

# The Taming of the Shrew

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It is without a doubt that Shakespeare has produced many wonderful and riveting classics, such as *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*. The role of women in Shakespeare's plays is what will be examined by exploring his more controversial piece, *The Taming of the Shrew*. For writing to be deemed a classic, it has to have universal appeal. This means that even though the text was written in a very different time, it still finds a way to touch the reader of today. If the literature doesn't have any effect on the reader, then the author has done nothing more than put words on a piece of paper. In that case, the literary work won't be able to withstand the test of time.

Shakespeare's play, *The Taming of the Shrew*, is centered around two sisters, Bianca and Kate, who are completely contradictory to each other. Bianca, the youngest of the two sisters is quiet and dutiful. She is deemed to be the ideal woman for the Elizabethan era and considered a prize any man would be lucky to have. Kate, on the other hand, is regarded as too chaotic and messy for any man, and is known all over town as the *shrew*. Although she is constantly mocked by society, Kate's resilience throughout the first two scenes of the play is inspiring and hopeful. For example, she cunningly describes, "If I be waspish, best beware my sting" (II.i.207–214). Unfortunately, Kate's character does not remain this way, as she is impacted by her forced marriage to Petruchio which could only be perceived as reasonable to the contemporary eye. His way of *taming* her is through starvation and denying her basic necessities, "you can't be a whole person if somebody is beating you up in that kind of way" (O'Brien 2015). The women in this play are written from the perspective of Shakespeare, a man who appears at that time to have a limited understanding of a woman's ability to be far greater than an object that's easily molded and abused, lacking emotional and intellectual strength.

For a piece of literature to be considered a classic, it needs to be able to continue touching readers and conveying a deep message or perspective. Just like any historical event, such as the bombing of Hiroshima, as years go by our views and feelings towards it might alter profusely. Today, the outlook on how women were treated in, *The Taming of the Shrew*, have most definitely changed from being lighthearted and funny, to greatly upsetting for many women. The story was supposed to convey how a woman has a duty to a man and is only embarrassing herself by trying to be more than that. Today, we can make adaptations to the story, as was done in the Bard on the Beach rendition, to express how far women have come to gaining respect as equals to men. With protests such as the Me Too movement and the constant struggle for equal pay around the world, reading or watching a play like this can remind us why our opinions are valid and unlike Kate, we have the support of other woman to stand up together.

In conclusion, the underlying messages in, *The Taming of the Shrew*, is much past its time. Although this is true, I still believe it's a classic because it has sparked passion and interest in me. While reading this play it aggravated me enough to have to think carefully about the role of women in our society today and during Shakespeare's era.

O'Brien, Jane. "Shakespeare's Evolving Attitudes towards Women." BBC News, BBC, 27 Apr. 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-32379759>.