

The Taming of the Shrew

By William Shakespeare

*Adapted by
Paul Caywood*

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THE STORY

In this hilarious play, Petruchio, who wants a rich wife, marries Katharina, "the shrew." Then he has to tame her. And that he does - by spirit, good-nature, and wit. The holy terror is subdued, but perhaps Katharina saw in Petruchio what she liked in a man and allowed herself to be tamed. Here is a play that is a loud and energetic romp from beginning to end. Like other Shakespearean comedies, this play lends itself to production by young people. Energetic teens thrive on action and clever dialogue, whether they are on the stage or in the audience.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

This adaptation, directed by Paul Caywood, was first presented at Woodruff High School in Peoria, Illinois, with the following cast:

Narrator - Fred Davis
Petruchio - Roger Gouran
Katharina - Nancy Wilson
Baptista - David Sills
Priest, Grumio, Tailor - Warren Harris
Lucentio - Gary King
Bianca - Janet Roszell

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 2 w, 2 flexible)

MALE ROLES:

PETRUCHIO: Katharina's suitor.

LUCENTIO: In love with Bianca.

BAPTISTA: The rich father of Katharina and Bianca.

FEMALE ROLES:

KATHARINA: A headstrong woman, the "shrew."

BIANCA: Her younger, gentler sister.

FLEXIBLE ROLES:

NARRATOR

GRUMIO / PRIEST / TAILOR

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PRODUCTION NOTES

The play is a comic romp telling of the stormy wooing of a hot-tempered woman by an obstinate man who is as determined and willful. But the actor playing Petruchio must realize that Petruchio quickly falls in love with Katharina. Then, by the use of clowning, teasing, and taunts, he changes her from a wild Kate to a conformable Kate. The cast must not take the story too seriously. They must involve themselves in the characters and situations and play them with spirit. Even the Narrator enjoys telling of the antics of the boisterous Katharina and Petruchio and responds to the images of bedlam that are in his mind. This arrangement of the play presents only the loud and animated confrontations between the "lovers," and the cast should relax and enjoy the scenes as they bring them to life. The play should be done in a very simple and non-realistic style.

PROPERTIES

Basket with dress (one sleeve Velcroed on.), cap, yardstick, tablecloth, book, tray with wooden platters, cups, and silverware.

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

(When the CURTAINS open, the audience sees a speaker's stand DR, a bench RC, and a table LC with a chair on each side of it. There are chairs at the back of the stage for the actors. They are arranged in two groups on either side of the stage, leaving the center area open. The actors sit in this order: SR - BIANCA, LUCENTIO, KATHARINA. SL - PETRUCHIO, GRUMIO, BAPTISTA. The actors come in from either side and take their seats. The Narrator comes in after the others and goes to the speaker's stand. He places a large book with the easily read title THE TAMING OF THE SHREW on the stand and begins to speak to the audience.)

NARRATOR: We're going to tell you the story of the taming of a shrew. What's a shrew? Well, one definition says it's "a mole-like animal with small eyes and velvety fur and a long-pointed nose." But, then, a second definition says it's "a loud, scolding woman." It's that second meaning we're going to be dealing with. Katharina was the elder daughter of Baptista, a rich gentleman of Padua, in Italy. She was a lady of such an ungovernable spirit and fiery temper, such a loud-tongued scold, that she was known in Padua by no other name than "Katharina the Shrew." It seemed very unlikely, indeed impossible, that any gentleman would ever be found to marry this lady, and, therefore, Baptista was much blamed for not giving his consent to the many excellent offers of marriage that were made to her gentle sister, Bianca. Baptista put off all Bianca's suitors with this excuse, that when the elder sister was fairly off his hands, they should have free leave to address young Bianca. It happened, however, that a gentleman named Petruchio came to Padua purposely to look for a wife, and he wasn't discouraged by these reports of Katharina's temper. Hearing she was rich and handsome, he resolved upon marrying this famous termagant, and turning her into a meek and manageable wife. And truly none was so fit to set about this Herculean labor as Petruchio, whose spirit was as high as Katharine's.

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NARRATOR: *(Cont'd.)* He was a witty and most happy-tempered fellow. He was wise, and of such a true judgment that he well knew how to feign a passionate and furious deportment, when his spirits were so calm that he could have laughed merrily at his own angry pretensions.

(PETRUCHIO and KATHARINA come to C.)

PETRUCHIO: *(As he comes.)* Good morrow, Kate, for that's your name, I hear.

KATHARINA: *(Sits on bench RC.)* Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing. They call me Katharina that do talk of me.

PETRUCHIO: *(Cross to her.)* You lie, in faith, for you are called plain Kate, and bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the curst; but, Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom, Kate of Kate Hall, my super-dainty Kate Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.

KATHARINA: *(Rises.)* Moved! in good time! *(Cross C.)* Let them that moved you hither remove you hence. I knew at first you were a moveable.

PETRUCHIO: *(Laughs.)* Why, what's a moveable?

KATHARINA: A joint stool.

PETRUCHIO: Thou hast hit it. *(Sits on bench, pats knee.)* Come, sit on me.

KATHARINA: Asses are made to bear, and so are you.

PETRUCHIO: *(Rises.)* Come, come, my wasp; i' faith, you are too angry.

KATHARINA: If I be waspish, best beware my sting.

PETRUCHIO: My remedy is then to pluck it out. *(He comes next to her and puts his left arm about her shoulders.)*

Good Kate, I am a gentleman.

KATHARINA: That I'll try!

(SHE starts to slap his face with her right hand, but PETRUCHIO seizes her wrist before she strikes.)

PETRUCHIO: I swear I'll cuff you if you strike.

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