Comedy by William Shakespeare, first performed 1593–94. Bianca, who has many suitors, must not marry until her elder sister Katherina (the shrew) has done so. Petruchio agrees to woo Katherina so that his friend Hortensio may marry Bianca. Petruchio succeeds in 'taming' Katherina but Bianca marries another.

One of Shakespeare's early comedies, written during the early 1590s, although there is some scholarly debate as to the exact dating. A play entitled The Taming of A Shrew, was known to have been performed in 1594 and published in a 'bad' quarto edition in the same year, but it may either have been an earlier play from which Shakespeare's version derived, or an early version of his own work. The Taming of the Shrew proper, was first published in the First Folio of 1623 and printed from Shakespeare's foul papers. The tale of the shrewish [sharp-tempered] wife is common to folklore, but the source of Bianca's story was an English version of an Italian comedy (I Suppositi, written by Ludovico Ariosto in 1509), entitled Supposes (1573), by George Gascoigne (c. 1530-77). The play, set in Padua in Italy, revolves around a battle of the sexes in which men, apparently, come out the winner. However, it is important to read the play in the context of life in Shakespeare's time in which a wife was the property of her husband. It is also important to realize that the play is concerned with the growth of its central character because she is loved.

SYNOPSIS :
In the Induction [introduction], Christopher Sly, a tinker, is discovered in a drunken stupor by a Lord and his hunting party who decide to play an elaborate trick on Sly. They take him home, surround him with luxuries and persuade him that he is a nobleman who has been mad for fifteen years. He is provided with a 'wife', really the Lord's page dressed in women's clothing, with whom he watches a company of travelling players perform The Taming of the Shrew.

In the play within a play, Baptista, a rich gentleman, has two daughters, Bianca who is sweet-natured and has a string of admirers, and Katherina whom no one will marry because of her reputation for being shrewish [sharp-tempered]. Baptista insists that Bianca must remain single until Katherina has found a husband. Lucentio, newly arrived in Padua, catches sight of Bianca and immediately falls in love with her. He disguises himself as a schoolmaster and under the pretence of teaching her Latin he wins her love. Baptista is greatly relieved when Petruchio, a rich, if apparently eccentric bachelor, announces that he will marry Katherina because she is rich. He seems unperturbed by her volatile temperament and carries her off to his country house, and sets about taming her. His technique is to behave as shrewishly as his wife; he sends back meals without eating them, hurls food at his servants, and prevents Katherina from...
sleeping at night. He intersperses his perverse behaviour with frequent references to Katherina's, sweet disposition until Katherina is thoroughly confused. Katherina and Petruchio return to Padua where they find that Lucentio has outwitted his rivals, and secretly married Bianca. At a celebratory banquet, Petruchio and Lucentio make a bet as to which of their wives is the most obedient. Surprisingly, Katherina, now thoroughly 'tamed' and in love with her husband, obeys him instantly while the apparently submissive Bianca, who also loves her husband, refuses on the grounds that it is inappropriate to make a silly bet about her obedience.


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