



— SANTA CRUZ —  
**SHAKESPEARE**

EDUCATION PROGRAM

***The Taming of the Shrew - Week 3: Petruchio's Plan***

Shakespeare plays with the idea of same-sex marriage through **metatheatricity**. With an Elizabethan all male acting cast, Katherina and Bianca would have been played by young boys dressed up as women. In the Induction, we see how metatheatrical moments like this can create humor with the male Page, Bartholomew, who dresses up as a woman and pretends to be Christopher Sly's wife. The Page has to make an excuse when Sly asks him to undress!

**SLY**

Servants, leave me and her alone.

**BARTHOLOMEW**

Madam, undress you and come now to bed.  
Thrice noble lord, let me entreat of you  
To pardon me yet for a night or two,  
Or, if not so, until the sun be set:  
For your physicians have expressly charged,  
In peril to incur your former malady,  
That I should yet absent me from your bed:  
I hope this reason stands for my excuse.

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**Petruchio's Machiavellian Scheming**

→ READ! In Act 2, before Petruchio meets Kate he reveals his plan to the audience about how he will court her. Later, in Act 4, the audience witnesses another soliloquy in which he divulges his wooing strategy, using falconry symbolism. Read over the two passages. What do you make of his strategy?

**PETRUCHIO**

I will attend her here,  
And woo her with some spirit when she comes.  
Say that she rail; why then I'll tell her plain  
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale:  
Say that she frown, I'll say she looks as clear  
As morning roses newly wash'd with dew:  
Say she be mute and will not speak a word;  
Then I'll commend her volubility,  
And say she uttereth piercing eloquence:  
If she do bid me pack, I'll give her thanks,  
As though she bid me stay by her a week:  
If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day  
When I shall ask the banns and when be married.

(2.1.168-179)

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

(4.1.177-200)

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→ WRITE!

- Do you think Petruchio is gaslighting or psychologically manipulating Katherina to confuse her and control her?
- In the second passage, Petruchio reveals he is using the same technique falconers do for taming hawks in order to control Katherina. Why do you think he uses this imagery and what are the audience supposed to feel about this?
- Think back to the Induction. How does the way the Lord and his servants treat Christopher Sly (dressing him up in fine clothing, giving him high quality wine and food and providing him with a wife and a play to watch) compare with the way Petruchio is conditioning Katherina? Do you think these techniques work?



**SOCIAL JUSTICE!**

→ DISCUSS! Why do people get married?

In pairs, decide whether you think these statements are true or false:

- Husbands should earn more money than their wives
- Women are much better at housework than men.
- Men should not have to cook.
- It is only women who really want to get married.
- People should only get married if they are in love.
- In marriage, the wife should obey the husband.
- Women plan their wedding before they even have a boyfriend.

→ A problem with all of these statements is that they are all encourage discussion of heterosexual marriage only. Discuss some of these ideas with same-sex marriages as well.