Shrew In A Few
adapted from William Shakespeare’s
The Taming of the Shrew

Activities for grades 1-12:
Synopsis, Scene Work, Acting Exercises & more!

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commissioned for SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL ST. LOUIS’
2011 EDUCATION TOUR
In addition to our popular Forest Park production, Shakespeare Festival St Louis is dedicated to offering compelling programs that introduce Shakespeare to young people through workshops and performances. These school-friendly offerings introduce the Bard’s language and his Elizabethan world, drawing connections and comparisons between then and now. They augment school curricula and provide a springboard from which to consider Shakespeare’s life and works in fun and dynamic ways.

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Christopher Limber
Education Director
Shakespeare Festival St. Louis
There are two primary sources for information on the Bard: his works, and various legal and church documents that have survived from Elizabethan times. Unfortunately, there are many gaps in this information and much room for conjecture. We know a man named William Shakespeare was baptized at Stratford-upon-Avon on April 26, 1564, and was buried at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford on April 25, 1616. Tradition holds that he was born three days earlier, and that he died on his birthday—April 23—but this is perhaps more romantic myth than fact. Young William was born of John Shakespeare, a glover and leather merchant, and Mary Arden, a landed heiress. William was the third of eight children in the Shakespeare household, three of whom died in childhood. We assume that Shakespeare went to grammar school, since his father was first a member of the Stratford Council and later high bailiff (the equivalent of town mayor). A grammar school education would have meant that Shakespeare was exposed to the rudiments of Latin, rhetoric, logic and literature.

In 1575, John Shakespeare suddenly disappears from Stratford’s political records. Some believe that his removal from office necessitated his son’s quitting school and taking a position as a butcher’s apprentice. Banns (announcements) were published for the marriage of a William Shakespeare to an Ann Whatley in 1582 (there are no records indicating that this arrangement was solemnized, however). On November 27 of the same year a marriage license was granted to 18-year-old William and 26-year-old Anne Hathaway. A daughter, Susanna, was born to the couple six months later. Twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born and baptized three years later, and Hamnet died in childhood at the age of 11, on August 11, 1596. We don’t know how the young Shakespeare came to travel to London or how he first came to the stage. One theory holds that young Will was arrested as a poacher (one who hunts illegally on someone else’s property) and escaped to London to avoid prosecution in Stratford; another holds that he left home to work in the city as a school teacher.

However, it is clear that between 1582 and 1592, Shakespeare became involved in the London theatre scene as a principal actor and playwright with one of several repertory companies. By 1594, Shakespeare was listed as a shareholder in one of the most popular acting companies in London: the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. He was a member of this company for the rest of his career, which lasted until about 1611. When James I came to the throne in 1603, he issued a royal license to Shakespeare and his fellow players, inviting them to call themselves the King’s Men. In 1608, the King’s Men leased the Blackfriar’s Theatre in London. This theatre, which had artificial lighting and was probably heated, served as their winter playhouse. The famous Globe Theatre was their summer performance space.

In 1616 Shakespeare’s daughter Judith married Thomas Quiney, the son of a neighbor in Stratford. Shakespeare revised his will six weeks later; within a month he died. The revised version of his will bequeathed his house and all the goods therein to his daughter Susanna and her husband Dr. John Hall, leaving Judith and Thomas only a small sum of money; his wife, who survived him, received the couple’s second best bed.

In the years since Shakespeare’s death, he has risen to the position of “patron saint” of English literature and drama. In the 1800s especially, his plays were so popular that many refused to believe that an actor from Stratford had written them. To this day some believe that Sir Francis Bacon was the real author of the plays; others choose to believe Edward Devere, the Earl of Oxford, was the author. Still others would prefer to believe Walter Raleigh or Christopher Marlowe penned the lines attributed to Shakespeare. While most people are content to believe that genius can spring up in any social class or rural setting, the gap between the known facts and the myths that surround Shakespeare’s life leaves ample room for speculation.
History and Sources

The Taming of the Shrew was one of Shakespeare’s earliest works, probably written between 1590 and 1594. It is hard to find exact dates for any of Shakespeare’s works because the performance histories remain speculative and are often based on private diary accounts rather than public record. However, based on the performance information that has been collected, we know that Shrew was performed very close to several of Shakespeare’s other famous plays, such as The Comedy of Errors, Richard III and Titus Andronicus.

Shakespeare based many of his plays on popular stories, novellas and history writings of his time. It is hard to find one specific source that inspired The Taming of the Shrew. In Shakespeare’s day there were many stories of a “shrew” – that is, a woman who disobeyed her husband, who was rude, coarse and unconventional – and this character type appeared in many different folk traditions and songs. There is some mystery, however, surrounding another play actually called The Taming of the Shrew, first registered in 1594, around the same time as Shakespeare’s play. This play has a lot in common with Shakespeare’s, and scholars often debate the similarities. Did Shakespeare and the other playwright use the same source material? Did the playwright of the second Shrew base his play on Shakespeare’s original? (There were no copyrights laws at that time to prevent authors from borrowing each other’s work.) Or, did Shakespeare himself write part of the second play? We may never know. However, speculation is fun and interesting as we compare the origin of Shakespeare’s play with similar works of the time.

Despite – or perhaps because of – its controver-

sial quality, The Taming of the Shrew is one of Shakespeare’s most popular plays. In addition to regular performances by theater groups across the world, The Taming of the Shrew has served as source material for several modern retellings, such as Cole Porter’s stage musical (and subsequent film) Kiss Me, Kate and the 1999 film 10 Things I Hate About You.

Coined by Shakespeare

Shakespeare first used these famous phrases in The Taming of the Shrew. Do you recognize any of them? Can you think of phrases we use today based on these quotes?

“I’ll not budge an inch.”
Induction I

“Kiss me, Kate”
Act Two, Scene 1

“And thereby hangs a tale”
Act Four, Scene 1

“This is the way to kill a wife with kindness”
Act Four, Scene 1

“To offer war where they should kneel for peace”
Act Five, Scene 2

“Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so”
Act Five, Scene 2
**SHREW in Today’s World**

**A NEW AGE FOR WOMEN?**

When Shakespeare wrote *The Taming of the Shrew*, Queen Elizabeth was in the third decade of her reign. Infamous as an unmarried Queen, Elizabeth insisted during her time in power that she alone was capable of ruling her country. She was in this way the catalyst of a new age for women. Today, *The Taming of the Shrew* is a highly controversial piece because on the surface, it is the story of a man, Petruchio, who through abuse, forces his strong-willed wife, Katharina, to submit to him. But with the changing cultural norms, and a strong Queen in power, Shakespeare’s play boils beneath the surface with added dimensions of relational richness. Kate is often seen as Petruchio’s equal – their verbal jousting suggests that. Kate’s ability to stand up to Petruchio asks whether she is truly submitting to her husband, merely mocking him, or eventually joining forces with him. *The Taming of the Shrew* invites readers, actors, directors and audience members to form their own conclusion. We are left to make decisions regarding Kate and Petruchio’s actual feelings for each other — and whether they are transcending the cultural mores of Elizabethan culture by choosing to use their partnership to their mutual advantage by winning the bet at the end of the play.

As popular as this play has been throughout the ages and today, *The Taming of the Shrew* remains a hot topic because of the sexist overtones that exist between the play’s men and women. On the surface, Petruchio and Katharina’s relationship is not friendly to the gender equality that modern audiences now expect. This debate has led directors to explore different interpretations that re-examine exactly what it means to “tame” a woman.

**KATE & PETRUCHIO**

Katharina is a strong, defensive character. Unlike her sister, she holds her own in a man’s world. She stands up to her father and her suitors. Her sharp temper occasionally crosses the line into cruelty with her sister and even with Petruchio. In Act 2, Scene i, Kate has tied her sister’s hands together, and after taunting her about her suitors, gives her a sharp slap. These actions cross the boundary from strong-minded to shrewish, and establish the title of the play within Shakespeare’s time. To some, Kate and Petruchio’s brash behavior seems impossible to justify within a contemporary social context. But the theatre loves a challenge. There is also so much to relish about the language, characters and action in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Allowing a modern interpretation of Shakespeare to freshly examine the relationships between men and women, marriage, love and equality as set alongside a modern psychological and social context merits the creative effort.

Like Kate, Petruchio is often seen as an unlikable character when first introduced. At first, he takes on the challenge of wooing Kate for her father’s money, not love, and his self-assumed dominance is clear from their first scene. He proclaims them engaged, regardless of her protests. He further humiliates her at her own wedding, and then denies her food and sleep at his house, crossing the line from determined to cruel.

As a dramatist, Shakespeare knows audiences...
want to be engaged by strong, believable characters in conflict and passionate action. Therefore, Petruchio and Kate are fascinated by each other intellectually and drawn to each other romantically. They have a lot in common and are well-matched, both imbued with a sharp tongue, a dexterous vocabulary, an undeniable determination, and a sharper and quicker wit than everyone around them. In their power game, the question becomes who exactly is playing with whom. This is the angle that directors often explore when they seek a contemporary and more feminist interpretation.

INTERPRETING THE TEXT
Shakespeare doesn’t provide emotional stage directions like [Shouts angrily and slaps him] in his script for the actors, nor do any plays of that era. The only emotional indicator is the relationship that can be discerned from the dialogue and events of the story itself. The action implied between the characters lies within what they say to each other and the specificity with which it is said. Underlying emotion, open to exploration by actor and director, can change from production to production, coloring and influencing the meaning for an audience. For example, we hear something different from a crying character than from a laughing one, even if they speak the same words.

This flexibility of sub-textual interpretation allows each production’s interpretation to wrestle with essential questions. For example: Is Kate just biding her time or does she really submit to Petruchio? A production might imply she is merely humiliating him in order to get her own way later. Can the subtext be strong enough to support this or do we need to change Shakespeare’s words in a modern re-write? Can it be implied in a production’s acting choices that Petruchio’s exercise in starvation is ‘acted’ by Kate (perhaps she steals food on the sly or is strong enough to live without) and she is merely playing a role in an endurance game? Could Kate’s submission be more out of boredom than desperation as she awaits a time to seek revenge and Petruchio’s comeuppance? These choices are all open to each production’s individual interpretation.

The final scene is often taken as proof that Kate really submits to Petruchio. Before that, their talk was all word games: dressing up, scaring tailors, even disagreeing about the time of day. However, Kate’s monologue about a woman’s duty to her husband is quite heartfelt and convincing. She seems justified in severely reproaching the shrewish women and imperfect wives who surround her. Perhaps this monologue isn’t about Petruchio winning over Kate, but about the couple winning their bet over the rest of the party. Lucentio and Hortensio have set an expensive wager against Kate’s obedience. With her “submission”, Petruchio wins a lot of money, and by default, Kate does as well. Is Kate’s eloquent speech simply another piece of acting? Tired of playing games with each other, maybe the couple has secretly joined forces to dupe the other dinner guests!

The wonderful thing about Shakespeare’s writing is that four hundred years later, his works can be mined and reexamined against the contemporary world and restaged to spark the interest and sympathy of a present-day audience. The text certainly can be performed as a harsh, sexist piece of literature on domestic abuse, but it is just as possible to interpret the last scene so that Kate and Petruchio are having the biggest and last laugh – all at the expense of party guests with empty pockets who believe in the taming of a shrew.
The Taming of the Shrew

Cast of Characters
(In the Induction)

A LORD: A young man, presumably very wealthy. For his entertainment, he decides to play a trick on Christopher Sly.

CHRISTOPHER SLY: A poor, drunk tinker.

HOSTESS: The mistress of an alehouse.

PAGE: A young boy, dressed up as a woman, who the lord passes off as Sly’s noble wife.

PLAYERS/HUNTSMEN/SERVANTS: Employees of the Lord who conspire with him to play his trick on Sly.

(In the play The Taming of the Shrew)

BAPTISTA MINOLA: A rich older gentleman, head of one of the finest houses in Padua. He is the father of Katharina and Bianca.

KATHARINA: Known also as “Kate.” She is the supposed shrew of the play’s title. Baptista’s oldest daughter, she is known for her sharp temper, bitter insults and stubborn disposition.

BIANCA: Baptista’s younger daughter. She is as sweet and mild as her sister is rough and passionate. Her beauty and charm win the love of many men, but her father has forbidden her to marry until her sister is married.

GREMIO: A wealthy old man and the first of Bianca’s admirers.

HORTENSIO: Another of Bianca’s admirers who has the foresight to suggest his friend Petruchio as a suitor for Katharina. Later disguised as a music teacher, “Licio.”

LUCENTIO: The last and most successful of Bianca’s lovers. Later disguised as a Latin teacher, “Cambio.”

PETRUCHIO: A young man recently returned from Verona. He agrees to woo Kate despite her rumored temper, because of her dowry.

TRANIO: A servant to Lucentio, he disguises himself as his master to woo Bianca.

BIONDELLO: Another of Lucentio’s servants.

VINCENTIO: A gentleman of Pisa, Lucentio’s father.

A PEDANT: A teacher from Mantua.

GRUMIO: Petruchio’s closest servant.

THE WIDOW: A rich woman married to Hortensio.

CURTIS/NATHANIEL/PHILIP/JOSEPH/NICHOLAS: Servants of Petruchio.
Synopsis

Induction: A drunkard named Christopher Sly is found passed out at an alehouse by a local lord, who decides to play a trick on him and make Sly believe he is a nobleman. In order to fool Sly, the lord has a play performed for him. This play is The Taming of the Shrew.

The Play: Baptista Minola is a rich gentleman from Padua. He has two daughters, Katharina and Bianca. The younger, Bianca, is sweet and obedient, but Katharina, known as Kate, is stubborn and quick-tempered. Many men fall in love with Bianca, but fearing that his older daughter will never find a companion, Baptista forbids Bianca to have suitors until Kate is married. Two of Bianca’s devoted admirers, Gremio and Hortensio, decide to work together to find a suitor for Kate. Hortensio finds the perfect man when his old friend Petruchio returns from Verona looking for a rich woman to marry. When Petruchio hears of Kate and her father’s wealth, he boasts it will be easy to woo Kate.

After a quarrel with her sister, Kate slaps the mild Bianca. Baptista is upset by his willful daughter’s actions, and he tells her so. Kate’s feelings are hurt; she accuses her father of loving Bianca more than her. At this heated moment Petruchio enters to begin to woo and the scene quickly becomes a spirited battle of wits. Kate insults him, but Petruchio pays no attention and continues to pursue her. When Baptista reenters, Petruchio tells him everything is settled and they are engaged.

Meanwhile, two of Bianca’s suitors, Lucentio and Hortensio, come up with an idea: since they can’t woo her directly, they disguise themselves as teachers and convince Baptista to hire them. Bianca’s schooltime quickly turns into a competition for her affection. Bianca decides she will hear Lucentio’s Latin lesson; Hortensio’s music will have to wait.

Kate’s wedding day has arrived, but her groom is late to the church! When Petruchio and his servant Grumio finally arrive, dressed like clowns, Petruchio turns the wedding ceremony into a circus, abusing Kate, striking the priest, and finally rushing Kate to return to his estate, leaving the guests to enjoy the wedding reception without them. After a calamitous road trip (Kate falls in the mud, and Petruchio scares the horses away) they arrive at Petruchio’s country house.

Petruchio causes nothing but upset and discomfort by claiming that nothing is “good enough” for Kate so she must therefore do without. Petruchio doesn’t let her eat or sleep. Assisted by Grumio and Hortensio, Petruchio taunts Kate until she is tired, hungry and seemingly at her wits end. Finally, Petruchio announces that they are going to return to Baptista’s house for a visit. He brings in a tailor to measure Kate for new clothes, but again, nothing is “good enough” and the tailor is dismissed in disgrace, with Kate getting nothing new. As long as Kate argues with him, Petruchio delays the trip home. It is only when Kate gives in and agrees with Petruchio’s absurd declarations (such as calling the sun the moon) that he finally allows their departure to Padua.

Baptista presents a grand feast to celebrate three marriages: Kate to Petruchio, Bianca to Lucentio and Hortensio to a rich widow. At this feast, the women withdraw to talk amongst themselves and the men place a bet on whose wife is the most obedient. Still believing Kate to be a shrew, Hortensio and Lucentio set extravagant wagers on their own brides. They are called back individually, but both the widow and Bianca refuse to come. Only Katharina appears promptly when she is called, so Petruchio wins the bet. Petruchio sends Katharina to fetch his friend’s wives: when they return, Kate lectures them on obedience to their husbands. Kate and Petruchio depart, and the play ends with Lucentio and Hortensio marveling at how Petruchio has indeed tamed the shrew.
The Taming of the Shrew

Breaking the Code

Challenge your students to decipher the following speech from The Taming of the Shrew (Act II, Scene ii). Use the “Guide to Shakespeare’s Code” and the list of poetic devices. Afterward, students can compare their findings!

(A print-friendly version can be found in Appendix 1)

PETRUCHIO (II,ii)
You lie, in faith, for you are call’d plain Kate, And bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the curst: But Kate the prettiest Kate in Christendom, Kate of Kate Hall, my Super-dainty Kate, For dainties are all Kates, and therefore, Kate, Take this of me, Kate of my consolation, Hearing thy mildness prais’d in every town, Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded, Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.

GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE’S CODE

Be sure to mark your findings.

1. Get a good dictionary.

2. Number each of the lines in the speech. (9)

3. Softly whisper the speech - run the words through the filter of your lips and tongue.

4. Look for instances of Shakespeare’s use of poetic devices (see below).

5. Look up all the unusual words in the dictionary.

POETIC DEVICES

Clever uses of word sound, rhythm and meanings.

1. Assonance: resemblance in sound, such as “Kate the curst.”

2. Rhyme: especially internal rhymes, such as “to woo.”

3. Puns: words with double meanings such as “dainty.”

4. Antithesis: contradictory statements such as “plain” and “bonny.”

Now then, have at it and remember: Shakespeare wrote for actors. Assume that every word and mark is there for a reason.

ACTOR REPORT

We’ve just run our speech through the rehearsal hall, and this is what our actors have discovered:

• There are 73 words, 14 commas, 1 colon, and 1 period. The entire speech is actually one sentence!

• There are 14 words beginning with the hard “K” sound.

• Petruchio puns in reference to “dainties” and “Kates,” and in his use of the word “sounded.” “Dainty” means either “delicately pretty” or “sweet and tasty.” “Kate” is the woman Petruchio is addressing, but the word also implies “cates,” which are food delicacies. “Sounded” means both “announced” and “fathomed.”

• Petruchio calls Katharina “Kate the curst” and “Kate of Kate Hall,” referring to St. Catherine of St. Catherine’s Hall in England - a saintly reference. Our hero also refers to Katharina as “plain Kate” and “bonny Kate.”

• The last four lines of the speech have some of the most open vowel sounds (“town,” “sounded,” “thee,” “mov’d,” “woo”) of the entire speech. There are also fewer words with explosive sounds. We noticed in rehearsal that the actor who plays our Petruchio tended to spit a lot while speaking the first six lines because there are so many “K’s”, “P’s” and “T’s.”
Shakespeare gives the actor lots of ideas and possibilities in the dialogue. Remember that there were very few stage directions and the actors only received their own lines in single sheets of paper called “sides”. This means the bulk of their information about who they were playing and what the character was feeling and doing was in the lines themselves. Think of the poetry as a “secret code” about character, action and emotion. That might help you to discover even more about what the words do and how their sound affects what choices the actor makes.

Let’s move on and see what kind of sense we can make of it. First of all, we want to know what kind of man is Petruchio? Is he smart, stupid, friendly, sensitive? Next, we need to know what he is doing in the quoted speech. Has he thought out these words beforehand, or is he making them up as he goes along? Is he speaking carefully and calmly, or is he ranting and raving? Are there some possible messages Shakespeare has offered in the poetry? You might have even MORE ideas:

Petruchio is very sensitive, very clever, and very strong willed. He seems to have thought about what he is saying, and likewise is trying to have a certain effect on the person to whom he is speaking (Katharina). My guess is that he is trying to antagonize her. But, I also think that something happens to make him change his attack, if only a little, so that he begins to speak differently.

I came to this conclusion from the following clues:

1. Petruchio is the first person ever to call Katharina “Kate,” which is a rather rude shortening of her name.

2. This is the first time the two have met, and yet one of the first things Petruchio says to Kate is, “You lie.”

3. As if it is not enough to call Katharina “Kate”, he repeats that name 11 times!

4. The first six lines have 11 of the 14 commas, all of the “K” words, and most of the explosive words. This leads me to believe that the first six lines are spoken with forethought, harshly, and fairly quickly.

5. It is almost as if Petruchio is not looking at Katharina during the first six lines, then truly notices her at line 7. His speech changes noticeably at that time, and seems to slow down a bit.

6. Petruchio must not be very sincere. He’s lying when he says “Hearing thy mildness prais’d…” as no one who has spoken to him about Katharina has said any such thing. I believe that what he does first is insult Katharina. Then he says nice things about her in order to see which way she will respond. Of course, from what we know of Katharina, she is most certain to react with anger, which is probably what Petruchio wants.
A lot of characters disguise themselves in *The Taming of the Shrew*. For example, Lucentio pretends to be Cambio, a Latin teacher, while his servant, Tranio, disguises himself as Lucentio!

You can create your own disguise! Being in disguise is pretending to be someone else. Only you know who you really are!

In order to create your disguise, first pick a name. Sarah, Jon, Jamiliah the Fifth? This name is called your alias – your fake name.

Now you can choose whom you want to be. You can be a girl, a boy, even an animal! You can be an adult or a child – whatever you want.

Lucentio disguised himself as a Latin teacher – you could be a teacher too! Or you could be a firefighter, a princess, a cook, a doctor or even just a different kid!

Now draw a picture of yourself in disguise. Would you wear a big hat? A wig? Sunglasses? Funny clothes? What would make people think that you in disguise are not you?

Coming up with a disguise can be fun, right? Maybe that’s why so many of Shakespeare’s characters create a fake identity. Why else do you think they might not want to be known as who they actually are?

* TEACHER’S NOTE: students will need paper and markers, crayons, pencils etc. for this activity. If they seemed engaged, this can be extended with a few costume pieces. Get the students to act out their own disguises, or have them pretend to be characters from the play.
Write the four categories and point values on your chalkboard or whiteboard (do not write the questions on the boards.) Choose four volunteers, and have them sit or stand in front. Starting from the far right let the first contestant pick a category and a wager amount. Give the prompt, and let whoever raises his or her hand first answer the question. If they get it right, they get the wager points, if they get it wrong, they lose those points. Continue until someone reaches 1000 points – that’s the winner!

**WHO IS THAT, ANYWAY?**
100 --------------- The shrew
200 --------------- Father of the shrew
300 --------------- A not-so noble nobleman (or Petruchio’s servant)
500 --------------- Bianca’s replacement

**WHERE ARE WE NOW?**
100 --------------- Baptista’s home
200 --------------- In the country
300 --------------- Petruchio’s return from ____
500 --------------- Induction (or Vincentio’s origin)

**WHOSE LINE IS IT?**
100 --------------- “Kiss me Kate, we will be married o’ Sunday.”
200 --------------- “Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so”
300 --------------- “I must dance bare-foot on her wedding day”
500 --------------- “And thereby hangs a tale”

**WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?**
100 --------------- Bonny
200 --------------- Coffer
300 --------------- Repute
500 --------------- Peremptory

**Teacher’s Note:** Two of the questions reference the Induction; if you have omitted it from your lesson, use the clue in parentheses. Also, if students want to play longer, have them create additional questions.

**Answers:**
Who is that anyway? 100: Katharina (Kate); 200: Baptista; 300: Christopher Sly (or Grumio); 500: The widow
Where are we now? 100: Padua; 200: Petruchio’s house; 300: Verona; 500: Alehouse (or Pisa)
Whose line is it? 100: Petruchio; 200: Lucentio; 300: Katharina; 500: Grumio
What does that mean? 100: Pretty; 200: Strongbox; 300: General opinion; 500: Insistence on obedience
In Shakespeare’s day, putting on a show was a cumulative effort that required the input of everyone in the company. Imagine you’re putting on a production of this play. In groups of four or five, come up with your own show concept.

First, as a group, decide on a theme for your show. Elizabethan England? Los Angeles in the 1940s? Outer Space? If you need inspiration, research other productions and the decisions they made. This decision will inform the production choices that you make. Be prepared to explain why you made this choice.

There are many design jobs in a production. These include:

DIRECTOR
PRODUCER
SET DESIGNER
COSTUME DESIGNER
PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR

Feel free to assign different roles to each individual, or just work together as a team.

Based on your show concept, design costumes and set, and select your cast – imagine you could have any actors you want! And of course, don’t forget to come up with a poster and playbill. Go to town – as Shakespeare said, “The play’s the thing.”

*Optional teacher note: For inspiration, make it a competition among the groups – look for the most creative, best researched, best teamwork, neatest concept etc.
A monologue is a long speech by just one actor. Shakespeare wrote a lot of monologues, many of which are among the most famous in dramatic literature (“To be or not to be…”; “Friends Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears...”; “Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?”). Actors love monologues because in addition to being an important solo part of a play, they can be great performance pieces on their own. Most auditions require that an actor prepare a monologue. Many actors put together monologues from many of Shakespeare’s plays to perform as a One-Person Show!

Here are the beginnings of three famous monologues from *The Taming of the Shrew*:

*Print-friendly versions of the entire monologues can be found in Appendix 2*

**BIONDIELLO (Act 3, Scene ii)**
Why, Petruchio is coming in a new hat and an old jerkin, a pair of old breeches thrice turned, a pair of boots that have been candle-cases....

**PETRUCHIO (Act 4, Scene ii)**
Thus have I politicly begun my reign,
And ‘tis my hope to end successfully...

**KATHARINA (Act 4, Scene iii)**
The more my wrong, the more his spite appears:
What, did he marry me to famish me?
Beggars, that come unto my father’s door...

Choose one of the above monologues, or find your own from *The Taming of the Shrew*. Your teacher will give you a time frame, which may mean you may have to shorten your monologue. Actors must often “cut” down their monologues for time, as many auditions only give you 1-3 minutes.

If you have to cut, first make sure you understand the context of the monologue and the character that you are about to play. This includes:
- To whom you are talking?
- Where are you?
- What has happened before to cause you to speak?
- What is your relationship to the person to or about whom you are speaking?
- What do you want from the person to whom you are speaking?

Even if it is a soliloquy (a monologue spoken alone to the audience) there is a reason Shakespeare is having you speak. Perhaps you are figuring out something very important or you wish to have the audience agree with what you are doing or empathize with your character.

The first essential step to successfully performing Shakespeare is to understand what you’re saying. Look up any unfamiliar words, and if you still have trouble understanding, try paraphrasing the entire monologue in modern English. Now memorize your monologue and practice how you wish to perform it. When you’re ready, take your turn to perform for your class. Break a leg!

**TEACHER’S NOTE:** this exercise will require more than one class period. It may make a good assignment: let them find and prepare a monologue, and then set aside a class as performance day. Vary the time limit based on the number of students.
Shakespearephone
Activity - All ages

Write the following phrases on different pieces of paper:

“You make amends.”
“I am very glad on’t”
“O disloyal thing”
“But what’s the matter?”
“Thanks, good sir”
“What hour is it?”
“I wish ye sport”
“Art not afeared?”
“I stand on fire.”
“In that he spake too far.”

Have all the students sit in a circle. Explain that you are going to give one of them a phrase, and this person is to repeat the phrase, in a whisper, to the next person. That person repeats it to the next, and so on. To save time, you can just make sure they all know how to play “Telephone”.

Compare the discrepancies between the initial statement and what the last person hears. When they run out of phrases, have them start their own sentences. Note whether the sentence is more or less accurate when it is their words versus Shakespeare’s words.

Point out how easily words can get confused. Ask them to discuss how this might impact dramatic literature and performance, and what might be done to prevent the audience from receiving a telephone message. The impact of volume, pronunciation and understanding are all good acting elements to draw student attention.

Have them try in earnest to get the message correct from the start to the finish. What changes?
DOWN
1. Gesture of affection
2. In love with Bianca
4. Aesthetic attribute
5. "Myself am moved to woo thee for my _____."
6. Entertains her guests
8. Tarry
10. Bianca & Kate’s last name
11. Petruchio’s servant
14. Who’s there?
16. Performs alterations
18. Female family member
21. Father of the bride

ACROSS
1. ...in submission
3. “One” en Español
7. Framing device (Prologue)
9. The Shrew
12. Wish to possess
13. “Tutor” synonym
15. A dead language
17. Formal “thee”
19. Unsweetened
22. Bet

ANSWER ON PAGE 20
Books on Shakespeare and Teaching Shakespeare:


Shakespeare Websites:

- Mr. William Shakespeare and the Internet: [www.shakespeare.palomar.edu](http://www.shakespeare.palomar.edu)
- The Shakespeare Resource Center: [www.bardweb.net](http://www.bardweb.net)
- Shakespeare’s Globe Center USA: [www.sgc.umd.edu](http://www.sgc.umd.edu)
- Shakespeare: A Virtual Field Trip: [www/hrbsstaff.ednet.ns.ca/engramja/Svtour.html](http://www/hrbsstaff.ednet.ns.ca/engramja/Svtour.html)
- Life in Elizabethan England: [elizabethan.org/compendium](http://elizabethan.org/compendium)
- Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: [www.shakespeare.org.uk](http://www.shakespeare.org.uk)

Shakespeare Websites:

- Shakespeare Lite: library.thinkquest.org/23293
- Shakespeare Magazine: [www.shakespearemag.com](http://www.shakespearemag.com)
- Absolute Shakespeare: absoluteshakespeare.com
- Ready to Use Activities for Teaching: [www.pearsonschool.com](http://www.pearsonschool.com)
- Shakespeare Curriculum Resources from The Center for Learning: [www.centerforlearning.org/c-41-shakespeare.aspx](http://www.centerforlearning.org/c-41-shakespeare.aspx)

One More Activity

Write and let me know your thoughts. YOU are the reason we do what we do, and it’s your responses that help us to provide theatre experiences that are exciting, meaningful and educational. Write care of:

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6: The Taming of the Shrew Summer Camp (top: Raz Cunco, Joe Konroy; bottom: Michael Wallach, Hannah Grimm, Sebastian Malloof)
8: All the World’s a Stage... (Elana Kepner, Michael B. Perkins, Dan Kelly, Khnemu Menu-Ra, Megan Cone)
15: Reading Room, Folger Shakespeare Library
APPENDIX 1
For Petruchio’s Speech in “Breaking the Code” activity

PETRUCHIO: You lie, in faith, for you are call’d plain Kate,
And bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the curst:
But Kate the prettiest Kate in Christendom,
Kate of Kate Hall, my Super-dainty Kate,
For dainties are all Kates, and therefore, Kate,
Take this of me, Kate of my consolation,
Hearing thy mildness prais’d in every town,
Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded,
Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.
BIONDELLO (Act 3, Scene ii)

Why, Petruchio is coming in a new hat and an old jerkin, a pair of old breeches thrice turned, a pair of boots that have been candle-cases, one buckled, another laced, an old rusty sword ta’en out of the town-armory, with a broken hilt, and chapeless; with two broken points: his horse hipped with an old mothy saddle and stirrups of no kindred; besides, possessed with the glanders and like to mose in the chine; troubled with the lampass, infected with the fashions, full of wingdalls, sped with spavins, rayed with yellows, past cure of the fives, stark spoiled with the staggers, begnawn with the bots, swayed in the back and shoulder-shotten; near-legged before and with, a half-chequed bit and a head-stall of sheeps leather which, being restrained to keep him from stumbling, hath been often burst and now repaired with knots; one girth six time pieced and a woman’s crupper of velure, which hath two letters for her name fairly set down in studs, and here and there pieced with packthread.
PETRUCHIO (Act 4, Scene ii)

Thus have I politicly begun my reign,
And ‘tis my hope to end successfully.
My falcon now is sharp and passing empty;
And till she stoop she must not be full-gorged,
For then she never looks upon her lure.
Another way I have to man my haggard,
To make her come and know her keeper’s call,
That is, to watch her, as we watch these kites
That bate and beat and will not be obedient.
She eat no meat to-day, nor none shall eat;
Last night she slept not, nor to-night she shall not;
As with the meat, some undeserved fault
I’ll find about the making of the bed;
And here I’ll fling the pillow, there the bolster,
This way the coverlet, another way the sheets:
Ay, and amid this hurly I intend
That all is done in reverend care of her;
And in conclusion she shall watch all night:
And if she chance to nod I’ll rail and brawl
And with the clamour keep her still awake.
This is a way to kill a wife with kindness;
And thus I’ll curb her mad and headstrong humour.
He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Now let him speak: ‘tis charity to show.
KATHARINA (Act 4, Scene iii)

The more my wrong, the more his spite appears:
What, did he marry me to famish me?
Beggars, that come unto my father’s door,
Upon entreaty have a present aims;
If not, elsewhere they meet with charity:
But I, who never knew how to entreat,
Nor never needed that I should entreat,
Am starved for meat, giddy for lack of sleep,
With oath kept waking and with brawling fed:
And that which spites me more than all these wants,
He does it under name of perfect love;
As who should say, if I should sleep or eat,
‘Twere deadly sickness or else present death.
I prithee go and get me some repast;
I care not what, so it be wholesome food.
Words, Words, Crosswords

DOWN
1. Gesture of affection
2. In love with Bianca
4. Aesthetic attribute
5. “Myself am moved to woo thee for my _____.
6. Entertains her guests
8. Tarry
10. Bianca & Kate’s last name
11. Petrchio’s servant
14. Who’s there?
16. Performs alterations
18. Female family member
20. Necessary for speech: “A sharp _____.
21. Father of the bride

ACROSS
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