

The Taming of the Shrew

SYNOPSIS

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Christopher Sly, a poor tinker, falls asleep after being thrown out of an ale-house because he is drunk. A lord takes him into his house and plays a trick on him by making him think he is a lord who has lost his memory for whom a company of players will perform the play 'The Taming of the Shrew'. This 'induction' is the frame story.

In the play itself Hortensio, who wants to marry a rich woman, old Gremio, who wants to use his money to find a young wife, and Lucentio, who has just arrived in Padua, all want to marry beautiful Bianca, but her father Baptista insists that her older sister Kate must marry first. Kate is a 'shrew', a woman with her own ideas and a violent temper. Petruchio, from Verona, agrees to woo Kate, both for her dowry and for the challenge of 'taming' her.

Hortensio and Lucentio both manage to spend time with Bianca by pretending to be tutors, while Lucentio's servant Tranio plays the role of his master.

Petruchio marries Kate, but he arrives at the church wearing totally unsuitable clothes and takes her to his country house, where he uses various forms of deprivation to break her will, for instance pretending that any dishes or clothes she is brought are not good enough and must be sent away, or making her agree with everything he says, otherwise she will not be able to sleep or visit her family.

Tranio persuades a travelling schoolteacher to pretend to be Lucentio's father, because Baptista wants to be sure that his potential son-in-law is respectable and rich enough. However, there is great confusion when the real father turns up, but in the end Lucentio and Bianca marry, while Hortensio marries a rich widow and Petruchio returns to show that Kate has changed. In the end there is a competition to see whose wife is the most obedient.

Media:

DVD:

The Taming of the Shrew (1929), dir. Sam Taylor, with Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford

Kiss Me Kate by Cole Porter (1953), dir. George Sidney (musical based on the play)

The Taming of the Shrew (1967), dir. Franco Zeffirelli, with Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor

The Taming of the Shrew (1976), dir. Kirk Browning (American Conservatory Theatre production in commedia dell'Arte style)

The Taming of the Shrew (BBC TV Shakespeare 1980), dir. Jonathan Miller, with John Cleese

The Taming of the Shrew (1983), dir. John Allison (not recommended)

10 Things I Hate About You (1999), dir. Gil Junger, with Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles (set in an American High School)

Deliver Us From Eva (2003), dir. Gary Hardwick (a loose adaptation)

Shakespeare Retold: *The Taming of the Shrew* (2005), dir. David Richards (modern version by Sally Wainwright about a politician told to marry to help her election chances)

Shakespeare: The Animated Tales Act 1 (2007) *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Macbeth*
Isi Life Mein (2010), dir. Vidhi Kasliwal (Bollywood adaptation set in India)

Not available:

The Taming of the Shrew (1973), dir. Robin Lovejoy (set in the Australian outback)

Kate: The Taming of the Shrew (2004), dir. Roberto Lione (Italian animated version)

CD Audio:

The Taming of the Shrew (Saland)

The Taming of the Shrew (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

[Michael Mitchell]