

Study Guide 2017



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About the Playwright

William Shakespeare was born in England in the year 1564 to a leather merchant named John. Records suggest that he was baptized on April 26 at Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon. April 23 is widely celebrated as his birthday, although no records explicitly confirm his date of birth. He had two older sisters, Judith and Joan, and three younger brothers, Gilbert, Richard, and Edmund. He most likely



attended the King's New School during his youth. At 18 he married Anne Hathaway, who was 26 at the time. The couple wedded on November 28, 1582, in Worcester and bore their first child only a year later. Shakespeare would eventually be the father of three children: Susanna and a set of twins, Hamnet and Judith.

Evidence exists that places Shakespeare as a playwright and an actor by the year 1592, around the time in which it is suspected that he wrote *The Taming of the Shrew*. In the 1590s he was well associated with an acting company known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men in London. The name of the company would later change to the King's Men after the coronation of King James I. Shakespeare would go on to build his own theater, the Globe, in the year 1599. His own works were performed on his stage and ranged from comedies to tragedies to histories.

It is believed that William Shakespeare died on his birthday at the age of 52. He has left an incredible legacy. His 37 plays and 154 sonnets are still widely read and performed all over the world. Even those who may be unfamiliar with Shakespeare's work use his language in daily speech. In *The Taming of the Shrew* alone, he gives us phrases like "break the ice" and "kill with kindness" and even the term "bedazzled." His stories continue to be reimagined on stage and screen for audiences of all ages.

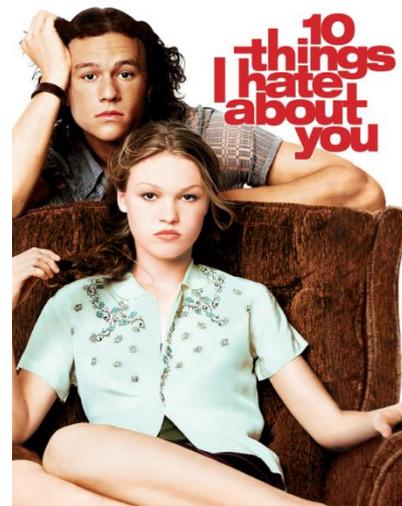
Production History

The Taming of the Shrew is one of Shakespeare's earlier works dating between 1593 and 1594. It was first performed on June 11, 1594, in Newington Butts Theatre in London, England. At this time the show most likely had no set and very minimal props. A recorded performance on November 26, 1633, for Charles I and Henrietta Maria was apparently well liked. The King's Men would go on to perform *Shrew* at theaters including the Globe and Blackfriars. The earliest recorded performance of the King's Men at Blackfriars was in 1610, suggesting that the play maintained enough interest to continue to be performed years later.



However, *Shrew* has fallen in and out of favor over time since some of its content can be seen as controversial. The seventeenth century was not very receptive to the show, and by the eighteenth century, alternate adaptations of the plot became more popular than Shakespeare's version. The most popular of these was David Garrick's *Catharine and Petruchio*, written in 1754. Shakespeare's *Shrew* would make a comeback in 1844, and Garrick's rendition slowly became less

popular until it was no longer performed at all. In the twentieth century, the play continued to gain popularity all over the world as productions were frequently staged. Mary Pickford starred as Katharina in the 1929 film version, which was the first instance in which one of Shakespeare's works was filmed with sound. Pickford's performance is famous for the actress's sly wink during Katharina's final speech. In 1967, a film adaptation starring Elizabeth Taylor did quite well. It grossed over \$8 million at the box office and was the 25th highest-grossing film of the year. Critics gave positive reviews, and even the popular film review website *Rotten Tomatoes* gives it a 7.5 out of 10. Other film renditions such as *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999) garnered similarly positive reviews. The film received much critical acclaim, including seven Teen Choice Award nominations and an MTV Movie Award, and the CFCA Award for "Most Promising Actress" was awarded to Julia Stiles for her performance as Kat Stratford.



About the Play: Summary

The townspeople anxiously await the coming of their beloved duke. Upon his arrival, the Duke elects a bystander to be the new “lord.” The new lord is highly celebrated with song. In an attempt to please the lord, the townspeople resolve to perform a play.

In the beautiful city of Padua there lives a merchant named Baptista. He is the father of two daughters: Katharina and Bianca. His youngest, Bianca, is fair, beautiful, studious, quiet, and soft spoken—everything a man could ever want. Katharina, on the other hand, is strong headed, stubborn, and quick tempered. She has been known to torment her sister, her father, or anyone else who dares to cross her. Many suitors desire to woo Bianca, but Baptista will not allow Bianca to accept suitors until Katharina is married. Due to Katharina’s unfavorable reputation, however, it could be a while before anyone is ready to accept the challenge of marrying such a fiery woman.

Hortensio is a suitor who wishes to pursue Bianca. Knowing of Baptista’s conditions, he hatches a plot to find a man willing to marry the tempestuous Katharina so that he (Hortensio) can marry Bianca. There is no one better suited for the job than Hortensio’s old friend Petruccio.

Petruccio is a man who cannot resist a challenge—not even the wooing of Katharina. He is drawn both to the test of accomplishing such an impossible feat and to the handsome dowry that comes with it. After Petruccio arrives from Verona with his trusty servant Grumio, he decides that he is willing to tame the untamable woman.

A student named Lucentio arrives from Pisa to study in fair Padua. After he sees Bianca for the first time, he immediately falls in love with her and hatches a plan of his own. Bianca is technically not allowed to have suitors until Katharina is married, but she *is* allowed to have tutors. Lucentio decides to disguise himself as a Latin tutor called Cambio so that he will be permitted to see Bianca while Tranio pretends to be Lucentio. Hortensio is already in hot pursuit of Bianca and is determined to win her hand, so he decides to disguise himself as a music instructor in order to gain access to her and keep Lucentio from winning her affections.

Meanwhile, Baptista is thrilled that *someone* is finally showing interest in Katharina and decides that Petruccio and Katharina are a perfect match. Sparks fly from the first moment the two meet, but Petruccio is not deterred at all by Katharina’s antics. Rather, he finds that he is her equal in both stubbornness and wit and immediately sets a date for their wedding. Petruccio proceeds to do a number of preposterous things: he shows up late to his own wedding in ridiculous clothes, keeps Katharina up all night so that she cannot sleep, denies Katharina food for periods of time, and even makes her say that the sun is the moon—all in an attempt to make her more agreeable. What started out as a fierce battle of the sexes might just end up as true love.

About Our Production: An Interview with Director Chad Bradford



How did you get involved with *The Taming of the Shrew*?

I've been involved with the traveling show for the past several years in one way or another as either a composer, an assistant director, or director. I love the family touring show. I love how many people it reaches. I love that we go into underserved communities, bringing that kind of art to people that perhaps may have no other outlet for seeing Shakespeare. *Shrew* is what was on the docket for the season, and it's something that we were excited to tackle in this form. At first I was pretty intimidated. It's so provocative. It's challenging. It's controversial. It's just downright hard—especially considering the limitation of making sure it's only one hour and making it accessible for audience members ages 7 to 70. At first I wasn't sure it was going to be something that I could tackle, but I started to rediscover it and found the idea of surrendering to love vs. submitting to societal pressures, surrendering to your best self vs. what everybody thinks you should be. Once I stumbled upon that idea, I thought, *Okay, I could do this!* and that has become the thesis of this production. How is Kate surrendering to the best version of herself? How is Petruccio finding the best version of himself?

What inspired you to incorporate elements of puppetry?

Well, there's that great scene with the tailor where Kate says to Petruccio, "What, do you mean to make a puppet of me?" And then Petruccio says to the tailor, "Yeah! He means to make a puppet of you!" The tailor replies, "No, I think she was talking about you," and then Petruccio chases the tailor out, which can seem perplexing, but at the heart of this scene is the idea of pulling our own strings. Petruccio is trying to make the point through all of his rascally, rambunctious behavior that *you're* the only one that should choose to pull your own strings. Unless you are master of yourself, you won't be happy. Through the conventions of marriage, and the role of women at the time, and how Katharina's father has kept her and Bianca at home—through the way men react to her and the way she reacts to men—it's all compounded to people even calling her "Kate the curst." But you can leave all that behind. *You* are your own puppet master kicking the tailor out. That is how it started. And then I thought, *That's fun.*



My mind went to Punch and Judy and how that's a married couple who have spats with lots of slapstick going on there. I thought that could be a really great marriage to kind of lighten up the violence. The slapstick is a metaphor for the tug of war between these two humans. If we were doing the three hour drama on HBO there wouldn't be all this violence. It would be a psychological push and pull, but the slapstick is a shorthand to portray the same idea. It's

all representational. These punches that Kate gives to Petruccio aren't going to leave a bruise; they are metaphorical punches that are used in order to make points.

That's how I got into the puppetry, and I thought it would provide a fun spectacle for the show because we do want to present it in a really fun way. From there, it was the early Italian world, so that's how we got into the opera and commedia dell'arte. It all kind of works in concert together. It was important to create a world with a good separation from reality so we can enter in and buy this relationship without it seeming dangerous or crude.

Did you always plan to incorporate music into the show?

Well, when I happened upon the idea of this big feel of this heightened old-world thing and the idea of commedia dell'arte and elements of that coming in, it really creates this otherworldly place—and, of course, with that comes music in order to tell the story. I think that's one of the things I enjoy putting in this type of production. It elevates it to a different type of reality that I think is appropriate for this type of concept. What's more Italian than opera? So that's how we happened upon that.

What were your concerns when you were cutting the script?

Oh, God. The Globe performed this play recently, and they do things pretty close to the original practices. Their performance was over two hours and thirty minutes long. I had to find a way to cut two-thirds of this play. It's actually longer than *Twelfth Night*; it's longer than a lot of his comedies, which I didn't know going in. Cutting it was arduous. It was the hardest thing I've cut before. The most difficult thing was not just deciding what is essential to the story but what *storylines* are essential. I found that cutting the character of Gremio allowed me to get the whole storyline going much faster. Then there's only one suitor that Lucentio is fighting against, so we don't have the whole scene with Tranio fighting over who has more money—which I love! Actually that was the hardest part, cutting stuff I love. My first cut was 17 pages longer than it is now. In order to keep the show to an hour, I knew I needed to cut storylines.

Separating myself from the stuff I love meant I had to decide what was essential, what storylines could be elided, and what storylines could just become a song. Trimming some entire scenes into two-page songs saves a lot of time, and I think it helps keep the audience engaged. You have to love a play in order to direct it, and I had come to love this play and all the different parts. Having to cut them was terrible.

What is your favorite scene?

The first thing that comes to mind is the sun-and-the-moon scene. In some ways it's the most understated because there's not a lot of action to it. It's the moment when they find themselves on the same page for the first time. I'm hoping we can play with the idea that it's more about a way of being than just submitting to his idea. It's, "Look you can get what you want by just being agreeable. We both know what I'm saying is nuts, but this is about being agreeable, not just me lording over you."

There is this push and pull. Katharina gets to the point where she realizes, "I know how to navigate this relationship where he's going to give me room to be kind and affable, but he's not going to keep me from being fiery or having it out with the widow. He's going to let me do whatever I want as long as we can get along and be agreeable." They finally start to find one another. There's a great line I kept in that most versions cut when Petruccio is making her say that Vincentio is a woman. After making her admit that Vincentio is a "fair budding virgin," he breaks it to her that he isn't a woman at all. And she replies:

"Pardon . . . my mistaking eyes, / that have been so bedazzled with the sun / That everything I look on seemeth green."

(4.5.38-41)

I think that she could take that line to Petruccio. It's like she's starting to see things fresh, see him fresh, see things anew and young again. She realizes she can switch back and forth. They can be agreeable and still have fun together. Everything is a little ambiguous because it's bucking society. You see this is a real human. Shakespeare's showing us this woman who has a certain *modus operandi* and relationship with Petruccio—but he's subverting this shrew thing that was already alive before he wrote the play. He subtly will take these societal things and turn them just enough to where a) he's not going to get in trouble, but b) he's going to make a good point. I think it's quite apt. We do see ourselves now through the lens of Shakespeare in a lot of ways, but this whole bucking of society is there in a lot of his plays. That's what I want to celebrate within this show.

Setting the Scene



In order to create the magical Old World of the Italian Renaissance without becoming a replica of a specific place, designer Christian Taylor began by drawing upon paintings of Italian cities.

Because this is a traveling show, the set and backdrops need to be portable *and* suitable for multiple venues.

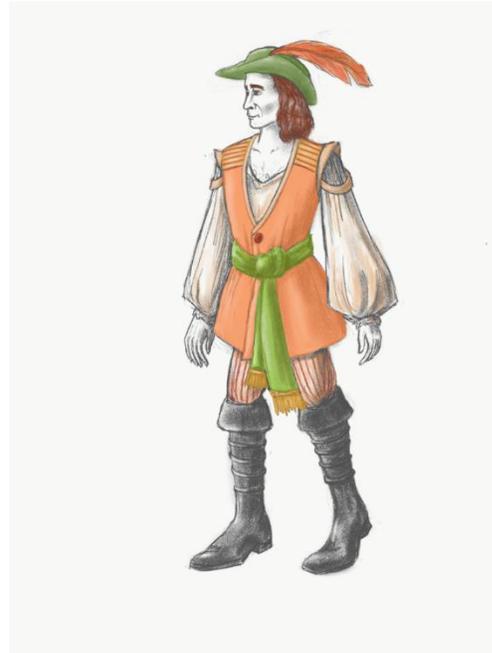




Watercolor was another big inspiration for the set. The combination of watercolor and Italian landscape make for a whimsical setting that transports the audience and gently fades into the background, drawing attention to the action on stage.

Creating the Look

The costume design by the brilliant Matthew Peoples utilizes rich and bold color palettes reminiscent of the Italian Renaissance. The use of laces and strings tie into the underlying puppetry theme and invoke the idea that the characters are bound in some ways by society and themselves.





Who's Who

Katharina portrayed by Kat Cordes: Daughter of the wealthy Baptista and sister of Bianca, Katharina (also referred to as Katherine or Kate) is the “shrew” that Petruccio sets out to tame. In the past, she has been extremely aggressive towards anyone who crosses her, and she is no less inclined to put up a fight with Petruccio when her father consents for them to be married. It is safe to say that Katharina’s will is as strong as her wit is sharp.

Petruccio portrayed by Jordy Neill: A gentleman of Verona and an old friend of Hortensio, Petruccio seeks his fortune—and a wife with a substantial dowry—in Padua, where he discovers the available Katharina who has a bigger dowry than he could have hoped for. With little regard for the warnings he has received against pursuing such a difficult woman, Petruccio sets out to marry Katharina. He is her equal in quick wit and cut-throat banter, and his stubbornness is equal—if not *greater*—than hers.



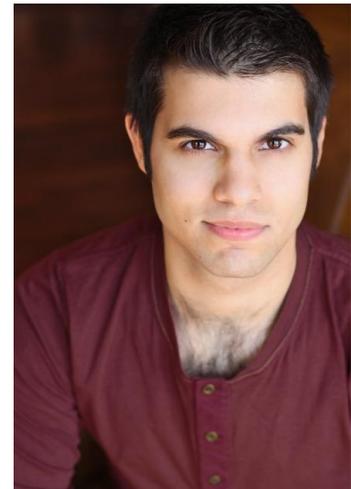
Baptista portrayed by Tommy Novak: Baptista is the father of Katharina and Bianca. He decides that Katharina must be married before he will allow Bianca to accept suitors. He is incredibly wealthy and, therefore, is able to provide his daughters with massive dowries. He is desperate for his eldest daughter to be wedded and truly has his daughters’ best interest at heart.

Bianca portrayed by Moriah Patterson: The lovely, gentle, and kind younger sister of Katharina dedicates much of her time to her studies and music. Her beauty and amiable nature (and her sizable dowry) make her the object of many suitors' affections.



Lucentio portrayed by Will Stotts: Lucentio is the son of Vincentio and is a student traveling from Pisa to Padua to study. He is caught off guard by Bianca the moment he first arrives. Struck by love at first sight, Lucentio is determined to do whatever it takes to marry her. He disguises himself as a tutor named Cambio so that he can spend time with Bianca even though she is not allowed to have suitors. His plan would not be possible without the assistance of his trusty servant Tranio but is almost spoiled by his bumbling servant, Biondello.

Tranio portrayed by Maxel Garcia: Tranio is Lucentio's faithful servant who agrees to help him pull off his plot by pretending to be Lucentio while Lucentio is pretending to be Cambio.



Hortensio portrayed by Matt Duncan: Hortensio wants to marry Bianca, so he plots to find a man to marry Katharina. Much like Lucentio, Hortensio disguises himself as a music instructor in order to gain access to Bianca. He is willing to battle Lucentio for Bianca's affections.



Grumio portrayed by Zev Steinberg:
Grumio is Petruccio's faithful servant.

Vincentio (also portrayed by Zev Steinberg): Vincentio is Lucentio's father.



Zev Steinberg

Biondello portrayed by Sharon Combs:
Biondello is a lovable hunchback in the service of Lucentio and his father, Vincentio.

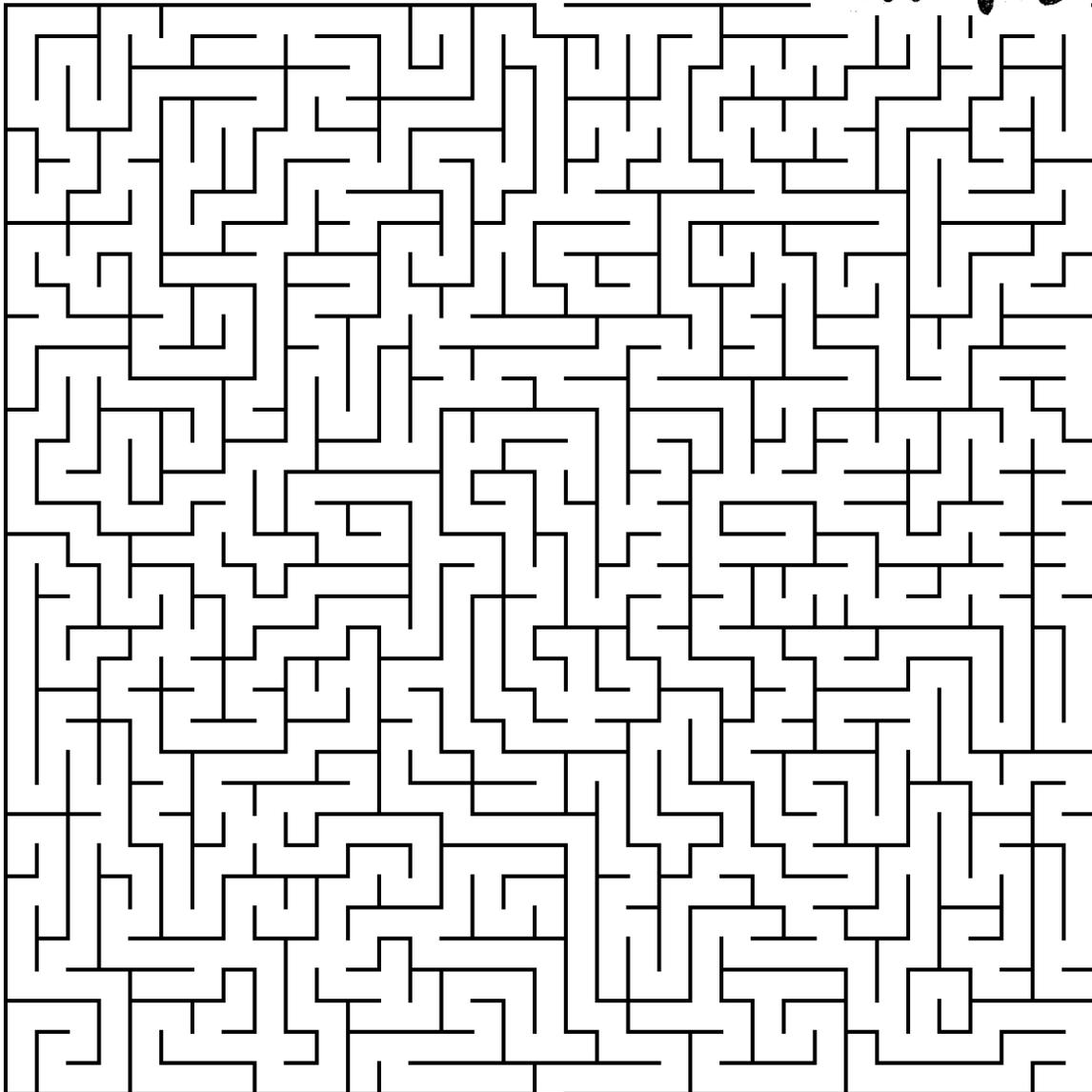
Before the Play Activity

Katharina and Petruccio had a long journey between their houses—approximately 88.4 kilometers! It would have taken about two days for them to travel from Verona to Padua. It's up to you to help them get back to Padua!

Answers on page 22.



Verona



Padua

Music in Shakespeare

Shakespeare is not generally thought of as musical theater, but music does play a substantial role in Shakespeare's plays. Many of his plays feature full songs with dancing while others only include characters singing fragments of songs. Regardless, the fact that Shakespeare incorporated music into his shows is undeniable.

Comedy, specifically, is a genre that has always been linked to music. *The Taming of the Shrew* originally contained two fragments of songs, both sung by Petruccio in act 4, scene 1 of the play. One song beginning with "Where is the life" and a second beginning with "It was the Friar" are both interrupted by dialogue or comedic action. Shakespeare began to incorporate more substantial songs and excerpts of songs after Robert Armin, a talented singer and comedian, became affiliated with his troupe in the early 1590s, around the time that *Shrew* was written. All of the comedies following Armin's arrival featured more music, especially for comic and female characters, and consequently more comedic roles that lent themselves to spontaneous song.

“Song, agency, and comic performance are interrelated . . . songs [are] often transformed through revision and interruption, [and] are a natural venue for the comic actor/author because they are inherently prone to the representation of multiple voices.”

– Catherine A. Henze

Music is quite easily combined with Shakespeare because of the rhythm within his language. A musical version of *Love's Labour's Lost* was released in the early 2000s; in the film *10 Things I Hate About You*, the English teacher is seen rapping Shakespeare's Sonnet 141; and our production happens to feature several additional songs not found in the original text. Due to the comedic value of music, the power it has to engage an audience, and the momentum with which it can propel a plot, it is an invaluable tool for Shakespearean theater.

Shakespeare's Inspiration

The Taming of the Shrew is based on several popular folktales, ballads, and comedies that were popular in Shakespeare's time. The audience would have known these stories and would have picked up on the similar elements and how Shakespeare chose to intentionally change them.

The beginning of the play, known as the Induction, is very similar to the folktale "Lord for a Day" or "The Frolicsome Duke" in which a duke plays a prank on a drunken tinker by convincing him that he is the *true* lord. There are three different endings to this sort of tale, but Shakespeare chose to leave it open ended.



The Supposes was a comedy adapted from the Italian *Supoetti* by George Gascoigne in 1566, several years before Shakespeare wrote *The Taming of the Shrew*. In this play, a man disguises himself as a tutor while his servant takes on his persona so that he can woo a woman who is unable to take suitors. This is believed to be the inspiration for the Bianca and Lucentio plot line.

Shrew tales were very common at this time. These were folktales and ballads that portrayed unruly wives being tamed by their husbands. Some of the most popular were "The Most Obedient Wife," "The Shrew Tale," and "A Merry Jest of a Shrewd and Curst Wife Lapped in Morel's Skin for Her Good Behavior." What all of these tales have in common is an overt submission of a wife to her husband and a portrayal of the husband as a brutal and violent figure. Shakespeare altered this popular trope to highlight the relationship between genders and the battle between the sexes rather than limiting the plot to pure dominance and submission.

Shakespeare's Language

Shakespeare is still impeccably relevant. He mastered the art of capturing human experience in all of its wonder through language. His biggest legacy is the language he left behind. Many of his phrases are still used today, though many are not recognized as Shakespeare quotes. See if you can identify which phrases are NOT from Shakespeare's plays. Answers on page 19.

1. The fault in our stars
2. As luck would have it
3. Kick the bucket
4. All that glitters is not gold
5. Bated breath
6. Dead as a doornail
7. Lie low
8. Give a cold shoulder
9. Cat got your tongue?
10. Give the devil his due
11. Good riddance
12. Jealousy: the green-eyed monster
13. It was all Greek to me
14. In a pickle
15. Quit cold turkey
16. Naked truth
17. One fell swoop
18. Star-crossed lovers
19. Something wicked this way comes
20. Piece of cake

After the Show: Disguise

Multiple characters choose to disguise themselves. What compels them to disguise themselves? How do they think that deception will help them achieve their goals? Does their dishonesty end up making things more difficult? What do you think Shakespeare might have been trying to say about what happens when we hide our true selves?



Disguise Activity

There are **three** characters who disguise themselves. Match the names with the correct false identities! Answers on page 19.

A. Lucentio

B. Biondello

C. Tranio

D. Grumio

E. Hortensio

1. Licio

2. Cambio

3. Petruccio

4. Lucentio

5. Vincentio

Theatre Etiquette

1. Please silence all electronic devices and refrain from flash photography or videotaping that might distract the actors or your fellow audience members.
2. When something strikes you as humorous, don't be afraid to laugh! When something is magnificent, show your appreciation to the cast with loud applause! But please do so at appropriate times and in an appropriate manner.
3. Refrain from talking during the performance and try to attend to any personal business beforehand so that you won't have to leave in the middle of the performance. This is respectful to the cast and the audience members around you.
4. Be kind! Do not heckle or "boo" the performers—like our moms always told us, if you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all.
5. Have fun! Immerse yourself in the world created before you and enjoy the show!



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