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The Taming of the Shrew

SAMPLE

Shakespeare in Three Steps

by Rebekah Shafer

An enjoyable and simple approach to some of the greatest literature ever written— the plays of William Shakespeare!

Now you can help your students become familiar with Shakespeare's imaginative stories, memorable characters, and brilliant lines in **three simple steps: read the story, hear the script, and watch the play.**

Shakespeare in Three Steps provides everything you need:

- **A well-written story version of the play** by E. Nesbit or Charles and Mary Lamb—classic narratives that have been providing a wonderful introduction to Shakespeare's plays for decades;
- **The complete script of the play** with helpful notes to explain unusual terms or add to your understanding of Shakespeare's stories, characters, and lines;
- **An outlined plan for walking through the script**, divided into manageable portions with quick recaps, scene introductions, and summaries that will guide you each step of the way;
- **Script highlights**, featuring well-known or just ponder-worthy lines, that will gently introduce the Bard's genius and cultivate an appreciation for his wonderful way with words;
- **Parental advisories** to give you a heads-up on scenes that may contain material inappropriate for children;
- **Helpful lists** of the characters in the scenes and the number of lines each one speaks, so you can assign parts knowledgeably for reading sessions or acting roles;
- **Candid reviews** of several video recordings of the play to save you time previewing and help you select a suitable presentation for your students to watch and enjoy.

"To become intimate with Shakespeare in this way is a great enrichment of mind and instruction of conscience"—Charlotte Mason

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Shakespeare in Three Steps

The Taming of the Shrew

by Rebekah Shafer

Recommended for Grades 6–12
Comedy

Summary: Baptista, a wealthy man in Padua, has two daughters who are famous throughout the city. The youngest, Bianca, is famous for her beauty and mildness, but the elder daughter Katharine is more famous for her temper. No matter how many men ask for Bianca's hand in marriage, none of them dare approach Kate the Curst, and Baptista refuses to allow anyone to marry Bianca until Katharine is wed. At last, in desperation, one of the suitors finds a man who is willing to woo and marry Katharine. This man's name is Petruchio, and he is afraid of no woman, so long as there is a sufficient monetary reward. He presents himself as a suitor and, despite Katharine's rages and arguments, manages to secure her father's permission to marry her and singlehandedly undertakes to tame Katharine and make her see the folly of her fiery ways.

Shakespeare in Three Steps: The Taming of the Shrew
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Cover Design: John Shafer and Sarah Shafer

ISBN 978-1-61634-295-1 printed
ISBN 978-1-61634-296-8 electronic download

Published by
Simply Charlotte Mason, LLC
930 New Hope Road #11-892
Lawrenceville, Georgia 30045
simplycharlottemason.com

Printed by PrintLogic, Inc.
Monroe, Georgia, USA

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Shakespeare in Three Steps

Understand and enjoy Shakespeare's plays by following these three steps.

Step 1: Read the story.
Read aloud the story version of the play to get familiar with the main characters and plot.

Step 2: Hear the script.
Listen to each scene on the audio dramatization and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves.

Step 3: Watch the play.
Enjoy a live or recorded presentation of the play.

Step 1: Read the story.

Notes

Ask students whether they have ever seen a shrew. Explain that shrews are rather like mice, but have a notoriously bad temper and nasty bite. In this play, Shakespeare likens the character of Katharine to that of a shrew.

Read aloud the story version of *The Taming of the Shrew* below to get familiar with the main characters and plot. If desired, help the students create a list of the main characters with a brief description of who each one is to help them keep everybody straight in their minds as you go along.

The Taming of the Shrew

(from *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare for Children* by E. Nesbit)

There lived in Padua a gentleman named Baptista, who had two fair daughters. The eldest, Katharine, was so very cross and ill-tempered, and unmannerly, that no one ever dreamed of marrying her, while her sister, Bianca, was so sweet and pretty, and pleasant-spoken, that more than one suitor asked her father for her hand. But Baptista said the elder daughter must marry first.

So Bianca's suitors decided among themselves to try and get some one to marry Katharine—and then the father could at least be got to listen to their suit for Bianca.

A gentleman from Verona, named Petruchio, was the one they thought of, and, half in jest, they asked him if he would marry Katharine, the disagreeable scold. Much to their surprise he said yes, that was just the sort of wife for him, and if Katharine were handsome and rich, he himself would undertake soon to make her good-tempered.

Petruchio began by asking Baptista's permission to pay court to his gentle daughter Katharine—and Baptista was obliged to own that she was anything but gentle. And just then her music master rushed in, complaining that the naughty girl had broken her lute over his head, because he told her she was not playing correctly.

"Never mind," said Petruchio, "I love her better than ever, and long to have some chat with her."

When Katharine came, he said, "Good-morrow, Kate—for that, I hear, is your name."

"You've only heard half," said Katharine, rudely.

"Oh, no," said Petruchio, "they call you plain Kate, and bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the shrew, and so, hearing your mildness praised in every town, and your beauty too, I ask you for my wife."

"Your wife!" cried Kate. "Never!" She said some extremely disagreeable things to him, and, I am sorry to say, ended by boxing his ears.

"If you do that again, I'll cuff you," he said quietly; and still protested, with many compliments, that he would marry none but her.

Notes

We recommend The Arkangel Shakespeare *audio dramatizations.*

Step 2: Hear the script.

Make a copy of the script on pages 45–145 for each student who can read. Work your way through the script over several sittings, as outlined on the following pages. Each session will follow a sequence similar to the one below:

- Use the notes to introduce each scene. Highlight the featured lines if desired.
- Listen to the scene(s) on the audio dramatization and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves.
- Invite any questions or comments, then set it aside until next time.

Introduction, Parts 1 and 2

Notes

- ❑ Ask students what they recall from last time's reading of the story of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Explain that today they will listen to the introduction to the play, where a traveling lord sets the stage for the story that will be told. Read the scene summary to give students the context for the lines they will be hearing.

  Scene Summary: A tipsy beggar falls asleep in the common room of an inn. While he sleeps, a traveling lord returns from hunting and, seeing the beggar sleeping, decides to work a bit of mischief. He tells his servants to carry the sleeping man up to the lord's own room and treat the beggar as if he were really a lord, and to pretend that the beggar has been out of his mind for many years. He even arranges for one of his own servants to dress up as the beggar's wife and enlists a group of actors to entertain the beggar. Then, to make sure his servants carry out the jest without laughing and giving it away, the lord dresses himself as a fellow servant and joins into the game.
  When the beggar wakes up from his stupor, the servants work hard to convince him that he has, in fact, been half mad for many years. Soon his protests falter, and he readily falls into acceptance of the new state of things and settles in to watch the performers of a play.

- ❑ Distribute a copy of the script to each student who can read.

- ❑ (Optional) Take a sneak peek at these lines from the script and enjoy Shakespeare's wording.

  » Lines 119–127: The lord is giving instructions to his page on how to pretend to be the beggar's wife.

  LORD
  Bid him shed tears, as being overjoyed
  To see her noble lord restored to health,
  Who for this seven years hath esteemed him
  No better than a poor and loathsome beggar:
  And if the boy have not a woman's gift
  To rain a shower of commanded tears,
  An onion will do well for such a shift,
  Which in a napkin being close conveyed
  Shall in despite enforce a watery eye.

Shakespeare wrote the lines of his plays in both prose (conversational speaking) and poetry.

PERSON: Prose lines will look like this.

PERSON
Poetry lines will look like this.

Notes

- ❑ Listen to The Introduction on the audio dramatization (approx. 17 minutes) and follow along in the script, or assign students to read aloud the various characters' lines themselves. If you are assigning students to read aloud, the following list might be helpful; it details the characters who speak and the approximate number of lines each one has in these scenes.

  - Christophero Sly, a beggar (56 lines)
  - The hostess of the inn (4 lines)
  - A traveling lord (137 lines)
  - First huntsman (9 lines)
  - Second huntsman (3 lines)
  - Servingman (2 lines)
  - A troupe of players (actors) (5 lines)
  - First servant (15 lines)
  - Second servant (13 lines)
  - Third servant (13 lines)
  - The Page, pretending to be a woman (15 lines)
  - A messenger (8 lines)

Step 3: Watch the play.

Now that you and your students are familiar with the story line and the script, you are ready for the best part of this study: watch a presentation of the play! Check for any local live performances that you could attend, or watch a video recording. (See reviews below.)

Video Recording Reviews

- The husband and wife team of Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford pair up for the 1929 adaptation directed by Sam Taylor. As expected from the production date, this old black and white, early talkie, features typical overacting and quite a bit of slapstick. The opening scene which shows a Punch and Judy type puppet show sets the tone. Both key figures carry long whips, which they use on people at different times. (One assumes the whips are symbolic of each character's overt attempt at supremacy and intimidation.) This version spends a lengthy time at the wedding itself and the priest's words, which are not in the original script. But most interesting . . .

Additional complete reviews are found in the full book.

Notes

Be sure to do your research to avoid any unpleasant surprises when watching Shakespeare productions. Unfortunately, some directors feel compelled to add unnecessary visual elaborations on the text. Preview any video presentation and check with someone who is directly involved with any live production to find out how it aligns with the original script and how appropriate it is for children.

Most presentations of The Taming of the Shrew *omit the Introduction.*

The Taming of the Shrew

Notes

Introduction, Part One

Setting: Before an alehouse on a heath.
Enter Hostess and Sly.

SLY: I'll feeze you, in faith.

"Feeze" means "fix."

HOSTESS: A pair of stocks, you rogue!

SLY: You're a baggage: the Slys are no rogues; look in the chronicles; we came in with Richard Conqueror. Therefore *pocas palabras*; let the world slide: *sessa*! 5

Pocas palabras *is Spanish for "few words."* Sessa *means to cease talking.*

HOSTESS: You will not pay for the glasses you have burst?

SLY: No, not a denier. Go by, Saint Jeronimy: go to thy cold bed, and warm thee.

HOSTESS: I know my remedy; I must go fetch the head-borough. 10

Exit Hostess.

SLY: Third, or fourth, or fifth borough, I'll answer him by law: I'll not budge an inch, boy: let him come, and kindly.

[Falls asleep.]

Horns winded. Enter a lord from hunting, with his train.

Shakespeare wrote the lines of his plays in both prose (conversational speaking) and poetry.

PERSON: Prose lines will look like this.

LORD

Huntsman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds:
Breathe Merriman, the poor cur is embossed; 15
And couple Clowder with the deep-mouthed brach.
Sawest thou not, boy, how Silver made it good
At the hedge-corner, in the coldest fault?
I would not lose the dog for twenty pound.

PERSON
Poetry lines will look like this.

FIRST HUNTSMAN

Why, Belman is as good as he, my lord; 20
He cried upon it at the merest loss
And twice to-day picked out the dullest scent:
Trust me, I take him for the better dog.