# Shakespeare Uncovered – The Taming of the Shrew

**ABC ME screening details: Friday** 29 May, 2020 at 02:05pm

This episode can also be viewed on [ABC iView](https://iview.abc.net.au/show/shakespeare-uncovered) after the scheduled screening time.

**Key learning areas: English**

**Level:** secondary

**About: Morgan Freeman discusses William Shakespeare’s The Taming of the Shrew with Tracey Ullman, Sinead Cusack and Julia Stiles**

## Before the episode

1. **Connect with what you know:** what are the usual features, or conventions, of the Romantic Comedy (Rom Com) genre? Can you think of any examples that don’t follow the conventions?
2. **Context**: research and list five facts about the lives of both noble and ordinary women in Elizabethan England. For example, who decided if they could get married?
3. **Imagine:** Shakespeare was an up-and-coming playwright when he wrote this play. What would you do if you were wanting to make an impression in your new, chosen industry? What would be the advantages of either ‘making a splash’ or ‘keeping your head low’ at first?

## During the episode

1. Compare Bianca and Katherina (Kate). Write down at least 5 characteristics including appearance and personality.
2. What is the meaning of “shrew” and where do we see this kind of character in our contemporary culture?
3. According to the presenter, how do we know that Shakespeare actually likes Kate?
4. How do we know that Petruchio and Kate are ‘made for each other’?
5. What connections can you see between the film ‘Ten Things I Hate About You’ and Shakespeare’s play ‘The Taming of the Shrew’?
6. Why are the scenes back at Petruchio’s house after the wedding so difficult for modern audiences?

## After the episode

1. **Discuss and debate or discursive speech**: this play has “the power to provoke and inspire".
2. **Analyse:** in the second half of the episode, actors from the Globe Theatre are asked to act out one scene in two very different ways. This changes the audience’s feelings towards the characters. First, analyse how the actors’ interpretation of the dialogue transforms the meaning. Then, consider how Shakespeare’s minimal theatrical instructions have left room for different interpretations over the centuries.
3. Choose another scene from ‘Taming of the Shrew’ and explain how you as an actor would interpret that scene.
4. **Summarise:** using specific examples, such as Morgan Freeman’s feelings about this play, write a personal summary exploring your feelings about the play.
5. **Discuss:** write a paragraph on what the ending reveals about
   1. Marriage
   2. Shakespeare

**Follow-up activity:** Creative writing.

Choose one of the following ideas to write either as prose or as dialogue (use Shakespeare’s language for an extra challenge):

* The meeting and conversation between one of the other sets of newly-married couples after the end of the play.
* A scene, between Kate and Petruchio, set 1 year, or 10 years, after the end of the play.
* An alternative ending to the play that changes the meaning or significance of the play. The full play is also available online via many different websites if you wish to access the play script to support your engagement with this activity.

# NSW teacher notes

This is an optional standalone resource that could supplement student learning. The activities align with syllabus outcomes across stages and can be modified to meet the needs of your students. Students can complete the activities while learning at home and in the classroom. All activities can be completed without access to the internet or a device. Teachers could collect student work to offer feedback and as evidence of learning.

## Learning intentions

* Understand how this play connects to (perhaps reaffirms, and perhaps challenges) some of the key ideas about the roles of women in the society in which it was written
* Explore the ways that Shakespeare creates characters and stories that continue to be relevant and continue to be open to interpretation in ways that make them interesting.

## Resources

* A copy of the play, or extracts from the play

## NSW English K-10 Syllabus outcomes

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| --- | --- |
| Stage 4 | Stage 5 |
| **EN4-1A:** responds to and composes texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure  Students consider and analyse the ways their own experience affects their responses to texts | **EN5-1A:** responds to and composes increasingly sophisticated and sustained texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure  Students analyse ideas, information, perspectives, contexts and ideologies and the ways they are presented in increasingly demanding, sustained imaginative, informative and persuasive texts |
| **EN4-2A**: effectively uses a widening range of processes, skills, strategies and knowledge for responding to and composing texts in different media and technologies  Students reflect on ideas and opinions about characters, settings and events in literary texts, identifying areas of agreement and difference with others and justifying a point of view (ACELT1620) | **EN5-2A:** effectively uses and critically assesses a wide range of processes, skills, strategies and knowledge for responding to and composing a wide range of texts in different media and technologies  Students interpret, analyse and evaluate how different perspectives of issue, event, situation, individuals or groups are constructed to serve specific purposes in texts (ACELY1742) |

[NSW English K-10 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/k-10/learning-areas/english-year-10/english-k-10) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales 2012.