

Taming of the Shrew

Critical Essay Assignment

For your final assessment choose **ONE** of the following topics and write an essay of at least 5 well developed paragraphs with a controlling thesis statement. Due, Thursday, June 6th.

1. **Analyzing a Character.** Characters may be dynamic or static. Dynamic characters undergo an important change in attitude, values, or behavior. In contrast, static characters remain pretty much the same throughout a play, novel, or short story. Select one of the following characters and write an essay showing that the character is either dynamic or static: Kate, Bianca, Petruchio, Lucentio, Baptista, Trainio. Support your position by specific references to the characters words and actions. Do not merely retell the story.

OR

2. **Analyzing a Favorite Scene.** Certain scenes have stronger appeal than others and yield enjoyment when they are remembered after the play is read or performed. What is your favorite scene in *The Taming of the Shrew*? Write an essay explaining the scene's appeal to you. Consider elements such as humor, irony, suspense, conflict, character, props, language, and theme.

OR

3. **Responding to a Critic.** Should *The Taming of the Shrew* be categorized as a comedy or as a farce? A farce is a type of comedy in which ridiculous and often-stereotyped characters are involved in far-fetched, silly situations. The humor arises from crude physical action, slapstick, and clowning. Comedy is a type of drama that ends happily because the protagonist, usually an ordinary person, overcomes a series of obstacles. Unlike pure farce, comedy may pose serious and realistic problems for the protagonist. After reading contrasting comments of the two critics below, respond to one of them by writing a paragraph in which you argue for or against the critic's position. Support your argument by citing specific details from the play

a. *The Taming of the Shrew...was an adaptation of an older play. Shakespeare took what was originally a tidy little farce and transformed it into a vigorous and colorful one. But it remains a rather heartless play, and although Katherina and Petruchio are entertaining they are not particularly real people. – from Marchette Chutte, An Introduction to Shakespeare.*

- b. *For his third comedy, The Taming of the Shrew, Shakespeare went to Gascoingne's Supposes..., but he combined this plot, very ingeniously, with the "taming" plot, and he set both in the framework of the gulling of Christopher Sly. The distancing of the play by the induction, the contrast between the levels of reality represented by the two main plots, and the sermon with which the play concludes-however unpalatable to modern tastes- prevent the comedy from being farcical. – from Kenneth Muir, ed. Shakspeare; The Comedies*

OR

4. **Is this Play Sexist?** Think about the play as a whole and the discussions that we have had in class. In an essay of several paragraphs discuss this question and offer evidence (from the text) to support your interpretation.