

## Not So Tame: *The Taming of the Shrew*

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*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.*

~ Katherina from William Shakespeare's  
*The Taming of the Shrew.*

### INTRODUCTION

Consider this scenario: one of the most acclaimed playwrights in history has written a play that makes light of spousal abuse. The main character is a young independent woman who is assertive and self-assured. She is not afraid to speak her mind or be without a man. She breaks the mold of what a woman is perceived to be: demure, soft-spoken, and passive. Instead of praising this positive deviant, the playwright actually exposes this woman to spousal abuse where she is forced to marry a man who deprives her of both food and sleep. Eventually, this young woman is molded into the subservient and dutiful young lady on whom society submits. How appalling! Instead of chastising this playwright, we actually teach this play in thousands of schools world-wide. What kind of behavior are we modeling for our young, impressionable students?

In 1594, William Shakespeare wrote *The Taming of the Shrew*, a comedy in which a poor man weds a “shrew” whose father is willing to marry her off to anyone. By marrying her, Petruchio wagers a bet in which he will receive a handsome sum if he tames Katherina, the shrew. Petruchio uses his knowledge of taming animals – sleep deprivation, social deprivation, and food deprivation – to tame his shrewish wife. Eventually, Kate is tamed into the obedient wife which society requires. In teaching this work, teachers are modeling inappropriate behavior for most of their students. They are showing their young men that it is acceptable to treat females like animals, while they are teaching the young females that it is appropriate to endure multiple forms of spousal abuse. Even though *The Taming of the Shrew* is a classical work of literature, is it possible that teachers should not teach it anymore? Absolutely not! However, teachers must present *The Taming of the Shrew* in a manner that is both culturally relevant to today’s society, and in a manner that portrays females in a positive light.

I have always been fond of Shakespeare; I guess I was just blessed with wonderful English teachers. His works have always fascinated me, and I even read his plays for delight. The beauty of his words and his complex characters imprisoned me, denying me my freedom. I still admire how culturally significant most of his characters still are in today’s society dealing with the struggles of love, betrayal, and anguish, struggles that individuals still deal with today. Shakespeare has a magnificent way of depicting the human spirit. Teachers cannot just throw away Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew* just because women are not depicted in a positive light. However, teachers must update Shakespeare to today’s society using it to teach young people suitable behavior. My ultimate desire is that this unit will instill the love for Shakespeare in my students’ hearts, changing their groans into cheers as well as making it culturally significant to young people.

It disturbs me that in 2004, domestic abuse (violence) was the number one reason women visited the emergency room (“Statistics about Domestic Abuse”). This alarming fact is reality for many of our students who experience domestic violence either first hand or second hand. In 2004, four million women in the US were physically assaulted by their partners, a crime that many of our students witness (“Statistics about Domestic Abuse”). This unfortunate reality is an issue that is affecting many students that we teach on a daily basis. It is our job as educators to inform students how to handle domestic abuse as well as help prevent the cycle of domestic violence from repeating itself. Domestic abuse affects not only our female students who may be victims of abuse but also our young male students who are modeling this inappropriate behavior. When teaching *Taming of the Shrew*, it is important that teachers educate their students on domestic violence and the severity of this issue that is affecting nearly 2/3 of all marriages in the United States (“Statistics about Domestic Abuse”).

Shakespeare is one of the most famous authors in all of English literature; however, Shakespeare makes light of a significant subject in today’s society, domestic abuse. Domestic violence is still an issue that many people face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, making *Taming of the Shrew* still applicable for today’s readers. Teachers are able to use this play to educate young people about domestic violence and what one can do to disrupt and stop the cycle of abuse. Since Shakespeare writes this play as a comedy, it allows educators to make light of a difficult topic to discuss. The amusing aspects of the play will permit students and educators to converse about this thorny topic with relative ease.

Shakespeare’s work allows readers to examine herstory versus the history. The students can study how women were treated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and they can understand why *Taming of the Shrew* was permitted to be produced as a comedic play. Students also have the ability to study herstory, or the history of women throughout society from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I have found that many of my students do not know many females throughout history. As a science teacher, I realize that the female scientists that my students know are few and far between. Most can only name one, Marie Curie. However, many females have played a central role in science, such as Rosaline Franklin, who developed the double-helix theory of DNA, for which Watson and Crick have received credit in spite of Franklin’s efforts. It is important that our students learn about females in history so that they learn herstory as well as history. Using Shakespeare’s play will enable teachers to instill herstory into the minds of their students.

Since the *Taming of the Shrew* is about the marriage of two individuals, it allows students to examine different marriage customs of different cultures throughout the world. Shakespeare’s work enables the students to study the account of marriage customs in the UK from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup>. Specifically the students can examine the marriage roles of females in different cultures throughout the world.

## **UNIT OVERVIEW**

I plan on creating a 4-week study of *The Taming of the Shrew* to supplement the English department’s current Shakespeare curriculum unit. This unit is designed for secondary students (7-12<sup>th</sup> graders) in Language Arts classes. Shakespeare is a required curriculum for schoolteachers throughout the world. However, many students do not believe that Shakespeare is exciting or entertaining. Many students moan when they even hear the mention of his name since they have been overwhelmed with the mechanics of Shakespeare, such as iambic pentameter and the old outdated language. My goal is to help the English teachers teach Shakespeare in a way that is culturally noteworthy to their students, taking the Shakespeare from the past and updating him for the new millennium.

My students will be responsible for examining the depiction of the female characters in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The students will be responsible for reading the entire play of

Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*. As a class, the students will analyze the treatment of both Bianca and Kate as they are forced to live under their father's overbearing rule and then forced to transform into the perfect Stepford wife as defined by each of their husbands. While reading this play, the students will research the treatment of women in the 1500s, allowing the students a more unified picture of women in that time period. The students will learn how in Shakespeare's era all actors and audience members were male; women did not earn the right to be actors or audience members in the time of this play. Students will also be responsible for scrutinizing and viewing several movie adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Students will compare and contrast his text to the film versions that they view. It is important that the students view the adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* since adaptations such as *Kiss Me Kate* and *Ten Things I Hate about You* are more culturally relevant to the students compared to the original work from 1594. In several adaptations of Shakespeare's work the women have portrayed Kate in a more feminist light with winks after her subversive speech, to having the man apologize for his incredulous acts such as in *Ten Things I Hate about You*. After viewing these films and studying Shakespeare's work, as a cumulating project, I would have my students create their own film adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The students will be responsible for creating a storyboard, plot, dialogue, costumes, and culturally relevant characters to today's society. After the creation of the story line, the students will be responsible for filming and editing their adaptation. I will rely on the theater arts, language arts, and technology teachers' aid in creating and implementing this unit. I believe by having the students act out their play it will enable them ownership and it will allow them to portray characters in a manner appropriate to society.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **Taming of the Shrew**

The opening scenes of the play begin with a drunkard, Christopher Sly being tricked by the lord of the land who wishes to trick Sly into believing he is a noble man. In tricking Sly the lord gathers a group of players who perform *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The play begins with Baptista, a wealthy man in Padua who has two daughters, Katherina and Bianca. Katherina is a physically and verbally abusive young lady who torments her family members. Baptista has sworn that Bianca may not wed a suitor until Katherina has wed. Bianca, who has many suitors such as Lucentio, hopes for Katherina to marry so she may wed.

Eventually, Petruchio comes to Padua to visit a friend. Attracted by Katherina's large dowry, Petruchio vows to tame the shrewish woman. Petruchio arranges a marriage to Katherina, and at the ceremony he makes an ass of himself by insulting the clergy and by wearing inappropriate wedding attire. Petruchio then sets out to domesticate Katherina. Using physical abuse and animal training tactics such as starvation and sleep deprivation, Petruchio eventually conquers Katherina. Lucentio, one of Bianca's many suitors, eventually wins the heart of Bianca. At Bianca and Lucentio's feast, Katherina proves she has been tamed by providing a lecture on how to be a dutiful wife.

### **Theme-Hate**

The play starts as a sick joke, designed as a play-within-a-play to trick Sly, the drunken beggar, into thinking that he is royalty. Tricksters, the lord and his associates, try to convince Sly he is an aristocrat. This sets the theme that the entire play is one malicious act set against one another (Krimms 50).

Katherina physically abuses her sister Bianca by tying her up and verbally abusing her. Katherina (Kate) is cruel to her sister by refusing to marry so that Bianca will not be able to marry a suitor. Kate also is physically abusive to Petruchio. She strikes him and is rude and condescending to him. However, this behavior is reversed and Petruchio humiliates Kate in

public by acting insane by wearing ridiculous clothes and speaking like an ass to members of the community (Krimms 51). Petruchio uses hate to tame Katherina by isolating her from her family, denying her new clothes, sleep, and food, evoking feelings of disdain in Katherina. One can ultimately argue that Katherina's disgust towards the world is actually her hate towards her father and his biased love towards her sister Bianca.

### ***Gender Roles***

In the Elizabethan household it was the role of the male to lead the family; however, in *Taming of the Shrew*, Katherina takes on many of the male roles and Petruchio many female gender roles (Perret 228). Katherina is disobedient to both her father and husband, something that is not the norm in Elizabethan times (Perret 203). Katherina breaks out of the typical feminine role of being seen not heard and is extremely outspoken doing what she wills.

When Petruchio and Katherina wed, many of the gender role reversals are apparent. Katherina is prominent in the male roles and Petruchio is seen in the more feminine gender roles. Katherina leads the family in prayer, while Petruchio is tending to the burnt food. Petruchio deals with the tailor describing what Katherina should wear and describing how the clothes fit on his wife. It is Petruchio who refuses to consummate the marriage, not Katherina who is forced into the marriage, and it is Petruchio who frets about the way a hat looks on Katherina's head. In public it is Katherina who publicly defends and stands up for her spouse as she publicly upholds his reputation by speaking out for his ability to tame her (Perret 234). Speaking out in public in Elizabethan times is a role that a man would partake in, not a woman (Perret 234).

### ***Attire in Taming of the Shrew***

Shakespeare uses clothes in his play as a means of controlling and taming Katherina (Jaster 95). In Elizabethan times and still today a person's attire shows his or her respective place in society. Those who wish to show off their wealth in today's society, as not much has changed since the 17th century, seek name brands such as Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, and Chanel. In Elizabethan times the husband would give his bride the gift of apparel that provided the bride a new social identity (Jaster 97). Petruchio uses clothes as a means of controlling Katherina and thus removing her from the ranks of high society. At their wedding Petruchio shows up in inappropriate wedding attire, wearing mismatched clothes fit for a fool, "an eyesore to our solemn festival" (3.2.91). When giving his bride a new wardrobe, Petruchio hires a tailor to design Katherina a new dress. Petruchio refers to the dress as a "loose bodied gown" a term for dresses that prostitutes wear (Jaster 104). Finally, Petruchio denies Katherina a new dress and he forces her to return to her father's house in her old clothes, thus stripping her of her social status and proving he is in control (Jaster 104).

### ***Characters in Taming of the Shrew***

#### ***Katherina/Kate***

At the beginning of the play most of what we learn about Katherina is hearsay from male suitors. She is referred to as a "devil" (1.1.60) and a "fiend of hell" (1.1.88). Even though the audience has no interaction with Katherina, her unbelievable reputation has already been established. When Katherina makes her grand entrance, she has bound her sibling and is physically striking her and verbally abusing her. Katherina is jealous of all the attention that her father bestows on her younger sister Bianca; therefore, Katherina is determined not to allow Bianca happiness by finding a suitor (thus ultimately denying Bianca marriage to a suitor). As the play progresses, the audience see Katherina transform from a strong-willed individual to a tamer version of herself. She shows compassion to the servants that her husband Petruchio abuses, and she conforms to his abusive antics, such as dressing poorly and speaking on how to be a perfect wife, thus ensuring her role as a woman in society.

### ***Petruchio***

Petruchio is an arrogant, selfish, and materialistic individual who only wishes to marry Katherina for her large dowry. Petruchio also wishes to tame Katherina to win a bet that he can change the shrew into a passive woman, therefore, ensuring increased finances. Petruchio treats Katherina unfavorably, like an animal. He robs her of her family, sleep, food, and adequate clothing. He insults her and debases her in front of family and friends and actually tricks her into believing that she has married a fool. Petruchio does not stop there; he subjects her to physical and verbal abuse, trying to scare her into becoming the model wife. However, Petruchio puts a lot of trust in Katherina since her actions do reflect his reputation. If he is unable to tame the shrewish woman, then he has ultimately failed as a man.

### ***Bianca***

Bianca is the younger sister of Kate and is at the mercy of her sister. Bianca is pursued by many male suitors; however, Bianca may not choose a suitor for marriage until her shrewish sister Kate has found a man to marry. Bianca is constantly being abused by her sister both physically and verbally and wishes for Kate to find a mate to marry. Bianca receives their father's attention and respect, as well as the interest of many other male characters in the play, creating a division between Kate and herself. Bianca's character represents the ideal sixteenth century woman, beautiful, sweet, generous, and tame.

### **Shakespeare's Life**

William Shakespeare was born in April 23, 1564, in Stratford-Upon-Avon (England) to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden (Gray). In 1582 Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior (Gray). On May 26, 1583 Anne give birth to their first child, Susanna (Gray). Two years later Anne gives birth to twins. William and Anne have another daughter, Judith, and a son, Hamnet (who dies as a child). Shakespeare worked as a writer producing sonnets, tragedies, historical plays, and comedic plays. From 1564-1599 Shakespeare produced many of his famous plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, *King John*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Richard II* (Gray). In 1599, Shakespeare helped to create the Globe Theater, which many of his plays were performed (Gray). Shakespeare was an integral part of his performances until 1613 when the theater burnt down to the ground. Shakespeare then retired from the play life focusing on writing until his death on April 23, 1616 (Literature Network 2004).

### **Life in 16<sup>th</sup> Century England**

Life in 16<sup>th</sup> century England brought on a change for most citizens of this time. Prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> century England was ruled by strict theological rule, particularly the Roman Catholic Church (Stearns). The rule of the Catholic Church ruled social class, societal thought, and even education. Many of the noblemen and clergy of this time were not highly educated and at times even were illiterate (Stearns). Change started to happen in the early sixteenth century when Henry VIII tried to annul his marriage to Katherine of Aragon ("Monarchs"). The Roman Catholic Church denied Henry VIII an annulment; therefore, Henry broke away from the Catholic Church and formed the Church of England. With the formation of the Anglican Church many citizens of England were exploring the Protestant ideas of Luther and were breaking away from the Catholic Church as well. ("Monarchs").

The daughter of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I eventually inherited the throne of England following the rule of Mary I ("Monarchs"). One of the first matters of business was to ease the religious tensions that existed in England ("Monarchs"). During the rule of Mary I many Protestants and followers of the Anglican Church were persecuted and killed if they were not strict followers of the Catholic Church. Fleeing from religious persecution many citizens left England and went to the English colony of America to start a new life ("Monarchs"). Elizabeth I

brought back strength to the Church of England and stopped the religious turmoil that England suffered from by murdering Mary I (“Monarchs”).

During the Elizabethan era many new changes were brought about. There was an increase in education and literature lending itself to many influential people such as philosopher Thomas Hobbes, scientist Sir Isaac Newton, and authors such as Shakespeare (Stearns). Many of the people from the new Age of Reason have greatly impacted our teaching still today. Luxuries and extravagance were seen throughout society. Houses became more luxurious and comfortable with rugs, elaborate furniture, and feather beds (Ross sect. 6). Meals became large and sophisticated, no longer for necessity but for showing off wealth (Ross sect 7). The merchant class saw an increase in size due to the strong English navy and an increase in wool trade (Ross sect. 5). With a growth in the merchant class many more people were experiencing the luxuries that England had to offer. With all of the new changes at hand, England was starting to become a more influential world power (“Monarchs”).

### ***Elizabethan Women***

Although Elizabeth I was a female in power, females in Elizabethan times did not experience the same luxuries of Elizabeth I herself. Females could not inherit or own property (Thomas). All inheritance and property would go to the males. If a father did not have any male heirs the property would go to the husband of the eldest daughter (Thomas). Most women didn’t have the financial means for survival and since inheritance always went to the eldest male, they could not inherit the family’s money nor could they work to earn capital (Thomas). Working would have been a hardship for most woman since many women stayed at home since they had on average one baby every two years due to lack of contraceptives (Thomas).

It was unlawful for a woman to go to school or pursue higher education. Schools were reserved only for males although it was acceptable for a female to become educated through a tutor (Thomas). It was unlawful for a woman to practice law, politics, medicine, military, acting, painting, or literature (Thomas). Ironically the ruler of England was a female who sanctioned the arts such as literature and theater.

Unlike the spousal abuse depicted in *The Taming of the Shrew* it was unlawful for a man to abuse his wife. The man has a responsibility toward the welfare and care of his wife and cruelty to his spouse is punishable by law (Thomas).

Many women were forced into marriage. With the formation of the Church of England, single women no longer had the convents to care for them (Thomas). Many single women had a hard time surviving since they were viewed as witches, and they could only work as domestic servants (Thomas). Many women married for a sense of security. Marriage lent them a home, food, and a job as the caretaker of the house (Thomas).

### ***Elizabethan Dress***

Getting dressed in Elizabethan times was quite a feat. Many components made up one outfit alone. Known for her spendthrift and intricate costumes, Elizabeth I started a fashion unique to sixteenth century England.

A female living in Elizabethan England would have many components to her fashionable attire. All women would wear a smock under all their clothes. This smock was lightweight and used to protect the clothes from body oil and sweat (Leed). After putting on a smock, the woman would then wear her stockings, similar to the nylon hose many women wear today. These stockings could have been wool or for the nobler class these would have been silk (Leed). Since elastic was not invented yet, these stockings were held up by a garter (Leed). After getting her stockings on the woman would wear a corset. The corset was a snug fitting item made out of wale

bone used to flatten a woman's bust and stomach making the appearance of a slim small waist (Leed). After squeezing into the corset, the woman would then add a Spanish farthingale, or a hoop skirt to provide the A line appearance which was fashionable during these times (Leed). Over the Spanish farthingale a woman would place a petticoat. The petticoat was used to add fullness to the woman's gown (Leed). Finally it is time for the gown and sleeves. Over all of the items the woman would place her gown and sleeves. But the Elizabethan woman is still not ready to leave her house.

After dressing in the attire, the woman would make sure that she is wearing an appropriate headwear. Since many of the people did not wash their hair on a regular basis or even use soap for their hair, headwear was essential for making hair look beautiful (Leed). Wigs, hair extensions, or cloth covers were used to change the appearance of the woman's hair into one of the utmost elegance (Leed). After fixing her hair, the woman would then apply white lead foundation to her face and red ceruse to her lips and cheeks (Leed). The whiter one's face the better, as tanned skin was often looked upon as the working class. To finish off the outfit, the woman would add ruffs, stiff bands that one secured to their neck and wrists, and jewelry to her garment (Leed).

### **The Globe Theater**

To date there have been three Globe Theaters ("Shakespeare's Globe"). Originally built in 1598 the Globe Theater was an open air, three-story octagonal theater. The Globe Theater was built for Shakespeare himself to perform his plays by Cuthbert and Burbage (Baskwill). The original theater held 3000 patrons and had a diameter of 100 feet. In 1613 the original Globe Theater burnt down during cannon shot during a performance of *Henry VIII*. The Globe was rebuilt after the fire. The Globe was in working order until 1642 when Puritans shut down the Globe Theater and in 1644 the Globe Theater was destroyed once again as the Puritans needed room for tenement buildings ("Shakespeare's Globe"). In 1993 Sam Wanamaker reconstructed the New Globe Theater close to its original site. The Globe Theater was reopened in 1997 and is still used today for productions of Shakespeare's work ("Shakespeare's Globe").

### ***Parts of the Globe Theater***

The original Globe Theater had many different components. Many of the parts of the original Globe Theater make up part of the New Globe Theater. Below are some of the main elements of the original theater discussed by Amanda-Lynn Baskwill:

- Machine room- Towards the top of the three-story building was a machinery room. This room held a system of machinery that was responsible for lowering or raising props or scenery onto the stage.
- Upper gallery- Above the stage was the upper gallery. This area was used to extra room in plays or was used to seat extra musicians or guests.
- Gallery- This area is located between the main stage and the upper gallery. This area was used for scenes that required extra room such as the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*.
- Two Penny Room/Middle Gallery- This was a seating area for patrons located to the right and left of the gallery. It would cost a patron two pennies to sit in this area.
- Gentlemen's Room- For a cost of six pennies a patron could sit in this alcove area that was actually part of the actual stage.
- Inner Stage- The inner stage was the masked area of the stage that could be curtained off at will.
- Yard- The yard was an open area where people would stand to watch the play. The yard cost each patron one penny to stand there and the yard had concession stands for the patrons to purchase food and drink.

## **Parts of a Theatrical Play**

A play is composed of many different parts such as plot, thought, character, diction, and spectacle (“Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays”). Each of these parts put together comprise a theatrical work.

### ***Plot***

The plot of the play is the main story or sequence of events that occur throughout the play (“Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays”). The plot of the play is composed of many different parts. The characters are introduced in the exposition. The aspect of characterization is an integral part of the exposition. After the exposition is the rising action. In the rising action the characters start to face a conflict. The rising action leads to the climax or the turning point in the play. The climax then leads to the resolution where the character resolves the conflict and the play comes to an end.

### ***Thought***

The thought of a play is the underlying theme or meaning behind the play. It is the lesson that the characters learn throughout the play. The thought of the play always supports the plot and it is purposeful to the plot (“Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays”). The thought and the plot support each other throughout the play.

### ***Character***

The characters are the people or animals within the play. Characters are the entities that are portraying the story throughout the play. The characters are developed through their relationships to one another and throughout the thought and plot of the play. Many of the characters will have a conflict that they will face and will have to resolve through the course of the play. The main element of the character is their believability (“Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays”). The audience must relate to the character in order for the character to be effective.

### ***Diction***

Diction is any sound that is heard throughout the play. Diction includes characters’ monologue, dialogue, songs, and music (“Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays”). A major aspect of diction is the ability to be heard by the audience. If the diction is unclear the audience members may not understand the theatrical work. Important workings of diction include microphones, projection of voice, and projection of music.

### ***Spectacle***

Spectacle is the costumes, scenery, and the dance in a play (“Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays”). These components support the plot, thought, and characters of the play. Spectacle can be used to provide foreshadowing, emotions, and insights to characters.

## **UNIT INFORMATION**

The first lesson my students will partake in is, “Who is Shakespeare?” This lesson will introduce my students to Shakespeare the man and the author. I always appreciate a book much more when I learn about the author. I believe that authors put so much of themselves into the work that they produce that if one learns about the author then he or she will have insight into the literary work. The students will be introduced to Shakespeare by creating a KWL chart. A KWL chart examines what the students “Know” about a particular topic, “What” they want to learn about a particular topic, and finally what they “Learned” about a topic. Once they have examined what they have learned, the students will complete a class-wide Shakespeare timeline. The students will be divided into several different groups of 2-4 students. After they are divided into groups they will be assigned to research a particular time period of Shakespeare’s life (childhood,

preteen, early adulthood, etc.). The group will then complete a time line of all significant events they learned about during that particular time period. After each group presents their information, the groups will put together each time period into one large Shakespeare time-line. This will enable students to work on their academic skills of research, using either the Big6 research method or the I-Search research method to locate and evaluate information. The student generated time-line will work on the students' skills of sequencing and the students presentations will work on the academic skills of presenting information orally. After creating the timelines, the teacher will provide insight into Shakespeare's life, such as places he grew up, supposed affairs, and his married life. The teacher should use a map when discussing the time-line of Shakespeare's life so that the students can not only learn a bit about geography but also have a reference point to further understand Shakespeare himself.

After learning all about Shakespeare, the man, the students will then learn about a play. What is a play? What makes it different from a novel? These two questions will be the guiding force behind the next part of the unit. The students will examine the different aspects of a play such as plot, setting, characters, and diction ("Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays"). Then the students will examine the different types of characters that are present in a play such as the antagonist and the protagonist ("Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays"). Using *Romeo and Juliet* as an example of a tragic play, the students will identify the protagonist, antagonist as well as plot, setting, characters, diction (this is where iambic pentameter will be discussed), moment of catharsis in the play, and the fatal flaw "Harmatia" of the protagonist ("Methods for Analyzing Theatrical Plays"). Since most of my students are familiar with *Romeo and Juliet* as well as the parts of a play, this will simply be a review for the majority of my students and nothing further than a discussion will be necessary.

Now that my students are armed with Shakespeare and the elements of a play, the students are ready to dive into reading *Taming of the Shrew*. This will not be an ordinary reading of the play however. Since the theme of the unit is gender equality, I will start out the reading of the play the way it was done in Shakespeare's time, with an all male cast. I will first assign all the parts to only male students without explaining why I chose to assign the parts this way. I want my students to tell me why I chose only the male students in my classroom. After providing some hints, I will then discuss with my students that in the time of Shakespeare only males had acting roles. I would then show a clip from the movie *Shakespeare in Love* in which an all male cast of *Romeo and Juliet* is depicted, including a male Juliet. I would then have several different readings of the play, one with the all male cast, one with an all female cast, and one with a mixture of males and females. These readings can be divided by acts to help with time. I would like my students that are not participating in the particular reading to make note on how the characters were illustrated with the varying cast. This will lead our class into the heart of the unit, examining the different themes of the play.

*Taming of the Shrew* has many different themes that accompany the play; however, our focus is the themes of gender roles, women, and abuse. I would start off the heart of the unit by telling my students some facts such as the following: 4 million women in the US suffer from this, 1,155,600 married women receive this from their loving husbands, and 2/3 of marriages experience this at least once ("Statistics about Domestic Abuse"). I would have my students brainstorm to determine the answers to these alarming statistics. After discussing their ideas I will let them know that the answer to all of these is domestic violence. Then I would ask my students, "Why did I provide those facts on domestic violence?" We will then examine the domestic violence that both Bianca and Kate endure from interactions with their father and their soon to-be husbands. We will examine the different forms of abuse that both of these ladies endure, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and verbal abuse. The students will have to cite specific passages in the play where then can find examples of the different types of abuse. We

will then discuss the way women are treated in 16<sup>th</sup> century England. Is abuse acceptable? It is normal for a woman to undergo abuse during this time period? If so why? What has changed from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century to make this unacceptable? Is it still acceptable to abuse your spouse? Where? Why? These are some guiding questions to start the process for the students to engage in their own research process. The students will research the average life of a 16<sup>th</sup> century woman in England compared to the 21<sup>st</sup> century woman in England. They will examine the women's daily routines, dress, level of education, and expectations for each century. After engaging in the I-Search research process on the women, the students will then search for abuse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Where is abuse occurring in the world? To whom? Is it acceptable? How can we help? The students will then go through another I-Search process to examine abuse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century comparing and contrasting it to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. After their research the students will design a program as a class focusing on ways to end abuse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

After learning about our themes and creating an action plan, the students will view several film adaptations of the play. The students will start off by viewing the 17 minute silent movie *Taming of the Shrew* from 1908. Prior to viewing the film I will provide background knowledge on women during this time period. The students will watch the film and compare the film's portrayal of Kate, Petruchio, and Bianca to the characters in Shakespeare's original work. The students will then watch the 1920s version of the play in which Kate is never fully tamed, winking during her submissive speech and still playing games with Petruchio till the bitter end. Taking in context that this film was made during the 1920s, during the women's suffrage movement, the time period where women gained the right to vote, it does not surprise me that this version has one of the most untamable Kate yet. Finally, the students will view the 1967 version of the play in which Kate succumbs to Petruchio's forms of abuse and is tamed at the end. After watching the adaptations I would ask the students the following question, "Is Kate really tamed?" The students will have to write a 1-page response to this question citing specific references to either the films or the text itself.

We will then proceed to view two modern day versions of the play, *Kiss Me Kate* and *10 Things I Hate about You*. Both are whimsical and fun adaptations of the original work without the abuse. The students will be responsible for comparing and contrasting these two film adaptations to the original text. The students will examine how has Kate evolved (if any), how does she become tamed (if she does at all)?

To end this unit, the students will create their own modern day adaptation of *The Taming of the Shrew*. The students will create characters and a story line that is based on Shakespeare's work. The students will use the film to examine gender roles (possible role reversal or homosexuality), sexual liberation, domestic violence, abuse, and feminism. The students will show what they have learned from the unit through this culminating project. Prior to beginning this project as a pre-activity, the students will learn about film production, lighting, and direction of a movie. The students will be responsible for assigning the different parts of the play.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson 1 - Who is Shakespeare?**

#### ***Objective***

The students will explore Shakespeare readiness by learning who William Shakespeare was and learn about his life. The students will also be able to identify and describe Shakespeare's contribution to literature.

#### ***Time***

2 class periods (50 minute class periods).

## **Materials**

Computers with Internet and printer access, construction paper, markers, printer paper.

## **Lesson**

The students will begin the lesson by examining who Shakespeare was. The teacher will create a KWL chart to examine the students' preexisting knowledge. The KWL chart will be divided into three columns: K, W, L. The K will list what the students already KNOW about Shakespeare, the W, WHAT they hope to learn, and the L is what they ultimately LEARNED. After examining the students' preexisting knowledge, the teacher will have the students participate in an Internet scavenger hunt, learning information about William Shakespeare.

The Internet scavenger hunt will have a student worksheet in which the students will have to find the answer to the following questions:

- When was Shakespeare born?
- Where is Shakespeare from?
- What is Shakespeare's full name?
- When did Shakespeare start writing?
- What is the title of Shakespeare's first publish work? What is it about?
- What is Shakespeare's most widely produced play?
- What is Shakespeare's most widely published work?
- Where did Shakespeare perform his plays?
- Can you visit this theater? If so where is it located?
- What is *The Taming of the Shrew* about?
- Is it a historical play, sonnet, comedy, or tragedy?
- Describe five contributions Shakespeare has made in modern literature.
- Why is Shakespeare difficult to read?
- When did Shakespeare produce his works?
- Compare and contract the time of Shakespeare to today.
- Would you like to live in Shakespeare's time? Why? Why not? Explain.
- Into how many languages are Shakespeare's works translated?
- How many films have been created from Shakespeare's work?
- What are some phrases we used that were created from Shakespeare?
- What are some vocabulary words that were created by Shakespeare?

## **Assessment**

The students will find the answers to each of the question. After finding out the answers, the students will then create a collage of information depicting their answers. The students can use Internet pictures or self-created ones to create a collage that depicts Shakespeare's life. The students are free to add Shakespeare's vocabulary words, quotes from Shakespeare, or pictures of Shakespeare himself.

The class will then review their KWL chart to determine what the students learned.

## **Lesson 2 - Reconstruction the Globe Theater**

This lesson is an interdisciplinary lesson that connects mathematics to literature. This lesson will help to gain the interest of the hands-on, kinesthetic, spatial, visual, and logical learners, allowing teachers to engage a variety of learners.

## **Objective**

The students will create a scale model of Shakespeare's Globe Theater.

***Time***

4-5 class periods (50 minutes each).

***Materials***

Various sizes of wood, metric sticks, wood glue, protractor.

***Note***

It may be helpful to integrate this lesson with the math teacher and a wood shop teacher.

Lesson: The students will learn about the Globe Theater and its use as a theater in Shakespeare's time and today. Using the library and the Internet, the students will learn about the Globe Theater's structure. The students will examine the dimensions of the theater, the number of seats the theater held, the dimensions of the stage, etc. After researching the diameters of the Globe Theater, the students will create scale replicas of the Globe Theater. This lesson may be used in conjunction with the math teacher as students use ratios and proportions to determine the size of the scale model.

***Assessment***

The students' models will show the inside and outside of the theater. The models will be detailed with replicas of the stage, seats, and dressing rooms. The students will have to present a generated report describing the scale used as well as describing the process they used to build the actual model. These models will be used further along in the unit as a reference when discussing the Globe as well as the elements of a stage.

**Lesson 3 - What is a Shrew?**

Webster's dictionary has two definitions for a shrew: 1- An ill-tempered woman and 2- a small mole-like mammal. It has always baffled me that an ill-tempered woman would be called the same thing as a rodent-like creature. What does this say about society's view of women? In this lesson students will determine what a shrew is and the characteristics of both definitions of shrew.

***Objective***

The students will be able to determine the characteristics of a shrew.

***Time***

1 class period (45-50 minutes).

***Materials***

Dictionary, Encyclopedia, copy of *The Taming of the Shrew*, pictures of shrews (both animals and women).

***Lesson***

After reading *The Taming of the Shrew*, the students will explore the question, "What is a shrew?" Using a dictionary the student will look up the definition of a shrew. After learning that a shrew is a woman and an animal, the student will research the animal shrew through encyclopedias and Internet research. The students will then try to determine if any connections exist between a shrew woman and a shrew animal. Students should examine the origin of the word shrew, behavior of the shrew animal, and characteristics of Kate in *Taming of the Shrew*. Using a Venn diagram the students will compare both types of shrews.

### **Assessment**

To assess this lesson, the teacher can hold an informal discussion with the class to determine the similarities and differences in shrews. The teacher can also lead a class discussion on the behaviors that Kate exhibits, and list any that are shrewish. The teacher can also formally assess the lesson by grading the students' Venn diagrams.

### **Lesson 4- Switch-a-Roo**

Students can have a blast updating *The Taming of the Shrew* with a twist. The students will be responsible for creating a modern version of this play; however, there is a catch, roles must be changed. Students will create a modern day version of this play with Kate playing the role of Petruchio and Petruchio playing the role of Kate, the shrew.

### **Objective**

The students will be able to analyze the characters in *The Taming of the Shrew* and create a story in which the character is allowed to switch roles.

### **Lesson**

This lesson should be completed after reading *The Taming of the Shrew*. After students are familiar with the main characters, Kate and Petruchio, students will create a modern day tale with Petruchio as the shrew and Kate as the tamer. The characters must still be the same, exhibiting the appropriate behavior for them. The students will be responsible for keeping the essential components of each character intact as they take on a new role.

### **Assessment**

The teacher can assess this lesson by examining the students' final story. The teacher should make sure that Petruchio and Kate still exhibit the essential distinctiveness of each character in this new tale.

## **CONCLUSION**

We need to empower our young ladies to become self-assured, assertive, and confident. In addition, we also need to educate our young men on the importance of treating others with respect and esteem, especially women. This unit will enable teachers to teach young people appropriate societal behavior, while allowing these students ownership in learning Shakespeare. The students can learn to love Shakespeare as well as themselves.

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