setting, music, costumes, cuts—you particularly liked or did not like, and explain why. How easy/difficult was it to understand Shakespeare’s language? How much did you “believe” what was happening? (These are good clues to a production’s strengths or weakness.) (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3a, 1B4a, 1C3d, 1C4d, 2B3a, 3B3a, 3B4a, 3C3b, 5C4b)

7. Design a CD or album cover for *The Taming of the Shrew*. Give related song titles with descriptions of the lyrics. And for extra credit…create your own CD from music you know. Annotate each song to explain who sings it, to whom, and at what exact moment in the play (even the exact line number!) when the character/s break into song. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3d, 1C4d, 1C5d, 3B3a, 3C3b, 3C4b)

8. After determining what astrological sign the characters of Shrew were born under, write a horoscope for the play’s main characters. Be prepared to quote line and verse to support your astrological intuition about each character’s sign! (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C3b, 1C4b, 1C3d, 1C4d, 2B3a, 3A3, 3B3a, 3B4a, 3C3a, 3C4a)

9. Create an enticing, descriptive, alluring travel brochure for the setting of *The Taming of the Shrew* that would encourage tourists to plan their vacations to Padua (with a day trip to Petruchio’s country home…). (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3Ba, 3C3a, 3C4a, 3Cb, 5A3a, 5Ba)

10. Scrapbooking your journey through the play, create a quote book. Match quotes from the text with current photos or drawings. (Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B3b, 2B3a, 3B3a, 3B4a, 3C3b, 3C4b, 5B3a, 5B4a)
CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's website
www.chicagoshakes.com

COMPREHENSIVE LINK SITES

William Shakespeare and the Internet
http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/

Shakespeare in Europe Sh:in:E (Basel University)
http://www.unibas.ch/shine/home

Touchstone Database (University of Birmingham, UK)
http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/welcome.html

Absolute Shakespeare
http://absoluteshakespeare.com

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

*indicates a specific focus on The Taming of the Shrew, in addition to other plays

The Folger Shakespeare Library
http://www.folger.edu/index.cfm

ShakespeareHigh.com (Amy Ulen’s “Surfing with the Bard")
http://www.shakespearehigh.com

Web English Teacher*
http://www.webenglishteacher.com

Proper Elizabethan Accents
http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html

The English Renaissance in Context: Multimedia Tutorials (University of Pennsylvania)
http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.htm

The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider
http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html

The Costumer’s Manifesto (University of Alaska)
http://www.costumes.org

Rare Map Collection (The University of Georgia)
http://www.libs.uga.edu/darchive/hargrett/maps/maps.html
Techno Shakespeare

Spark Notes*
http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/

Shakespeare Resource Center*
http://bardweb.net/plays/index.html

The Taming of the Shrew

E-text of the 1566 English translation by George Gascoigne of Ariosto’s “Supposes”
http://leehrsn.stormloader.com//gg//supposes.html#top

BBC’s “Shakespeare Re-Told” 2005 adaptation
Includes backstage interviews with the director and cast, production photos for use in class, character descriptions of this very smart 21st-century update. The DVD is available through Amazon or the BBC shop—some clips are on YouTube (search “Shakespeare Retold”).
www.bbc.co.uk/drama/shakespeare/tamingoftheshrew/

A Teacher Guide to the Signet Edition

Setting the Stage for Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew
http://www.bcps.org/offices/lis/models/setstage/index.html

Elizabethan Wedding Customs
http://www.william-shakespeare.info/elizabethan-wedding-customs.htm

Penguin Classics Teachers’ Guides
http://www.penguinclassics.co.uk/nf/shared/WebDisplay/0,,82544_1_10,00.html

Shakespeare and Elizabethan England

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
http://www.shakespeare.org.uk/

The Elizabethan Theatre
http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/index.html

Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet
http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/life.htm

Queen Elizabeth I
http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm

Shakespeare and the Globe: Then and Now (Encyclopedia Britannica)
http://search.eb.com/shakespeare/index2.html

Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend (The Newberry Library’s Queen Elizabeth exhibit)
http://www.newberry.org/elizabeth/
Texts and Early Editions

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html

Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto (British Library)
http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html

The First Folio and Early Quartos of William Shakespeare (University of Virginia)
http://etext.virginia.edu/frames/shakeframe.html

Furness Shakespeare Library (University of Pennsylvania)
http://dewey.lib.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/

The Internet Shakespeare Editions (University of Victoria, British Columbia)
http://ise.uvic.ca/Foyer/index.html

What Is a Folio? (MIT’s “Hamlet on the Ramparts”)
http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm

Words, Words, Words

Alexander Schmidt’s Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary (Tufts University’s Perseus Digital Library)
http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079

Word Frequency Lists (Mt. Ararat High School)
http://www.mta75.org/curriculum/english/Shakes/index.html

Shakespeare in Performance

The Internet Movie Database: William Shakespeare
http://www.us.imdb.com/find?q=Shakespeare

The Internet Broadway Database
http://www.ibdb.com

Shakespeare in Art

Shakespeare Illustrated (Emory University)
http://wwwenglish.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html

The Faces of Elizabeth I
http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/elizface.htm

Tudor England: Images
http://www.marileccody.com/images.html

Absolute Shakespeare
http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare_pictures.htm
Suggested Reading

A bible for Shakespearean actors, this classic book by John Barton (of Royal Shakespeare Company fame) offers any reader with an interest in Shakespeare’s words an insider’s insight into making Shakespeare’s language comprehensible.

Written by famous actors about the Shakespearean roles they have performed on the English stage, this collection of personal essays offers the reader a privileged look inside the characters and the artist’s craft.

Resources abound discussing commedia. This is among the many useful overviews covering the subject within the larger framework of theater history.

The classic reference detailing Shakespeare’s sources. Out of print, this multi-volume resource is well worth searching for in a library.

Part of DK Eyewitness Books’ “children’s series,” this title, plus a number of others (Costume, Arms and Armor, Battle, Castle, Mythology) offers students of any age beautifully illustrated background information to complement a classroom’s Shakespeare study.

A terrific, easy-to-use Shakespeare dictionary that’s a mainstay in CST’s rehearsal hall.

Frye’s work is a classic in Shakespearean scholarship, and serves still as an excellent lens through which to understand Shakespeare’s comedies.

This unparalleled series, used extensively as a resource in CST’s education efforts, includes most of Shakespeare’s plays, as well as a book devoted to the Sonnets. Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully thanks Cambridge University Press for its permission to include various classroom activities annotated throughout this Teacher Handbook.

As “missionary” and inspiration to the “active Shakespeare” movement worldwide, Rex Gibson compiles into one incomparable resource activities that encourage students to playfully and thoughtfully engage with Shakespeare’s language and its infinite possibilities.

A classic, post-war critical analysis, which is both readable and humanistic, devoting a chapter to each play.

This book is a must-have resource for anyone who loves to place Shakespeare, his writing, and his royal characters in an historical context.

This very reliable, accessible series of Shakespearean criticism is a good resource for many plays in the canon. Each is a single scholar’s voice, as opposed to a compilation of various shorter essays.
The editors combed the canon for lines that will incite any classroom into speaking Shakespeare with wild abandon!

Many titles are available in the excellent series of performance-based Shakespeare criticism.

Though *The Taming of the Shrew* is not included, this three-volume set, edited by the Folger Library’s Director of Education is a treasure chest of creative and comprehensive lesson plans.

Not for the prudish, Partridge’s classic work offers an alphabetical glossary of the sexual and scatological meanings of Shakespeare’s language. It will help the reader (including even the most Shakespeare-averse) understand another reason for this playwright’s broad appeal on stage…

Among the many excellent costume books available, Peacock’s offers hundreds and hundreds of annotated sketches—an essential resource (from our point of view) for every English classroom’s study of Shakespeare.


This excellent three-volume set (Book One includes *The Taming of the Shrew*) is a collection of critical essays edited for secondary school students on 23 of Shakespeare’s plays plus the Sonnets.

This abridged version of Stone’s magnum opus presents his treatise about the evolution of the family in England from the impersonal, economically tied group to the smaller, affectively tied nuclear family.

George Bernard Shaw was one of Shakespeare’s most outspoken critics—and also one of the most humorous. Students who know of Shaw’s work, too, may enjoy having him as an ally!

Among many books on early modern theater in England, this one is particularly interesting as it traces the roots of the first public theaters in England.
Shakespeare and the art of theater open up many and varied paths of learning. Through one of the largest arts-in-education programs in the entire country, Team Shakespeare brings Shakespeare’s works to life for middle and high school students. Team Shakespeare is an expansive effort to share Shakespeare with young people and to celebrate the work of this great playwright, who embraced the limitless scope of imagination and the exploration of our complex human nature.

Team Shakespeare is supported, in part, by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.

Major annual support for Team Shakespeare provided by Bank of America, The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, Nuven Investments, Sheila Penrose and Ernie Mahaffey, Polk Bros. Foundation, Burton X. and Sheli Z. Rosenberg, Carol and Gordon Segal and the Segal Family Foundation II, Walt and Judy Skowronski, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, and Anonymous donors.