The Taming of the Shrew

STUDY GUIDE
The material in this study guide is designed to meet the following Pennsylvania Academic Standards:

Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening

- Students will use knowledge of root words and words from literary works to recognize and understand the meaning of new words. (1.1.11 C)
- Students will identify, describe, evaluate, and synthesize the essential ideas in text. (1.1.11 D)
- Students will read and understand works of literature. (1.3.11 A)
- Students will analyze the effectiveness, in terms of literary quality, of the author’s use of literary devices. (1.3.11 C)
- Students will analyze and evaluate in poetry the appropriateness of diction and figurative language (e.g., irony, understatement, overstatement, paradox). (1.3.11 D)
- Students will analyze how a scriptwriter’s use of words creates tone and mood, and how choice of words advances the theme or purpose of the work. (1.3.11 F)
- Students will read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama. (1.3.11 F)
- Students will demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading. (1.1.11 H)
- Students will listen to others. (1.6.11 B)
- Students will contribute to discussion. (1.6.11 D)
- Students will participate in small and large group discussions and presentations. (1.6.11 E)
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We know very little about the life of William Shakespeare; however, more is known about him than many of his contemporaries. His birthday is historically attributed to April 23, 1564, and supposedly, he died on the same day in 1616. As the eldest child of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden, he was raised in the market town of Stratford-on-Avon, which lies approximately ninety miles northwest of London. He most likely attended the town’s grammar school where he would have been instructed in Latin and the Classics.

In November of 1582 he married Anne Hathaway, and in May of 1583 they had their first child, Susanna. Two years later the fraternal twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born. It is unclear exactly when Shakespeare began his career in drama, but at some point he went to London and began working as an actor and playwright. By 1595 he was a shareholder in The Lord Chamberlain’s Men. Sadly, in 1596, his son Hamnet died. Many have wondered about the connection between Hamnet’s early death and his father’s subsequent dark tragedy, Hamlet.

Shakespeare is known worldwide as an excellent playwright and poet, but the exact number of plays that he wrote is still subject to some debate. Scholars would like to determine which plays Shakespeare wrote alone and which he co-authored with other playwrights. Most experts agree that Shakespeare penned 38 plays, 5 long poems, and 154 sonnets, which serves as a good reference point for understanding how prolific a writer he was. William Shakespeare’s popularity has yet to wane, hundreds of years later, and his works continue to be important for students, dramatists, and audiences around the world.
Playwrights alive during the Elizabethan era worked in a very different way than playwrights do today. Instead of producing a play independently, they were first required to present a company with their idea for a plot. The leading actors and managers would then decide whether they liked it or not, and offer a down payment for its completion.

This close relationship between the writer and the performers meant that writers often created their characters with certain actors in mind. For instance, knowing that The Lord Chamberlain’s Men’s leading man, Richard Burbage, had a strong memory for long scripts, Shakespeare created the parts of Richard III and Hamlet for him. These parts involve lengthy soliloquies that might have strained another actor. As Burbage aged, Shakespeare created more mature characters for him.

When Shakespeare finished a play it was not distributed to the actors in books. Instead, each player received only the lines for his own part. This meant that he would not see who else was going to be on the stage until they actually rehearsed the scene. Actors today might find it strange to be unable to read the entire work before rehearsing.

Rehearsals were used to sort out the details not specified in the script. Actors were expected to address questions of entrances, exits, costumes, and songs. There was an area behind the stage called the tiring house, which was used for costume changes during the play and here, an actor might find fine clothing bought from lords and knights. Acting was a male profession, which meant that the company would also have had a wide variety of dresses and lady’s accessories to clothe the men who played female parts.
Julius Caesar may have been the first production performed at the famous Globe Theater. Construction was finished earlier in 1599 and made use of timber taken from the company’s former theater. The Lord Chamberlain’s Men were housed at The Theatre until a question of the building’s ownership caused a dispute with the landlord. The outraged players dismantled the building and secreted the materials to a new Bankside location. This new space could house up to 3000 audience members who would stand or sit depending on their ticket. The cheapest tickets allowed attendees to stand on the ground directly in front of and to the sides of the stage.

The Globe was the most magnificent venue London had ever seen; unfortunately, it burned down in 1613 when a canon misfired during Henry VIII. After successfully rebuilding, the theatre was then shut down in 1642 by the Puritans and pulled down in 1644. Part of the original foundation was discovered in 1989, and a modern reconstruction was finished in 1997 less than 1000 feet from the original site.

The American actor and director, Sam Wanamaker, made it his mission to recreate The Globe on the bank of the Thames. This reincarnation of the theater is connected to the indoor Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, which houses various non-Shakespeare performances throughout the year. The revamped Globe holds performances during warmer months and offers tours of their exhibition and performance spaces to the public all year long.
INTRODUCTION TO THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

Adaptations

1912 *The Taming of the Shrew* — directed by Harry A. Pollard, starring Norma Shearer and Reginald Denny; sets the play in a contemporary *milieu* as a husband attempts to curtail his wife’s attendance of local suffragette meetings by pretending to have an affair.

1915 *The Iron Strain* — written by C. Gardner Sullivan, directed by Reginald Barker, takes place in New York and Alaska as a prospector attempts to tame a beautiful but spoiled socialite.

1929 *The Framing of the Shrew* — written by Octavus Roy Cohen, directed by Arvid E. Gillstrom, starring Evelyn Preer and Edward Thompson; when a man becomes exasperated with his domineering wife, he decides to tame her by initiating divorce proceedings and pretending he has a girlfriend.

1953 *Kiss Me Kate* — written for the screen by Dorothy Kingsley, directed by George Sidney, starring Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel; filmic adaptation of Cole Porter’s 1948 musical.

1999 *10 Things I Hate About You* — starring Julia Stiles and Heath Ledger; A teen rom-com where an overprotective father tells his younger daughter she cannot date until his older daughter begins to date. One of the most famous adaptations of Shakespeare’s play.

2003 *Deliver Us from Eva* — starring Gabrielle Union and LL Cool J; takes place in modern Los Angeles, where a shrewish woman interferes in the affairs of her family and friends. Her family gets together to pay a playboy to date her, but he ends up falling in love with her.

2010 *Isi Life Mein* (English: *In This Life*) — Bollywood film directed by Vidhi Kasliwal and starring Akshay Oberoi and Sandeepa Dhar. It was revised to remove the perceived misogynist parts of Shakespeare’s script.
Is *The Taming of the Shrew* sexist?

In 2015, this question follows this play as closely as the racism question follows *The Merchant of Venice*. It’s ubiquitous. And not without reason: “I am your wife in all obedience,” “thy husband is thy lord” and “place your hands below your husband’s foot” sound like fighting words to modern women.

Yet in my view, this play is not sexist at all. Quite the opposite, in fact. This is the story of a woman empowered. Katherina at the beginning of the play has the appearance of strength: her acid wit can reduce any man to terror in seconds. She defeats them, overmasters them and drives them off, high and low, her father most of all. But what does this strength get her? She is alone. Everyone avoids her. The men joke that nobody would ever marry her. Even her father, who is doing his best (although his best is not very effective), kindly “corrects” a suitor who thinks he wants to woo Katherina. Katherina loves nobody, and nobody loves Katherina. This is not a strong woman. This is a woman trapped in her own rage with no visible escape route. This is a powerless woman.

Then along comes Petruchio. Here is a man who is not intimidated by Katherina’s bluster. He sees through the barbed wire façade to another woman hiding inside, and immediately falls passionately in love with her. He even gives her a different name: “Kate.” Petruchio devotes himself completely to defeating the veneer of bravado — the fiery dragon Katherina — in order to reach the loving and compassionate inner Kate, whose potential to blossom he trusts completely. He never doubts for a moment that, if he can reach the inner Kate, she will be the woman of his dreams — loving, smart, an equal partner to share life’s journey. He believes in her so thoroughly that he will stop at nothing to reach her: he humiliates himself in company, he makes a shambles of his own wedding, he blasphemes in the church, he abuses his servants, he deprives himself of food and sleep for days. How many women are blessed with such devotion?

So what do we make of Kate obeying Petruchio’s commands in Act Five? And of her long speech that concludes the play, admonishing her fellow wives to “serve, love and obey”? What I make of it is that she is playing a game with Petruchio. Now that she has found a true strength, now that she is Petruchio’s equal, she no longer requires a false strength to hide behind. And she doesn’t mind having a little fun with the other women in service of urging them to follow her example. “My mind hath been as big as one of yours, My heart as great, my reason haply more, To bandy word for word and frown for frown; But now I see our lances are but straws.” Kate has given up her straw lances in favor of truer strength, and now exhorts her sister and friends to join her on the happy side.

Perhaps you are not convinced. “Go to your mistress, say I command her to come to me” is still ringing in your ears. Bear in mind, Shakespeare wrote this play in a world so thoroughly sexist that “sexist” wasn’t even a word yet. Because nobody had even thought that there might be an alternative. Women could not own property, could not vote, could not serve on a jury. A woman was the chattel of her father until she became the chattel of a husband. Of course the language of marriage in Shakespeare’s play is suffused with terms of male domination. To ask otherwise would be to ask a play written in Spanish to not contain any Spanish words. It’s the world Shakespeare lived in, the water he swam in. Which makes it so much more astounding that, within that context, he was able to create this story of female empowerment. This is a feminist play, created at a time when the only tools available were anti-feminist tools.
## Plot Overview

### Character List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Katherina</td>
<td>The “shrew” Katherina, or Kate, is the daughter of Baptista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petruchio</td>
<td>A gentleman from Verona looking to woo a woman with a large dowry, namely Kate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bianca</td>
<td>The younger daughter of Baptista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucentio</td>
<td>A young student from Pisa who falls in love with Bianca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tranio</td>
<td>Lucentio’s servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gremio &amp; Hortensio</td>
<td>Two gentlemen of Padua. They are Bianca’s suitors at the beginning of the play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grumio</td>
<td>Petruchio’s servant and the play’s comic relief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biondello</td>
<td>Lucentio’s second servant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plot Review

HAS SPITFIRE KATE MET HER MATCH?

A battle of sisters. A battle of suitors. And an epic battle of the sexes. Who emerges victorious? Or is there a deeper message at play? Many questions surround *The Taming of the Shrew*, but at its heart, it is a play about Shakespeare’s meditation on the true nature of marriage.

**THE SHREW AND HER SISTER:** Feared by all, and loved by few, the ill-tempered and sharp-tongued Katherina clashes with her sister, her father, and all who dare come near. Her younger sister, the beautiful and sweet Bianca, has a trail of suitors waiting at the ready.

**THE SUITORS:** Fortune-hunting Hortensio, rich old Gremio, and newly-arrived-in-town Lucentio all wish to court the beautiful Bianca. The catch? The girls’ wealthy father, Baptista, refuses anyone to court Bianca before her older sister, the shrewish Kate, is married.

**THE CHALLENGE:** Petruchio, a young man from Verona, arrives with his quick-witted sidekick, Grumio, to find his way in the world. Hearing of the shrew, Petruchio vows to woo Kate both for her dowry and for the challenge of overcoming her fearsome reputation. However, as soon as he meets her, he falls in love with her and decides she’s the partner for him.

**THE DISGUISE:** Hortensio and Lucentio gain access to Bianca by disguising themselves as tutors in hopes to “woo” her, while Lucentio’s servant, the comical Tranio, assumes Lucentio’s identity and plays the role of his master to bargain with Baptista for Bianca’s hand.

**THE BATTLE:** After a heated battle of wit and words, Petruchio marries the wild and waspish Kate – turning up late to the wedding wearing unsuitable clothes – and takes her off to his country house, where he ‘tames’ her through various forms of deprivation and mirroring her unreasonable behavior.

**A TAMED SHREW:** Having exposed Katherina’s true nature, Petruchio and Kate return to reveal that she is a changed woman. The love-match between Lucentio and Bianca is happily settled with some barbs being exchanged between them. Hortensio marries a wealthy widow. And the former shrew, Kate, gives a final speech on the nature of marriage to her fellow female counterparts, and all of us.
1. Why must Katherine get married and how do at least three characters benefit from this marriage?

2. On what condition does Baptista agree to Pertruchio marrying Kate?

3. Why does Pertruchio wear a costume to the wedding? What point is he trying to prove?

4. *The Taming of the Shrew* is another one of Shakespeare's plays where people dress in disguises to get what they want. Give some specific examples of this and tell why each character used a disguise.

5. Are all of the issues in the play resolved neatly by the end of the performance?

6. Is *The Taming of the Shrew* a simple, superficial comedy?
PRODUCING WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AS HE INTENDED

Have you ever imagined what it was like to see a play by William Shakespeare, produced by William Shakespeare back in his time? For this production of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Artistic/Executive Director, Carmen Khan, has been exploring the concept of “Original Staging Practices,” used in renowned Shakespeare theatres, including The Globe Theatre in London, England, and the Blackfriars in VA. The goal of this unique staging approach is to present the play as close as possible to how it would have been originally presented to audiences in Shakespeare’s time, with universal lighting, simple costumes and a few props, placing the focus on the language and the actor.

**UNIVERSAL LIGHTING:** Shakespeare’s actors could see their audience; our actors can see you. When actors can see an audience, they can engage with them in a direct way that makes the audience member more part of the play. And audience members can play the roles that Shakespeare wrote for them — Cleopatra’s court, Henry V’s army, or simply the butt of innumerable jokes.

**LENGTH:** We cannot know the precise running time of a Shakespeare play in the Renaissance, but the Chorus in *Romeo and Juliet* promises “two hours’ traffic of our stage.” This technique requires brisk pacing and a continuous flow of dramatic action, often without an intermission.

**SETS:** Shakespeare’s company performed on a large wooden platform unadorned by fixed sets or scenery. A few large pieces – thrones, tombs, and tables – were occasionally used to ornament a scene. We will use set pieces (and/or boxes) to indicate location and, like Shakespeare’s company, we can use these items to spark the audience’s imagination to “piece out our imperfections with [their] minds.”

**COSTUMING:** Costuming was important to the theatre companies of Shakespeare’s day for three reasons. First, the frequently lavish costumes provided fresh color and designs for the theatres, which otherwise did not change from show to show. Second, costumes made it easy to use one actor in a variety of roles. Third, as they do now, costumes helped an audience “read” the play quickly by showing them at a glance who was rich or poor, royalty or peasantry, priest or cobbler, ready for bed or ready to party, “in” or “out.” Costumes are important to us in the same way. But costumes were NOT important to Shakespeare and his fellows as a way of showing what life used to be like in a particular historical period. They performed *Julius Caesar*, for example, in primarily Elizabethan (not ancient Roman) garb. For them, as for us, the play always spoke to the present. The costumes in original practices speak to audiences in the most familiar language possible while staying consistent with the words in the play.

**MUSIC:** Shakespeare had a soundtrack. Above the stage, musicians played an assortment of string, wind, and percussion instruments before, during, and after the play. The plays are sprinkled with songs for which lyrics, but not much of the music, survive. The songs will often be set in contemporary style.

(Adapted with permission from the American Shakespeare Center.)
STAGING QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of other creative ways to interpret and present *The Taming of the Shrew*?

2. Does the staging of this production call attention any particular aspect of the play?

3. What might be the challenges of deciding on a particular creative direction for a performance?
THEMES

GENDER ROLES

The roles of men and women in Shakespeare’s society were undoubtedly different than those of today. The playwright examines ideas of dominance, ownership, and obedience between male and female characters in *The Taming of the Shrew.*

SOCIAL STATUS

From the very beginning of the play, *The Taming of the Shrew* shows the treatment of those in different classes. Servants are poorly treated and abused. Likewise, women, even in the upper class, are simply property and treated as such. Notice how both women and servants often outwit the noblemen in this story.

MARRIAGE

The plot of *The Taming of the Shrew* focuses on the marriages of the sisters, Katherine and Bianca. Marriage is displayed as reciprocal love and as an economic exchange. It is a way to unite families and define power.
Identify the speaker and theme of each quote. (Note: Some of the quotes demonstrate more than one of the three listed themes. Look closely to what is said to identify ALL themes that may be present. Are there other themes you can also identify in these lines?).

**Induction, Scene 1**

“What think you, if he were convey'd to bed, Wrapp’d in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers, A most delicious banquet by his bed, And brave attendants near him when he wakes, Would not the beggar then forget himself?”

“Sirrah, go you to Barthol’mew my page, And see him dress’d in all suits like a lady: That done, conduct him to the drunkard’s chamber; And call him ‘madam,’ do him obeisance.”

**Act I, Scene 1**

“Hush, master! here’s some good pastime toward: That wench is stark mad or wonderful forward.”

“Why, and I trust I may go too, may I not? What, shall I be appointed hours; as though, belike, I knew not what to take and what to leave, ha?”

**Act I, Scene 2**

“Petruchio, since we are stepp’d thus far in, I will continue that I broach’d in jest. I can, Petruchio, help thee to a wife With wealth enough and young and beauteous, Brought up as best becomes a gentlewoman: Her only fault, and that is faults enough, Is that she is intolerable curst And shrewd and forward, so beyond all measure That, were my state far worser than it is, I would not wed her for a mine of gold.”

**Act II, Scene 1**

“Say that she rail; why then I’ll tell her plain She sings as sweetly as a nightingale: Say that she frown, I’ll say she looks as clear As morning roses newly wash’d with dew: Say she be mute and will not speak a word; Then I’ll commend her volubility, And say she uttereth piercing eloquence: If she do bid me pack, I’ll give her thanks, As though she bid me stay by her a week: If she deny to wed, I’ll crave the day When I shall ask the banns and when be married. But here she comes; and now, Petruchio, speak.”

**Act III, Scene 2**

“No shame but mine: I must, forsooth, be forced To give my hand opposed against my heart Unto a mad-brain rudesby full of spleen; Who woo’d in haste and means to wed at leisure.”

**Act IV, Scene 5**

“Well, come, my Kate; we will unto your father’s Even in these honest mean habiliments: Our purses shall be proud, our garments poor; For ‘tis the mind that makes the body rich; And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds, So honour peereth in the meanest habit.”

**Act V, Scene 2**

“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.”
Themes are important ideas that act as a point of focus in a work of art. Studying Shakespeare's texts is not only a study in rich language and drama, but also a study in various themes that highlight our shared humanity. His works incorporate themes that are universally relevant and timeless, which is why he continues to be an important playwright to this day. Depending on which play you read, you might find yourself exploring themes like: love, power, identity crisis, and gender dynamics among many, many more! A few themes apparent in The Taming of the Shrew are: gender roles, social status, and marriage. Of course, you may also notice other themes during the performance!

**Thematic Analysis Questions**

1. What do you think is the most significant theme presented in *The Taming of the Shrew*?

2. How is that theme incorporated throughout the play?

3. Is this theme something that you might find in modern movies, plays, or books as well? Can you provide an example of a movie, play, book, or other source that demonstrates your theme?
4. How do the setting/costume/props, etc. enhance one of the themes that you noticed in the play?

5. How are these thematic elements important for the success of the performance?

6. Draw an image that represents one of the play’s themes.
**FUN FACTS**

- *The Taming of the Shrew* is one of Shakespeare’s very first plays and was written between 1590-1593.

- Just like many actors and playwrights today, Shakespeare started at the bottom and worked his way to fame. He once cared for the horses of theatregoers; a valet of his time.

- In all of Shakespeare’s works, only one word starts with ‘X’—Xanthippe. It appears in *The Taming of the Shrew*. When is this word used and by whom?

- In his Will, Shakespeare left his wife his “second best bed.” In 1938, Ben Travers wrote the movie, *Second Best Bed*, an adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. 
CAST LIST

CARMEN KHAN • DIRECTOR

ZACH AGUILAR • CURTIS/PEDANT/SERVANT

JERRY CARRIER • VINCENTIO

ALEXANDER ELTZROTH • BIONDELLO

MICHAEL GAMACHE • GRUMIO

GREG GIOVANNI • GREMIO

DEAON GRIFFIN-PRESSLEY • HORTENSIO

JULIA JENSEN RAY • BIANCA

JOSH KACHNYCZ • LUCENTIO

AARON KIRKPATRICK • PETRUCHIO

JENNA KUERZI • KATHERINA

WILLIAM LeDENT • TRANIO

SARAH STRYKER • SERVANT/TAILOR/WIDOW

J.J. VAN NAME • BAPTISTA

BAPTISTA
INTERVIEWS WITH THE CAST

AARON KIRKPATRICK

Petruchio
Aaron returns to The Philadelphia Shakespeare Theatre after playing “Wall/Snout” in A Midsummer Night’s Dream. Previous roles include: Lou in Light Sensitie (Montgomery Theater); Benedick in Much Ado About Nothing and Lucio in Measure for Measure (Pennsylvania Shakespeare Festival); Don Pedro in Much Ado About Nothing (Kentucky Shakespeare Festival); Don in Boys Life (Krane Theatre, NYC); The Captain in Woyzeck (Under St. Marks, NYC); and Brick in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (IU). Aaron has an MFA in acting from Indiana University.

How do you connect with your character?
This has been a major challenge in undertaking this role. At first glance, Petruchio seemed like a sadist to me. When approaching a role in Shakespeare, most of the psychological clues that connect you to the character are directly stated in the text. With Petruchio, there are only a few key moments that speak to his true intent. In the soliloquy, “Thus have I politicly begun my reign...” I found what I needed to connect with him on his journey.

How do you expect the audience will connect with the play?
I think this play will expose the audience to their gender bias. The struggle continues for women’s rights around the world, and a less than cursory look at any Facebook feed will show how hot the dialogue is, and how we might be at a tipping point in history that could effect the greatest progress of gender equality. The Taming of the Shrew is somewhat ill-timed for this dialogue. It is unfair to judge Shakespeare, or any historical figure, by today’s standards, but I can confidently say that he was very progressive for his time. His female characters are almost always complex. A story about a dominant man saving an ill-mannered woman from herself by force, resulting in her affection and obedience, is not going to sit well with all people. If we can show the audience the growing affection between the quarrelsome couple, we stand the best chance of our play being seen for what it is, and not a thorn in the side of feminism.

What, in your mind, is the most important theme in this play?
The surest way to find happiness and fulfillment in life is to dedicate oneself to the service of others. I think today we often mistake obstinacy for strength. Kate’s journey concludes with her putting aside her ego to accept love and give to her husband. Personally, I relate to this, and I couldn’t when I was younger. I used to dream of success and status. Now, my hope is that I will have a useful life, where I’m giving the chance to share and be of service. On my bad days I still dream of the selfish things, but my heart has learned the difference.

What drew you to Shakespeare?
I’ve noticed that in moments of extremity, such as grief, or joy, or anger, most people, myself included, lose their ability to articulate their feelings. This is Shakespeare’s greatest strength. When the big moments happened, his characters knew what needed to be said. I wish I had that in life, and I relish it on the stage. To live for a moment as one of his characters, is to greatly expand your IQ. It’s a great feeling.
INTERVIEWS WITH THE CAST

JENNA KUERZI

Katherina
Jenna is thrilled (and moderately terrified) to return to The Philadelphia Shakespeare Theatre and take on one of Shakespeare’s most formidable ladies. She previously appeared, last season, as Hermia in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and Nym/A number of other parts in *Henry V*. Other selected recent credits include: *Stairs to the Roof* (Alma. And a fish. EgoPo Classic Theatre), and the 2015 Fringe shows *Spookfish* (Kori. Fringe Late Night) and *Exit the King* (Juliette. Idiopathic Ridiculopathy Consortium).

How do you connect with your character?
I, too, can be a total big-mouthed jerk.

What, in your mind, is the most important theme in this play?
Obey your partner, or else? I kid, I kid. How about “The institution of marriage is just as mad as love itself.”

Some modern critics of *The Taming of the Shrew* consider the play to be misogynistic. There has been recent controversy about this. Do you agree? Why or Why not?
Well. I mean. It’s not called the “The Cuddling of the Shrew,” so I get it. But I see the play more similar to “Gone Girl”, if you’ve ever seen the movie/read the book. These two lunatic people may be the only two people in the world for one another. Like a mean version of *Romeo and Juliet*.

What, in your mind, is the most important theme in this play?
Obey your partner, or else? I kid, I kid. How about “The institution of marriage is just as mad as love itself.”

This production was done using original practices. How do you as an actor view this method and how do you compare it to traditional staging/rehearsal?
It definitely goes by quick! I really like tech week and elaborate costumes/lighting, but this makes the true star of the show, the words, take center stage. It is equal parts great and terrifying.

What drew you to Shakespeare?
I hate when people think Shakespeare is “too smart” or “complicated” to understand. The reason I love it so much is that it is emotional. More like music than a textbook.

If the Bard were here in the flesh, what would you ask him?
“Where are all the mothers in your plays?” Because he certainly had some absentee mother issues. But mostly I’d say thank you, and then probably fan girl for the remaining time I’m around him.
INTERVIEWS WITH THE CAST

J.J. VAN NAME

Baptista

How do you connect with your character?
As I study the script and learn the lines. The text is always what gives you all the clues you need to understand who this character is, and the “connecting” part is the magic of the process. As the character taps in to you as you study and rehearse her, it connects with the lifetime of experiences that you can relate to and/or imagine. Then you filter all of that in you and into the language and actions of the character you are developing on stage.

How do you expect the audience will connect with the play?
As they always do with well-produced Shakespeare, I think the audience will connect really well with the play. The Philadelphia Shakespeare Theatre focuses on the STORY, the language, and the actions of the plot and characters to make what you see really active, honest and clear story telling! Well told stories about relationships and all their ups and downs is what we all live and relate to. This one is particularly hilarious, a bit stereotypical between men and women, but upon closer analysis it has some pretty interesting twists to unravel all that may not seem obvious at first. I think our school students will have a blast!

In what ways does The Taming of the Shrew stand out from others of Shakespeare’s plays in your mind?
Well it’s kind of the penultimate story of comedy between two seemingly opposing, impossible, and implausible lovers who come together and really fall in love . . . and don’t die at the end!

What, in your mind, is the most important theme in this play?
It’s the theme of Love and all the things we do to block or draw it in to our lives.

What drew you to Shakespeare?
When I was a junior Theatre major in college, I was cast as The Nurse in Romeo & Juliet. That’s when I fell in love with Shakespeare and discovered I had a knack for performing it, too. It was a very auspicious experience. I have played The Nurse at The Philadelphia Shakespeare Theatre three times since. The last time was in 2014 and I always discover new things about her and the play. Then I went to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival later in life, and immersed myself in a week of Shakespeare and fell more deeply in love with it. That’s when I knew that performing Shakespeare was what I wanted to do. I went back there for many more summers to absorb it as an audience member. I’ve also been working with this Theatre since its beginning 20 years ago, on and off. In 2008, I became the Text Coach for the company, working with the actors during rehearsals on the intricacies of Shakespeare’s spoken language and all the “tricks” to lifting the language to its most vibrant and understandable level.
INTERVIEWS WITH THE CAST

JERRY CARRIER

Vincentio
After retiring from the Philadelphia Daily News, Jerry Carrier launched a second career on stage. He has played the Shepherd in The Winter’s Tale, Captain Brackett in South Pacific, Mr. Witherspoon in Arsenic and Old Lace, the Wizard in The Wizard of Oz, and Otto Frank in The Diary of Anne Frank. He is also a living historian, portraying 19th-century statesman John Hay. He and his wife, Edda, live in Bensalem. They have seven grown children, ten grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.

How do you connect with your character?
As an older man and a father, I am frequently stunned and confused by what the younger generation is doing. The same thing happens to Vincentio, who frequently has no clue about what's going on, or why. Any father can identify with that! I do keep my sense of dignity, however.

How do you expect the audience will connect with the play?
Anyone who's ever been in love or frustrated by their children — or both — will identify with this play. If you don't connect emotionally, just relax and enjoy the laughs.

What memories do you have of Shakespeare from high school?
In my high school days, Shakespeare was a big part of our literature courses. Unfortunately, our drama club never came close to performing his work. Gilbert and Sullivan was as highbrow as we ever got.

What, in your mind, is the most important theme in this play?
I'd say the theme here is a pretty upbeat one. Our protagonists face seemingly insurmountable challenges, but overcome them through their wit and creativity. Unlike the tragedies, this is a very optimistic drama.

Some modern critics of The Taming of the Shrew consider the play to be misogynistic. There has been recent controversy about this. Do you agree? Why or why not?
Those who call this drama misogynistic have no sense of irony. Also, it's a comedy. Lighten up!

This production was done using original practices. How do you as an actor view this method and how do you compare it to traditional staging/rehearsal?
Original practices, as opposed to modern staging, will be relatively unfamiliar ground for some of us, including myself. It takes some adjustment, but that just makes the work more interesting. It could also be educational for audience members, who are more accustomed to contemporary staging. It may be old, but for the cast, it's new — and refreshing.

What drew you to Shakespeare?
Before I was an actor, I was a writer. Before I was a writer, I was a reader. Shakespeare, more than anyone, OWNED the English language. How could a reader/writer/actor NOT be drawn to him?
INTERVIEWS WITH THE CAST

WILLIAM LeDENT

Tranio

How do you connect with your character?
I first look for all the ways we are similar. What I have in common with the character. Then, with the differences, I try to see what his point of view might be or how I might act in that position.

How do you expect the audience will connect with the play?
This particular play is always tricky; between differences in social and gender structures in 1500s and today. I think directors and audiences alike often misunderstand the play. I personally focus more on my character in that world and telling his part of the story.

In what ways does *The Taming of the Shrew* stand out from others of Shakespeare’s plays in your mind?
I think it is more relatable to the everyday person. Where as the histories, or fantasies have less that the average person can relate to in their everyday life.

What, in your mind, is the most important theme in this play?
Complex personalities, strong personalities and relationships. How various types of people can connect and reach each other.

Some modern critics of *The Taming of the Shrew* consider the play to be misogynistic. There has been recent controversy about this. Do you agree? Why or Why not?
It is NOT misogynistic at all. I feel that is the common trap with this play. It is a lazy, short-sighted viewpoint. If these critics looked deeply at each character and how REAL people vary, they would see this. Also, if they had any information on social norms and how women were treated in the 1500s, they also would not even consider misogyny.

This production was done using original practices. How do you as an actor view this method and how do you compare it to traditional staging/rehearsal?
It is actually similar to how I am used to taking on a role and rehearsing, even if the theatre is not trying to do an original practice.

If the Bard were here in the flesh, what would you ask him?
How much did you write and what was collaborative?
The Taming of the Shrew has been adapted into film, opera, dance, and modern theater versions, not to mention performed a countless number of times in Shakespeare’s original form. Why does this controversial comedy continue to delight audiences worldwide and appear in grade school and college curricula? Take into account the plot, setting, language, themes, and any other element of the performance that grabbed you to explore why you feel this play continues to be so popular despite the fact that it is one of Shakespeare’s more controversial plays.
Ready to try a little improvisation? Do the *Five Minute TAMING OF THE SHREW!* Take about 10 minutes to work in groups and create your own five minute version of the play. Use what you remember about the story and try to capture those scenes and moments that stand out in your mind. Feel free to use narration, pantomime, singing, or anything else to get the sense of the play. Be sure to chart out your play and write it down when you've finished. After each group has performed, compare them. It’s often surprising to see what stands out for different people.

Over the past 400 years, a number of artists have tried to capture the power and emotion of Shakespeare works, and have sketched, painted, and sculpted scenes from many of them. **Re-create a scene from *The Taming of the Shrew*, by drawing, creating a collage, or using any medium you choose.** How will you do it? Will you make it abstract or stylized, as in the production, or will you try something more realistic?

**Create your own music mix for the play.** What other sounds can you incorporate? Music in Shakespeare’s plays can not only create a particular mood or emotion, it can also help us to connect the play to our own world. What kind of music could you use (or create) to fit the play into a contemporary context?

**Do It Yourself Adapation.** *The Taming of the Shrew* has been adapted into many different settings and stories over the years and appeared as the basic storyline in the film as *Ten Things I Hate About You* and the Broadway musical, *Kiss Me, Kate*, among others. How would you take the story and adapt it for an audience of your friends? Create a new scenario for Petruchio and Kate; how does your story end?
WHAT’S WHAT AND WHO’S WHO IN SHREW?

ACROSS
3. A frazzled father
8. The tamer
9. The instrument that gets broken over Hortensio’s head
10. One of Petruchio’s zany servants
11. Also known as “Cambio”
12. “Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper, thy head, thy ________.”

DOWN
1. The bird that Petruchio compares Kate to
2. A shrew
4. The “good” daughter
5. Hortensio’s bride
6. Not Grumio
7. A suitor to Bianca
STUDENT QUESTIONS

Use this space to write down questions you might have about any aspect of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Write general questions or questions meant specifically for certain cast members and/or the director.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5.
CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Books
- *Teaching Shakespeare*, by Rex Gibson
- *Shakespeare Set Free*, ed. by Peggy O'Brien, Folger Library (several books, each dealing with 3 plays)
- *Teaching Shakespeare Through Performance*, ed. by Milla Cozart Riggio
- *Shakespeare in the Classroom*, by Susan Leach
- *Shakespeare: To Teach or Not to Teach*, by Cass Foster and Lynn G. Johnson
- *Shaking Hands with Shakespeare*, by Allison Wedell Schumacher

Websites
- For teacher lesson plans, The Folger Library: [www.folger.edu](http://www.folger.edu)
- For play synopses and some interpretations, The Royal Shakespeare Company: [www.rsc.org.uk](http://www.rsc.org.uk)
- For fantastic classroom texts, The Cambridge Shakespeare Series: [www.cambridge.org/uk/education/secondary/english/shakespeare/cambridgeschoolshakespeare/rexgibson.htm](http://www.cambridge.org/uk/education/secondary/english/shakespeare/cambridgeschoolshakespeare/rexgibson.htm)
- For an all-around great site that will give you links to lots of helpful sites including the MIT and other online copies of texts, festivals, libraries, theatres, etc.: [http://www.interleaves.org/~rteeter/shakespeare.html](http://www.interleaves.org/~rteeter/shakespeare.html)
- For some lesson plans (under “study materials”) The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: [www.shakespeare.org.uk](http://www.shakespeare.org.uk)
- For general information and a great listing of additional web resources, The Colorado Shakespeare Festival: [http://www.coloradoshakes.org/education/resources.cfm#guides](http://www.coloradoshakes.org/education/resources.cfm#guides)
STUDY GUIDE SOURCES

www.shmoop.com

www.shakespearesglobe.com

www.rsc.org.uk

www.londontheatredirect.com

www.shakespearestime.wikispaces.com

www.telegraph.co.uk

www.northernstarart.com

www.eranthyaenoire.deviantart.com

www.stageraw.com

www.litcharts.com