

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

Character Notes

KATHERINA (KATHERINE, KATE)

The “shrew” of the title and the eldest daughter of Baptista Minola, a rich citizen of Padua in Italy. She is sharp-tongued and headstrong, making her poor material for a wife. Her rudeness disguises a deeply entrenched jealousy towards her prettier, softer sister, Bianca. Despite her long standing disdain for and rejection of marriage she eventually yields to the advances of Petruchio. She is attracted by his strength of character and is charmed by his fascination with her. The fact that he doesn't want her mild, obedient sister as his wife interests her. One interpretation of the play is that Kate gets little attention and/or love at home. Her mother is dead and her father is besotted with Bianca; her bad behaviour might well be a cry for help. Therefore when Kate's feisty spirit appears to be "tamed" by her husband, she is in reality simply responding favourably to his commitment and companionship, and eventually falling in love. This is not a manual for the advantages of domestic violence.

PETRUCHIO

Katherina's suitor and later husband is a fortune seeker from Verona. This sharp and boisterous man ignores all advice to the contrary and is determined to make Katherina his wife. He believes that unleashing his own bad temper and unacceptable behaviour will give Kate a taste of her own medicine and make her understand how unattractive her own behaviour is. To make the play work, Petruchio must illustrate a hidden fascination with Kate that is eventually transformed into love.

BIANCA

Baptista's younger daughter is sweet natured and mild in both temperament and manners. This, coupled with her large dowry, ensures that many seek her hand in marriage. Her father however, has vowed that she will not wed until her sister Katherina has.

BAPTISTA

A very wealthy and good natured man, he is keen to see both of his daughters married. He is particularly concerned about his eldest daughter Katherine whose stubborn disposition means that suitors are few and far between, despite her large dowry. He insists that Petruchio love Katherina and that she should give her consent to become his wife before granting permission for their marriage.

LUCENTIO

An agreeable and courageous young student from the city's university. Lucentio instantly falls in love with Bianca. He persuades his servant Tranio to impersonate him, and disguises himself instead as a Classics tutor (Cambio) in order to get close to Bianca. He eventually succeeds in winning her affections, but runs into trouble when his father, Vincentio, comes to visit and blows his cover.

TRANIO

Lucentio's comical servant. He later impersonates his master in order to negotiate with Baptista for Bianca's hand in marriage.

GREMIO AND HORTENSIO

Two of Bianca's suitors whose efforts are thwarted by Lucentio. Their rivalry turns into friendship as their struggles to win the hand of Bianca continually end in failure. Hortensio eventually marries a widow who is crazy for him whilst Gremio consoles himself with his money.