



YOUNG PEOPLE'S SHAKESPEARE

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

EDUCATION PACK

The activities in this pack are inspired by Tim Crouch's 2011 Young People's Shakespeare (YPS) production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. They can be used either as stand-alone practical approaches to this play or as supporting activities for students seeing the production. They have been designed with KS2/3 students in mind, but can be adapted for other age groups. Most of them are best suited to an open space such as a hall, but they can be used in a classroom with chairs pushed to the side.

ABOUT OUR EDUCATION WORK

We want children and young people to enjoy the challenge of Shakespeare and achieve more as a result of connecting with his work. Central to our education work is our manifesto for Shakespeare in schools; Stand up for Shakespeare. We know that children and young people can experience Shakespeare in ways that excite, engage and inspire them. We believe that young people get the most out of Shakespeare when they:

- Do Shakespeare on their feet – exploring the plays actively as actors do
- See it Live – participate as members of a live audience
- Start it Earlier – work on the plays from a younger age

We also believe in the power of ensemble; a way of working together in both the rehearsal room and across the company enabling everyone's ideas and voices to be heard. Artistic Director, Michael Boyd, encapsulates this vision for ensemble in his rehearsal room where actors are encouraged to try out different interpretations of scenes before deciding together on what will be presented to an audience in the final performance.

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These symbols are used throughout the pack:



READ

contextual notes from the rehearsal room



ACTIVITY

Get on your feet for a classroom activity

More activities that support your active approaches to teaching Shakespeare can be found in the RSC Shakespeare Toolkit for Teachers, available in the **RSC Shop**. The RSC also runs a range of different courses for teachers and students; for more information about these visit: www.rsc.org.uk/education

INTRODUCTORY NOTES



The Taming of the Shrew is one of Shakespeare's most challenging plays: Is Shakespeare condoning the social oppression of women, their 'taming,' as it seems from Katherina's final speech, or are there other interpretations possible which would make the play more palatable to us today?

Staging & Performance

The Taming of the Shrew, first performed sometime in the 1590's, was one of Shakespeare's early attempts at writing for the stage. With theatre's architecture providing the backdrop and very little else in the way of set design, a sense of place and atmosphere depended on costume, a few basic props and, most importantly, the text itself. For more information about Elizabethan staging practices go to 'Shakespeare's Theatre' at: www.rsc.org.uk/education/resources/social-historical-context

Social & Historical Context

A main theme in the play is marriage and relationships between husband and wife.

In Elizabethan England bad-tempered or gossipy wives who refused to conform to the authority of a husband were called 'shrews' or 'scolds.' In *The Taming of the Shrew* Gremio's pun about Katherina being better suited to 'carting' than to 'courting' refers to the practice of shaming unruly women by parading them through the streets on or behind a cart. Other punishments included attaching a metal bit that fitted into the mouth and then putting the 'shrew' on display to the community. Yet another 'cure' was to dunk her repeatedly in a river.

Tim Crouch, the director of Young People's Shakespeare (YPS) *The Taming of the Shrew* production, believes this play has relevance for young people. He is interested in exploring issues of gender equality and other challenging themes raised by the play for today's young audiences. He said:

'The Taming of the Shrew always felt like a natural choice for the RSC's Young People's Shakespeare. Its themes of sibling rivalry, bullying, love, identity and education make it a perfect play for a young, enquiring audience. Shakespeare tells a compelling story but it is not sugar-coated'.

DISCUSSION



1. Ask your students what the story of *The Taming of the Shrew* might be about. What information about the storyline does the title provide?
2. What would young people expect a shrewish woman to look like? How would she speak and act? If they were introduced to her how might she behave?
3. What other words can your students associate with the word 'shrew'?
4. Finally, consider the Elizabethan perspective on a shrew? To what extent have views changed?

INVESTIGATING THE THEMES



Still images or tableaux are one of the range of strategies director Tim Crouch used with the actors to explore the play's meanings during the rehearsal period. Tableaux can be a simple but very useful tool in helping students to investigate their thinking about relationships and themes. Here is an example of a still image from the production:



Christopher Sly [Jamie Beamish] photographs Kate [Madeline Appiah] and Petruccio's [Nikesh Patel] wedding party.
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011

STARTER ACTIVITY



Show the image of Kate and Petruccio's wedding above and ask students the following;

- What is happening here?
- What is the relationship between the characters? How do they feel about one another? How do you know? What clues are in the characters' body language and facial expressions? What do the costumes tell us?
- What might happen next?

MAIN ACTIVITY



In an open space with students working in groups of 3 or 4, give the groups 30 seconds (or less) to create images of the following:

- a. **Happiness changing into sadness**
- b. **An ideal family changing into a feuding family**
- c. **Masters changing into servants**
- d. **Honesty changing into disguise**
- e. **Bullies changing into victims**
- f. **Respect changing into scorn (or contempt)**
- g. **Love changing into hate**

Examples of some of these images from the production are provided on page 5.

Arrange the groups around the space and have them visit one another's work. Ask each group to show at least one of the paired images and use these questions to prompt discussion:

- What makes us happy/sad?
- What's needed for a family to be happy?
- Do we still have masters and servants today?
- Who is disguised in the play and why?
- What causes bullying?
- What are the ingredients of a good relationship?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY



Images from past productions of *The Taming of the Shrew* are available at:
www.rsc.org.uk/education/resources/bank

Go to:

www.rsc.org.uk/downloads/rsc_how_to_work_with_images_2011.pdf

Using the questions provided under 'Discussing a production' ask them how these images create meaning through the staging choices and character body language.

Further information on the themes and motifs within the play are available at:

www.rsc.org.uk/explore/the-taming-of-the-shrew/teachers-resources/themes.aspx



Bianca [Emily Plumtree] and Lucentio [David McGranaghan] are just wed and happy.
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011



Bianca's [Emily Plumtree] and Lucentio's [David McGranaghan] happiness soon turns to sadness when Lucentio bets on her obedience at the end of the play.
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011



Baptista [Caroline Martin] is furious when she discovers Bianca [Emily Plumtree] has married Lucentio [David McGranaghan] in secret.
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011



Lucentio [David McGranaghan] disguises himself as a tutor to get close to Bianca [Emily Plumtree].
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011



Petruchio [Nikesh Patel] arrives with his servant Gremio [Jason Morell] in Padua.
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011



Baptista [Caroline Martin] exerts her authority over Kate [Madeline Appiah].
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011

EXPLORING THE CHARACTERS



The characters in *The Taming of the Shrew* are very strongly and broadly drawn. This is not surprising for the play is descended from the Italian Commedia dell'Arte whose essential features were farcical improvisation and stock characters. Gremio, for example, is a direct descendent of the Commedia rich old man, Pantelone. Both Bianca and Kate reflect aspects of the young and headstrong Commedia heroine Isabella. Shakespeare, as ever, borrows from past histories and dramatic traditions in order to fashion something very new.



Kate [Madeline Appiah] grabs Bianca's [Emily Plumtree] hair during one of their squabbles.
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011

To help his actors achieve this strong characterisation and the necessary character contrasts, Tim Crouch had them create mood boards or character collages for the roles they were playing. The sequence of activities below asks students to develop their understanding of a major character through the same activity.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Large size paper (A3 or Flipchart)
- A supply of craft items and magazine images
- Coloured pens
- Scissors
- Magazines
- Glue

STARTER ACTIVITY: **What's in a Colour?**



Explain to the students that in rehearsals actors use a variety of approaches to explore their characters, including the one you are introducing now.

Explain that another way of looking at someone's character is to describe them in terms of a colour.

Ask students individually to think of a colour they feel represents them and to write their names in that colour.

MAIN ACTIVITY: **Creating a Character Collage**



With students, create a list of facts for each character, for example:

Kate (Katherine/a) Minola

- Eldest daughter of Baptista and older sister to Bianca
- She has a violent temper
- She is witty and clever
- She has a mind of her own
- She marries Petruchio and goes to his home immediately after the wedding
- She is not allowed to return to see her father (mother in the YPS production) and sister until she bows to her husband's will

Working in groups of 5 or so, give each group a character from the play. Now ask them to agree on a colour to represent that character and write that character's name in the colour and style they feel represents that character. Next, explain to students that they are going to make a mood board or collage of images, words and anything else they can find that represents their group's character.

As a first step they should answer the following:

- What do they already know about their character?
- What do they imagine their character's interests and hobbies might be?
- What are their character's hopes, dreams and fears?
- What music does this character listen to?
- What books magazines does s/he read?
- What TV programmes does s/he watch?
- What is his/her favourite possession?

Display the finished collages around the classroom and have groups visit each in turn. Perhaps each group gives a brief presentation of the ideas represented in their collage and the visiting groups are invited to ask questions. Finally, ask students to reflect on these questions:

- What have they discovered about their characters that they didn't know before?
- What five words would they choose to describe their character?



Kate [Madeline Appiah] and Bianca [Emily Plumtree] reading in their bedroom.
Photograph by Nick Spratling © RSC 2011

The idea of character collage was incorporated into the YPS production set design by designer Lily Arnold, as the image illustrates.

INTERPRETING THE PLAY



Kate and Petruchio Scene Study

Here is a sequence of activities which explores the key relationship of Kate and Petruchio in its earliest stages. This sequence introduces the idea of using different tactics to interpret character. This approach is then used to explore Kate's challenging final speech. Finally, students are invited to consider what approaches to the play make sense in today's theatre.

ACTIVITY



Ask two volunteers to read Kate and Petruchio's scene on page 9. The rest of the class should close their eyes and repeat any significant words they hear used more than once in the scene. 'Hear' and 'hard' are examples from the first two lines.

Ask what the effect is of these repetitions and why the characters are repeating one another's words.

Now ask the class to stand and to create with you different levels of status or importance through their body language. They are going to create five levels, as follows:

- Number one is very low status with, for example: head hanging, feet close together, minimal eye-contact, arms folded, taking up as little space as possible.
- Number two is slightly higher status, with a more erect and open posture, but still with signs of insecurity.
- A number three sees themselves as of equal status with others and greets others with a friendly smile – takes up as much space as others will allow.
- Number four sees themselves as superior to others. Perhaps one hand is on a hip, with chin up in the air – takes up their fair share of space.
- Number five is very high status and assumes s/he is in charge. This person demands to be the centre of attention.

Now have students work in pairs to read the scene, the first time through the scene ask Kate to play status level two (low status) and Petruchio play status level five (high status). The second time through have them both play status level five. Ask students:

- What levels work best for the scene and why?
- Are there moments when other status levels might be effective?

Finally, have students experiment with different tactics for achieving their characters' aims in the scene.

- The first time through Petruchio could bully Kate into submission. Kate should snarl at Petruchio and drive him away.
- The second time Petruchio could charm Kate and Kate should laugh at or mock Petruchio.

Which of these tactics suit the scene best and why? Might all of these and others be incorporated at different moments in the scene?

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
EDITED TEXT SCRAPS

ACT 2 SCENE 1

PETRUCHIO *Good morrow, Kate; for that's your name, I hear.*

KATE *Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing:
They call me Katherine that do talk of me.*

PETRUCHIO *You lie, in faith, for you are called plain Kate,
And bonny Kate and sometime Kate the curst,
But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom.
Hearing thy mildness praised in every town
Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.*

KATE *Moved? In good time! Let him that moved you hither
Remove you hence. I knew you at the first
You were a moveable.*

PETRUCHIO *Why, what's a moveable?*

KATE *A joint stool.*

PETRUCHIO *Thou hast hit it: come sit on me.*

KATE *Asses are made to bear, and so are you.*

PETRUCHIO *Come, come you wasp, i'faith, you are too angry.*

KATE *If I be waspish, best beware my sting.*

PETRUCHIO *My remedy is then to pluck it out.*

KATE *Ay, if the fool could find where it lies.*

PETRUCHIO *Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting?
In his tail.*

KATE *In his tongue.*

PETRUCHIO *Whose tongue?*

KATE *Yours if you talk of tails, and so farewell.*

KATE'S FINAL SPEECH

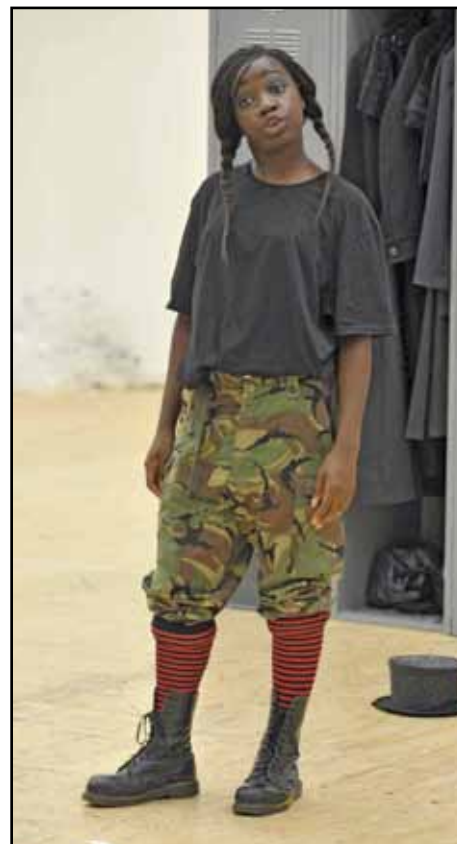


During rehearsals Madeline Appiah, who played Kate, explored different ways of performing Kate's final speech. Has Kate truly been won over to Petruchio's way of seeing the world? Or perhaps she has found her way of managing him as he believes he is managing her? Yet another interpretation would be that Petruchio has terrified and bullied Kate into submission and she will do and say anything to preserve the peace. This sequence asks students to explore their own responses to the speech as Madeline did in the rehearsal room.

ACTIVITY



- In an open space, ask the students to sit in a circle and pass around Kate's speech, one line per person from the text on page 11. Ask each person to repeat the last word of the previous line before they speak their own line, an approach which may help continuity and concentration. Ensure that everyone understands what Kate is saying.
- Divide the group in half. To the students in each half allocate the passages, in sequence, until all the passages are assigned. Depending on numbers, students may be speaking more than one passage.
- Ask one of the two groups to sit on the floor in a group, backs against a wall. Explain to them that they are at the wedding feast at the end of the play. Number each student one or two. The ones are Biancas and the twos the Widow, Hortensio's new bride.
- Take the other group aside and tell them privately that they should deliver their lines to the group as if Kate is speaking her lines from a sincere belief that the other women at the banquet need to be reformed. The lines should be delivered in order to reform the behaviour of the other women.
- The group of Biancas and Widows line up now facing the group of Kates, about five or six feet away. At a cue from you, each of the Kates in turn goes up to the banquet group and delivers her line with the ambition of reforming them.
- Ask the Kates how it felt to play this intention or ambition? How did it feel to be on the receiving end?
- Now the groups swap over. For the Kates this time their ambition with their lines is to be sarcastic in their delivery, undercutting and mocking Petruchio.
- Ask the students how they felt in delivering and receiving this experience? What other interpretations are possible? How would they direct the speech for today's audience?



Kate [Madeline Appiah] delivers her final speech.
Photograph by Stewart Hemley © RSC 2011

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW
EDITED TEXT SCRAPS

ACT 5 SCENE 2

KATHERINA

1. *Fie, fie, unknit that threatening unkind brow,*
2. *And dart not scornful glances from those eyes
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.*
3. *It blots thy beauty as frosts do bite the meads,
Confounds thy fame as whirlwinds shake fair buds,
And in no sense is meet or amiable.*
4. *A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty,*
5. *And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip or touch one drop of it.*
6. *Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
And for thy maintenance;*
7. *commits his body
To painful labour both by sea and land,*
8. *To watch the night in storms, the day in cold
Whilst thou liest warm at home, secure and safe;*
9. *And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks, and true obedience –
Too little payment for so great a debt.*

10. *Such duty as the subject owes the prince,
Even such a woman oweth to her husband.*
11. *And when she is forward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,*
12. *What is she but a foul contending rebel
And graceless traitor to her loving lord?*
13. *I am ashamed that women are so simple
To offer war where they should kneel for peace,*
14. *Or seek for rule, supremacy, and sway,
When they are bound to serve, love, and obey.*
15. *Why are our bodies soft, and weak, and smooth,
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
But that our soft conditions and our hearts
Should well agree with our external parts?*
16. *Come, come, you froward and unable worms,
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.*
17. *But now I see our lances are but straws,
Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.*
18. *Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
And place your hands below your husband's foot.*
19. *In token of which duty, if he please,
My hand is ready, may it do him ease.*

FOLLOW-UP WRITING ACTIVITIES



John Fletcher, one of Shakespeare's contemporaries, wrote a sequel to *The Taming of the Shrew*, entitled *The Woman's Prize; or The Tamer Tamed*. In this play Kate has died and Petruchio has remarried. His new wife, Maria, sets out to tame Petruchio. Here are two activities which invite students' written responses to the controversial aspects of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

1. Ask students to write an additional scene, to be inserted anywhere within the play, which would dramatically change its action and outcome.
2. Students rewrite Kate's final speech. If they were Kate, what would they say in response to Petruchio's demand that she should tell these headstrong women what duty they owe their lords and husbands?