

The Taming of the Shrew Character List

Katherine

The “shrew” of the play’s title, Katherine, or Kate, is the daughter of Baptista Minola, with whom she lives in Padua. She is sharp-tongued, quick-tempered, and prone to violence, particularly against anyone who tries to marry her. Her hostility toward suitors particularly distresses her father. But her anger and rudeness disguise her deep-seated sense of insecurity and her jealousy toward her sister, Bianca. She does not resist her suitor Petruchio forever, though, and she eventually subjugates herself to him, despite her previous repudiation of marriage.

Petruchio

Petruchio is a gentleman from Verona. Loud, boisterous, eccentric, quick-witted, and frequently drunk, he has come to Padua “to wive and thrive.” He wishes for nothing more than a woman with an enormous dowry, and he finds Kate to be the perfect fit. Disregarding everyone who warns him of her shrewishness, he eventually succeeds not only in wooing Katherine, but in silencing her tongue and temper with his own.

Bianca

The younger daughter of Baptista. The lovely Bianca proves herself the opposite of her sister, Kate, at the beginning of the play: she is soft-spoken, sweet, and unassuming. Thus, she operates as Kate’s principal female foil. Because of her large dowry and her mild behavior, several men vie for her hand. Baptista, however, will not let her marry until Kate is wed.

Baptista Minola

Baptista Minola is one of the wealthiest men in Padua, and his daughters become the prey of many suitors due to the substantial dowries he can offer. He is good-natured, if a bit superficial. His absentmindedness increases when Kate shows her obstinate nature. Thus, at the opening of the play, he is already desperate to find her a suitor, having decided that she must marry before Bianca does.

Lucentio

A young student from Pisa, the good-natured and intrepid Lucentio comes to Padua to study at the city’s renowned university, but he is immediately sidetracked when he falls in love with Bianca at first sight. By disguising himself as a classics instructor named Cambio, he convinces Gremio to offer him to Baptista as a tutor for Bianca. He wins her love, but his impersonation gets him into trouble when his father, Vincentio, visits Padua.

Tranio

Lucentio's servant. Tranio accompanies Lucentio from Pisa. Wry and comical, he plays an important part in his master's charade—he assumes Lucentio's identity and bargains with Baptista for Bianca's hand.

Gremio and Hortensio

Two gentlemen of Padua. Gremio and Hortensio are Bianca's suitors at the beginning of the play. Though they are rivals, these older men also become friends during their mutual frustration with and rejection by Bianca. Hortensio directs Petruchio to Kate and then dresses up as a music instructor to court Bianca. He and Gremio are both thwarted in their efforts by Lucentio. Hortensio ends up marrying a widow.

Grumio

Petruchio's servant and the fool of the play—a source of much comic relief.

Biondello

Lucentio's second servant, who assists his master and Tranio in carrying out their plot.

Kate-Petruchio

PETRUCHIO

Good morrow, Kate, for that's your name, I hear.

KATHERINE

Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing:

They call me Katherine that do talk of me.

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,
Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs,
Myself am mov'd to woo thee for my wife.

KATHERINE

Mov'd! In good time! Let him that mov'd you hither
Remove you hence. I knew you at the first
You were a moveable.

PETRUCHIO

Why, what's a moveable?

KATHERINE

A join'd-stool.

PETRUCHIO

Thou hast hit it; come sit on me.

KATHERINE

Asses are made to bear, and so are you.

PETRUCHIO

Women are made to bear, and so are you.

KATHERINE

No such jade as you, if me you mean.

PETRUCHIO

Alas, good Kate, I will not burden thee,
For knowing thee to be but young and light.

KATHERINE

Too light for such a swain as you to catch,
And yet as heavy as my weight should be.

PETRUCHIO

Should be! Should—buzz!

KATHERINE

Well ta'en, and like a buzzard.

PETRUCHIO

O slow-wing'd turtle, shall a buzzard take thee?

KATHERINE

Ay, for a turtle, as he takes a buzzard.

PETRUCHIO

Come, come, you wasp, i'faith you are too angry.

KATHERINE

If I be waspish, best beware my sting.

PETRUCHIO

My remedy is then to pluck it out.

KATHERINE

Ay, if the fool could find it where it lies.

PETRUCHIO

Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting?

In his tail.

KATHERINE

In his tongue.

PETRUCHIO

Whose tongue?

KATHERINE

Yours, if you talk of tales, and so farewell.

PETRUCHIO

What, with my tongue in your tail? Nay, come again,

Good Kate; I am a gentleman—

KATHERINE

That I'll try.

She strikes him.

PETRUCHIO

I swear I'll cuff you, if you strike again.

KATHERINE

So may you lose your arms.

If you strike me, you are no gentleman,

And if no gentleman, why then no arms.

PETRUCHIO

A herald, Kate? O, put me in thy books!

KATHERINE

What is your crest? A coxcomb?

PETRUCHIO

A combless cock, so Kate will be my hen.

KATHERINE

No cock of mine, you crow too like a craven.

PETRUCHIO

Nay, come, Kate, come; you must not look so sour.

KATHERINE

It is my fashion when I see a crab.

PETRUCHIO

Why, here's no crab, and therefore look not sour.

KATHERINE

There is, there is.

PETRUCHIO

Then show it me.

KATHERINE

Had I a glass, I would.

PETRUCHIO

What, you mean my face?

KATHERINE

Well aim'd of such a young one.

PETRUCHIO

Now, by Saint George, I am too young for you.

KATHERINE

Yet you are wither'd.

PETRUCHIO

'Tis with cares.

KATHERINE

I care not.

PETRUCHIO

Nay, hear you, Kate. In sooth you scape not so.

KATHERINE

I chafe you if I tarry. Let me go.

PETRUCHIO

No, not a whit, I find you passing gentle:

'Twas told me you were rough and coy and sullen,

And now I find report a very liar;

For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous,

But slow in speech, yet sweet as spring-time flowers.

Thou canst not frown, thou canst not look askance,

Nor bite the lip, as angry wenches will,

Nor hast thou pleasure to be cross in talk;

But thou with mildness entertain'st thy wooers,

With gentle conference, soft, and affable.

Why does the world report that Kate doth limp?

O sland'rous world! Kate like the hazel-twigg

Is straight and slender, and as brown in hue

As hazel-nuts, and sweeter than the kernels.

O, let me see thee walk. Thou dost not halt.

KATHERINE

Go, fool, and whom thou keep'st command.

PETRUCHIO

Did ever Dian so become a grove
As Kate this chamber with her princely gait?
O, be thou Dian, and let her be Kate,
And then let Kate be chaste, and Dian sportful!

KATHERINE

Where did you study all this goodly speech?

PETRUCHIO

It is extempore, from my mother-wit.

KATHERINE

A witty mother! Witless else her son.

PETRUCHIO

Am I not wise?

KATHERINE

Yes, keep you warm.

Bianca-Kate

BIANCA.

Good sister, wrong me not, nor wrong yourself,
To make a bondmaid and a slave of me—
That I disdain; but for these other gawds,
Unbind my hands, I'll pull them off myself,
Yea, all my raiment, to my petticoat,
Or what you will command me will I do,
So well I know my duty to my elders.

KATHERINE

Of all thy suitors here I charge thee tell
Whom thou lov'st best; see thou dissemble not.

BIANCA

Believe me, sister, of all the men alive
I never yet beheld that special face
Which I could fancy more than any other.

KATHERINE

Minion, thou liest. Is't not Hortensio?

BIANCA

If you affect him, sister, here I swear
I'll plead for you myself, but you shall have him.

KATHERINE

O then belike you fancy riches more:
You will have Gremio to keep you fair.

BIANCA

Is it for him you do envy me so?
Nay then you jest, and now I well perceive
You have but jested with me all this while.
I prithee, sister Kate, untie my hands.

KATHERINE

If that be jest, then all the rest was so.

Strikes her.

BAPTISTA.

Why, how now, dame, whence grows this insolence?
Bianca, stand aside. Poor girl, she weeps.
Go ply thy needle, meddle not with her.
For shame, thou hilding of a devilish spirit,
Why dost thou wrong her that did ne'er wrong thee?
When did she cross thee with a bitter word?

KATHERINE

Her silence flouts me, and I'll be reveng'd.

Flies after Bianca.

BAPTISTA

What, in my sight? Bianca, get thee in.

Exit Bianca.

KATHERINE

What, will you not suffer me? Nay, now I see
She is your treasure, she must have a husband;
I must dance barefoot on her wedding-day,
And for your love to her lead apes in hell.
Talk not to me, I will go sit and weep,
Till I can find occasion of revenge!

Grumio-Petruchio

PETRUCHIO.

Verona, for a while I take my leave
To see my friends in Padua, but of all
My best beloved and approved friend,
Hortensio; and I trow this is his house.
Here, sirrah Grumio, knock, I say.

GRUMIO

Knock, sir? Whom should I knock? Is there any man has rebus'd your worship?

PETRUCHIO

Villain, I say, knock me here soundly.

GRUMIO

Knock you here, sir? Why, sir, what am I, sir, that I should knock you here, sir?

PETRUCHIO

Villain, I say, knock me at this gate,
And rap me well, or I'll knock your knave's pate.

GRUMIO

My master is grown quarrelsome. I should knock you first,
And then I know after who comes by the worst.

PETRUCHIO

Will it not be?

Faith, sirrah, and you'll not knock, I'll ring it.

I'll try how you can sol, fa, and sing it.

He wrings him by the ears.

GRUMIO

Help, masters, help, my master is mad.

PETRUCHIO

Now knock when I bid you, sirrah villain!

Enter Hortensio.

HORTENSIO

How now, what's the matter? My old friend Grumio! And my good friend Petruchio! How do you all at Verona?

PETRUCHIO

Signior Hortensio, come you to part the fray? Con tutto il cuore, ben trovato, may I say.

HORTENSIO

Alla nostra casa ben venuto, molto honorato signor mio Petruchio.

Rise, Grumio, rise, we will compound this quarrel.

GRUMIO

Nay, 'tis no matter, sir, what he 'leges in Latin. If this be not a lawful cause for me to leave his service, look you, sir. He bid me knock him and rap him soundly, sir. Well, was it fit for a servant to use his master so, being perhaps (for aught I see) two and thirty, a peep out?

Whom would to God I had well knock'd at first,

Then had not Grumio come by the worst.

PETRUCHIO

A senseless villain! Good Hortensio,
I bade the rascal knock upon your gate,
And could not get him for my heart to do it.

GRUMIO

Knock at the gate? O heavens! Spake you not these words plain, "Sirrah, knock me here; rap me here; knock me well, and knock me soundly"? And come you now with "knocking at the gate"?

Gremio-Hortensio

KATHERINE

Why, and I trust I may go too, may I not? What, shall I be appointed hours, as though, belike, I knew not what to take and what to leave? Ha!

Exit.

GREMIO

You may go to the devil's dam; your gifts are so good, here's none will hold you. Their love is not so great, Hortensio, but we may blow our nails together, and fast it fairly out. Our cake's dough on both sides. Farewell; yet for the love I bear my sweet Bianca, if I can by any means light on a fit man to teach her that wherein she delights, I will wish him to her father.

HORTENSIO

So will I, Signior Gremio. But a word, I pray. Though the nature of our quarrel yet never brook'd parle, know now upon advice, it toucheth us both, that we may yet again have access to our fair mistress, and be happy rivals in Bianca's love, to labor and effect one thing specially.

GREMIO

What's that, I pray?

HORTENSIO

Marry, sir, to get a husband for her sister.

GREMIO

A husband! A devil.

HORTENSIO

I say, a husband.

GREMIO

I say, a devil. Think'st thou, Hortensio, though her father be very rich, any man is so very a fool to be married to hell?

HORTENSIO

Tush, Gremio; though it pass your patience and mine to endure her loud alarums, why, man, there be good fellows in the world, and a man could light on them, would take her with all faults, and money enough.

GREMIO

I cannot tell; but I had as lief take her dowry with this condition: to be whipt at the high cross every morning.

HORTENSIO

Faith, as you say, there's small choice in rotten apples. But come, since this bar in law makes us friends, it shall be so far forth friendly maintain'd till by helping Baptista's eldest daughter to a husband we set his youngest free for a husband, and then have to't afresh. Sweet Bianca, happy man be his dole! He that runs fastest gets the ring. How say you, Signior Gremio?

GREMIO

I am agreed, and would I had given him the best horse in Padua to begin his wooing that would thoroughly woo her, wed her, and bed her, and rid the house of her! Come on

Tranio-Lucentio

TRANIO

I pray, sir, tell me, is it possible
That love should of a sudden take such hold?

LUCENTIO

O Tranio, till I found it to be true,
I never thought it possible or likely.
But see, while idly I stood looking on,
I found the effect of love in idleness,
And now in plainness do confess to thee,
That art to me as secret and as dear
As Anna to the Queen of Carthage was:
Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio,
If I achieve not this young modest girl.
Counsel me, Tranio, for I know thou canst;
Assist me, Tranio, for I know thou wilt.

TRANIO

Master, it is no time to chide you now,
Affection is not rated from the heart.
If love have touch'd you, nought remains but so,
"Redime te captum quam queas minimo."

LUCENTIO

Gramercies, lad. Go forward, this contents;
The rest will comfort, for thy counsel's sound.

TRANIO

Master, you look'd so longly on the maid,
Perhaps you mark'd not what's the pith of all.

LUCENTIO

O yes, I saw sweet beauty in her face,
Such as the daughter of Agenor had,
That made great Jove to humble him to her hand,
When with his knees he kiss'd the Cretan strand.

TRANIO

Saw you no more? Mark'd you not how her sister
Began to scold, and raise up such a storm
That mortal ears might hardly endure the din?

LUCENTIO

Tranio, I saw her coral lips to move,
And with her breath she did perfume the air.
Sacred and sweet was all I saw in her.

TRANIO

Nay, then 'tis time to stir him from his trance.
I pray, awake, sir; if you love the maid,

Bend thoughts and wits to achieve her. Thus it stands:
Her elder sister is so curst and shrewd
That till the father rid his hands of her,
Master, your love must live a maid at home,
And therefore has he closely mew'd her up,
Because she will not be annoy'd with suitors.

LUCENTIO

Ah, Tranio, what a cruel father's he?
But art thou not advis'd, he took some care
To get her cunning schoolmasters to instruct her?

TRANIO

Ay, marry, am I, sir; and now 'tis plotted.

LUCENTIO

I have it, Tranio.

TRANIO

Master, for my hand,
Both our inventions meet and jump in one.

LUCENTIO

Tell me thine first.

TRANIO

You will be schoolmaster,
And undertake the teaching of the maid:
That's your device.

LUCENTIO

It is; may it be done?

TRANIO

Not possible; for who shall bear your part,
And be in Padua here Vincentio's son,
Keep house and ply his book, welcome his friends,
Visit his countrymen, and banquet them?

LUCENTIO

Basta, content thee; for I have it full.

We have not yet been seen in any house,
Nor can we be distinguish'd by our faces
For man or master. Then it follows thus:
Thou shalt be master, Tranio, in my stead;
Keep house and port and servants, as I should.

I will some other be, some Florentine,
Some Neapolitan, or meaner man of Pisa.
'Tis hatch'd, and shall be so. Tranio, at once
Uncase thee; take my color'd hat and cloak.
When Biondello comes, he waits on thee,
But I will charm him first to keep his tongue.

TRANIO

So had you need.
In brief, sir, sith it your pleasure is,
And I am tied to be obedient—
For so your father charg'd me at our parting;
“Be serviceable to my son,” quoth he,
Although I think 'twas in another sense—
I am content to be Lucentio,
Because so well I love Lucentio.
LUCENTIO
Tranio, be so, because Lucentio loves.

Biondello-Baptista

BIONDELLO.

Master, master, news, old news, and such news as you never heard of!

BAPTISTA

Is it new and old too? How may that be?

BIONDELLO.

Why, is it not news to hear of Petruchio's coming?

BAPTISTA

Is he come?

BIONDELLO.

Why, no, sir.

BAPTISTA

What then?

BIONDELLO.

He is coming.

BAPTISTA

When will he be here?

BIONDELLO.

When he stands where I am, and sees you there.

TRANIO

But say, what to thine old news?

BIONDELLO.

Why, Petruchio is coming in a new hat and an old jerkin; a pair of old breeches thrice turn'd; a pair of boots that have been candle-cases, one buckled, another lac'd; an old rusty sword ta'en out of the town armory, with a broken hilt, and chapeless; with two broken points; his horse hipp'd, with an old mothy saddle and stirrups of no kindred; besides, possess'd with the glanders and like to mose in the chine, troubled with the lampass, infected with the fashions, full of windgalls, sped with spavins, ray'd with the yellows, past cure of the fives, stark spoil'd with the staggers, begnawn with the bots, sway'd in the back, and shoulder-shotten, near-legg'd before, and with a half-cheek'd bit and a head-stall of sheep's leather, which being restrain'd to keep him from stumbling, hath been often burst, and now repair'd with knots; one girth six times piec'd, and a woman's crupper of velure, which hath two letters for her name fairly set down in studs, and here and there piec'd with packthread.

BAPTISTA

Who comes with him?

BIONDELLO.

O, sir, his lackey, for all the world caparison'd like the horse; with a linen stock on one leg, and a kersey boot-hose on the other, gart'ed with a red and blue list; an old hat, and the humor of forty fancies prick'd in't for a feather: a monster, a very monster in apparel, and not like a Christian footboy or a gentleman's lackey.

TRANIO

'Tis some odd humor pricks him to this fashion;

Yet oftentimes he goes but mean apparell'd.

BAPTISTA

I am glad he's come, howsoe'er he comes.

BIONDELLO.

Why, sir, he comes not.

BAPTISTA

Didst thou not say he comes?

BIONDELLO.

Who? That Petruchio came?

BAPTISTA

Ay, that Petruchio came.

BIONDELLO.

No, sir, I say his horse comes, with him on his back.

BAPTISTA

Why, that's all one.

Petruchio Monologue

PETRUCHIO

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-gorg'd,
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 today, nor none shall eat;
Last night she slept not, nor tonight 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 clamor keep her still awake.
This is a way to kill a wife with kindness,
And thus I'll curb her mad and headstrong humor.
He that knows better how to tame a shrew,
Now let him speak; 'tis charity to show.

Kate Monologue

KATHERINE

Fie, fie, unknit that threat'ning unkind brow,
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes,
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor.
It blots thy beauty, as frosts do bite the meads,
Confounds thy fame, as whirlwinds shake fair buds,
And in no sense is meet or amiable.
A woman mov'd is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty,
And while it is so, none so dry or thirsty
Will deign to sip, or touch one drop of it.
Thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,
Thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,
And for thy maintenance; commits his body
To painful labor, both by sea and land;
To watch the night in storms, the day in cold,
Whilst thou li'st warm at home, secure and safe;
And craves no other tribute at thy hands
But love, fair looks, and true obedience—
Too little payment for so great a debt.
Such duty as the subject owes the prince,
Even such a woman oweth to her husband;
And when she is froward, peevish, sullen, sour,
And not obedient to his honest will,
What is she but a foul contending rebel,
And graceless traitor to her loving lord?
I am asham'd 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.
Why are our bodies soft, and weak, and smooth,
Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
But that our soft conditions, and our hearts,
Should well agree with our external parts?
Come, come, you froward and unable worms!
My mind hath been as big as one of yours,
My heart as great, my reason haply more,
To bandy word for word and frown for frown;
But now I see our lances are but straws,
Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.
Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,

And place your hands below your husband's foot;
In token of which duty, if he please,
My hand is ready, may it do him ease