

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

By William Shakespeare
Directed by Chris Abraham

GRADE RECOMMENDATION

Suitable for Grade 5 and up.

STUDENT MATINÉE DATES

May 11, 14, 19, 27; June 16, 25; September 3, 17, 23, 29;
October 8.

ABOUT THE PLAY

The Taming of the Shrew is one of Shakespeare's earliest comedies, written sometime between 1590 and 1594, around the same time as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Comedy of Errors*. It was first published in the First Folio of 1623.

Several of Shakespeare's works feature a play within the play, and in *The Taming of the Shrew* this device is used to frame most of what we think of as the play itself. *Shrew* begins with what is called the "induction" scene (frequently not produced), in which a drunkard named Christopher Sly is convinced that he is a lord for whom a play – *The Taming of the Shrew* – is about to be presented. This framing device has many precedents in world literature, some of which may have been familiar to Shakespeare.

The story of Katherine and Petruchio itself was also a well-known plot and versions appear in works with which Shakespeare might have been familiar. However, most scholars believe that Shakespeare based his play on oral traditions rather than written works.

SYNOPSIS

The main action of *The Taming of the Shrew* takes place as a play within the play, performed for the benefit of a drunken tinker, Christopher Sly.

Baptista Minola, a wealthy widower of Padua, has two daughters: the demure and popular Bianca and her sharp-tongued and ill-tempered older sister, Katherine. Bianca already has two suitors – Hortensio and Gremio – when a third, Lucentio, arrives on the scene. Baptista, however, has decreed that no one can marry Bianca



until a husband has been found for Katherine.

A solution presents itself when Hortensio's friend Petruchio arrives in town looking for a wife. After meeting Katherine, Petruchio is unperturbed by her insults and resolves to marry her, leaving the way clear for Hortensio (posing as a music teacher), Lucentio (posing as a literary tutor) and the hapless Gremio to continue their pursuit of Bianca, whom Baptista decides to bestow on the wealthiest of the three.

An absurdly costumed Petruchio arrives late for his wedding and conducts himself outrageously throughout. Afterwards, instead of staying for the wedding banquet, he immediately carries the still-protesting Katherine off to his house in Verona. There he subjects her to a series of humiliations – having food prepared and then sending it away untouched, ordering fine clothes for her and then rejecting them in apparent rage – in a calculated strategy to break down her wilful disposition.

The success of his plan becomes apparent when, at a celebration following the secret marriage of Bianca and Lucentio, the reformed Katherine advises the other women present on the necessity of being a devoted and dutiful wife.

CONTENT ADVISORY FOR STUDENTS

Contains some sexual innuendo and slapstick comedy violence.

THEMES

- Marriage
- Society, Class & Happiness
- Transformation
- Theatre, Performance & Identity
- Gender & Misogyny
- Education
- Power, Language & Communication
- Love & Money
- Country vs City

MOTIFS

- Disguise
- Domestication
- Family
- Animals & Hunting
- Horses

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- All Grades: Language/English (Listening to Understand, Speaking to Communicate, Reading for Meaning & Critical Literacy)
- All Grades: Drama, Music, Visual Art
- Gr. 5 Health & PE (Healthy Living: Bullying/Violence; Growth & Development: Stress and Pressure; Gender Barriers & Expectations; Personal Safety & Injury Prevention)
- Gr. 6 Health & PE (Positive Social Interaction and Conflict Management)
- Gr. 6 Social Studies (Inclusiveness, Equity, Empathy & Respect)
- Gr. 7 Health & PE (Bullying/Harassment, Healthy Sexuality)
- Gr. 8 History (Historical Perspective)
- Gr. 11 – 12 Interdisciplinary Studies: Issues in Human Rights

- Gr. 11 – 12 Social Sciences & Humanities (Gender Studies / Equity & Social Justice / Dynamics of Human Relationships / Challenge & Change in Society)

ENRICHMENT

Study Guide available at stratfordfestival.ca/studyguides.

Prologues (interactive presentations on stage) at 11 a.m. before every student matinée except May 11, 27; June 25; September 3.

Private workshops and post-show chats may be arranged by calling the Education Department at 519.271.4040, ext. 2354.

Festival Theatre and Costume Warehouse tours may be arranged by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

Additional classroom activities and ideas for engagement with the text can be found at stratfordfestival.ca/teachingmaterials.

LET US TAKE CARE OF LUNCH!

Picnic lunches are available anytime (must be ordered two weeks in advance) and Student Deli Lunch Buffets are another option (subject to availability). For more information, see page 11 of the Schools Guide (available online) or ask the Groups and Schools Department when placing your ticket order.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Respect the actors and your fellow patrons. When the lights dim, it is time to be quiet and engage with the actors on stage. Be sure to turn off cell phones and refrain from texting, talking or eating, as this is disrespectful to the actors who are telling the story.

Respond to what you see through laughter, tears, smiles, giggles or captivated silence. The actors feed off your presence and response to their work on stage. Don't respond by talking to your neighbour; please wait until after the performance to discuss your thoughts.

BOOKING INFORMATION

Online

Order at any time and select your seats! Visit stratfordfestival.ca/festivaltrip.

Phone

1.800.567.1600 or 519.273.1600

Fax

519.273.3731

Email

groups@stratfordfestival.ca

Download an order form at

stratfordfestival.ca/orderform

Mail

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