



 Prestwick House

Activity Pack

THE TAMING OF THE SHREW

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Item No. 201002

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Setting and History**

Objective: Researching the historical setting of the play

Activity

The Taming of the Shrew is set in Padua, a city in northern Italy between Venice and Verona.

Using the library, the Internet, or both, research the history of the setting. Your research should include information about Padua and Italy. Focus on the time period in which the play is set, and include any significant facts about the world at the time. Use this research to complete the chart on the next page.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Advertising****Objective:** Creating a playbill**Activity**

In Shakespeare's time, playwrights did not have the luxury of television advertisements or Internet pop-up windows to market their productions. They were limited to two means of advertising: word of mouth and playbills. Printing technology was still quite primitive, so the playbills, or flyers, were restricted to text and perhaps one—if any—simple drawings. A playbill might have included the title of the production, the name of the playwright, the time and location of the performance, the names of the major characters and actors, and a brief description of the plot.

Each group should design a modern playbill for the premier of *The Taming of the Shrew*. It must fit on one page, and it must be alluring enough to convince people to see the play.

Use any available resources to make the playbills. They can be completely hand drawn, computer generated, or any combination of the two. Drawings should be relevant to the play, and they should be dramatic enough to capture the interest of a passerby. Text on the playbill should be eye-catching, but it must also be easy to read. Complete one flyer per group.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act I**Motif****Objective:** Identifying motifs that contribute to theme**Activity:**

The Taming of the Shrew contains several motifs that support the major themes of the play. To identify material that supports a particular motif, you must contemplate the significance of every action, incident, and dialogue in the play. Sometimes it is easier to identify a motif at the end of the play, when the reader has been exposed to the entire text and can draw connections or identify recurrences.

The chart lists three motifs in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Complete the chart by recording any incidents, actions, and dialogue that support a specific motif. Provide the location of each event, and then write a brief description of the event on the chart beside its applicable motif. Three motifs are listed on the chart, and each includes example situations to guide your search. One example of each motif is provided for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act II**Simile****Objective:** Recognizing a simile**Activity**

Shakespeare's use of simile gives his drama and prose a unique, realistic style. Identify six instances of simile in Act II. List them on the chart that follows, and then, interpret them. Two examples of simile are provided for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts II – IV**Metaphor****Objective:** Recognizing and interpreting metaphors**Activity**

As do most of Shakespeare's plays, *The Taming of the Shrew* contains several instances of metaphor. The chart lists examples of metaphor found in Acts II, III, and IV. For each example, identify the character that uses the metaphor, and then interpret or explain the metaphor. We have supplied the metaphors and have done the first example for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act IV**Interviewing****Objective:** Interviewing main characters**Activity**

You are now a television talk show host, who is popular for interviewing people involved in controversial events that are not important enough to hold the attention of the mainstream media. Your interviewing skills often result in the exposure of new details, which in turn draws the public eye to your guests.

Baptista is well known in Padua, and the public is vaguely aware of Katharina's idiosyncrasies. Petruchio's behavior at the wedding has inspired many rumors around town, and you plan to dedicate three shows this week to interviewing people involved in the event.

As a class, choose three characters that you think will have the most interesting perspectives of the events of the play. Each group will produce a list of at least ten questions for its assigned character. Remember, it is your job to pry the most interesting or overlooked information from your guests; do not hesitate to ask controversial or even potentially insulting questions. Three sample questions for three different characters are provided for you.

Petruchio: What were you thinking when you wore such inappropriate clothing to your own wedding?

Katharina: If you do not want to get married, what is it that you want to do with your life?

Baptista: Why did you not stop the wedding when you witnessed Petruchio's insolent behavior?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Critical Thinking****Objective:** Identifying binary opposition**Activity**

The Taming of the Shrew contains many small conflicts, some of which are not easily noticed unless readers are actively seeking them. These conflicts, sometimes called binary oppositions, are at the source of every conflict in the play.

One example of a binary opposition is *slavery versus service*. Throughout *The Taming of the Shrew*, we see upper class characters, such as Lucentio and Petruchio, either at odds with their servants or honoring their servants; for example, Lucentio appears to embrace his relationship with Tranio, but Petruchio seems to mistreat all of his servants. The conflicting portrayal of the servants' roles in *The Taming of the Shrew* prompts the question, "Are the servants actually slaves, or are they simply doing a job under their own desires?" As with *slavery versus service*, many of the binary oppositions suggest that one side is privileged over the other.

The chart supplies a list of binary oppositions found in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The right column of the chart contains a list of questions derived from specific oppositions. Match each question with an opposition that could cause it. Some letters will be used more than once.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Characterization I****Objective:** Analyzing characters in the play**Activity**

Psychiatrists examine patients, determine the source of problems, and implement possible solutions. Imagine now that you are a psychiatrist, and you have the job of observing, diagnosing, and treating the major characters in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

The following chart contains your list of patients for today. In the problem column, write symptoms that each patient experiences (as portrayed in the play). Diagnose each character in the cause column, and then suggest a treatment in the treatment column. Single characters may have multiple problems and treatments.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Acts I – V**Plot**

Objective: Relating conflicts and characters in the play to contemporary equivalents

Activity

Shakespeare's drama is often described as universal, which means that it appeals to all audiences and cultures, past and present. Shakespeare achieves this universal appeal by using age-old themes to which anyone can relate, regardless of time or place.

Consider the storyline of *The Taming of the Shrew*. How and where could it occur in the present day? Begin by thinking of people who share the same type of lifestyle, responsibilities, or power as the major characters in the play—especially those who make decisions that produce conflict.

Once you have identified a situation that reasonably parallels that of *The Taming of the Shrew*, fill in the supplied chart, with the equivalent events and characters. The answers need be only short comments. Several examples have been completed for you, but feel free to discard them and use different characters, settings, or plot adjustments for your alternate version of the play.