

S: Ladies and gentleman, **my name is William Shakespeare. (1)** I am here to introduce you to two of my characters from my plays. Firstly I will introduce you to Katerina from "The Taming of the Shrew" just after she is told she is to marry Petruchio.

K: Hello to you all. As you might have heard my father promised my hand in marriage to that nuisance of a man Petruchio. Ha! How dare he? He did not even ask me for my opinion. Of course I HAVE to marry him because his and my reputation are on the line. (Mimics) Poor old Baptista! With that sharp tongued daughter who will never marry a man. My father is basically throwing all his money at him just to convince him to marry me because as I hear Petruchio comes to "wive wealthily in Padula". What sort of love is that? But I suppose during these days marriages are arranged for economic benefit not for love. Of course I do not have a say on this because I'm a woman and men are higher than us in the great chain of being. I'm a very head strong woman and I refuse to be this perfect woman society wants me to be "frailty thy name is woman" Please!? We are only this way because of the way we are treated. However my sister Bianca gets everything she wants. I've had to watch her be spoilt by my weak father for years and all because she is happy to simper and submit.

And since father won't let her marry one of her many possible suitors until I'm married, as is tradition as I am older than her, I now have to marry the half crazy Petruchio just so once again my sister can have everything she wants. Bianca is in love with Lucentio, although the Lucentio that was introduced to my father is actually Lucentio's servant Tranio. The real Lucentio is disguised as my sister's Latin tutor just to get to know her better, Ha! They think no one knows, but you'd be surprised what you can find out by listening in to the many conversations around here.

I think I would like to find love, or well at least have a chance to, but no, I have to be told what to do just like a child just so I can get out of the way and my father can get a high dowry price for the oh-so-beautiful Bianca. I guess you could argue that father has tried to give us the best possible future. He did get us tutors in Latin and the lute. Here in Italy the church services are done in Latin so it very impressive to be able to speak it. Most women are inspired to be educated because it is the Renaissance and education is highly valued. I myself think that father just wanted to make us more appealing to the suitors. (Angrily making fun of him) Oh what a terrible disappointment it must have been when he realised it had all backfired and I had the learning and the wit to answer back. He would not get a high dowry price for me. And to think Petruchio didn't want to marry me until Bianca's suitors told him about the high dowry price my father was offering. What sort of man is he!? I better get going I might as well enjoy these few moments of freedom, ciao.

S: Oh my! I had fun making Lucentio get disguised as the tutor to pursue his love. As you might have noticed disguises are one of my favourite things to include in plays. In "Hamlet", Hamlet uses madness as a disguise when trying to revenge his father's death.

**Taming of the shrew is one of my earlier works, it is a comedy and mostly written in what you would call iambic pentameter. This is a popular way to write because the rhythm gives energy to the words. I think it is because it so resembles the human heart beat. I use it for all the important bits where I want the audience to be swept along by the language. It's generally the more educated people who enjoy it most. When I write bawdy bits for the groundlings, I tend to use prose, because then I know they will get it. I can tell you, it is no easy thing to get the balance right so the whole audience stays interested. It helps that I really love playing with language. Sometimes, if I can't find the word I want, I just make it up. I have invented over 2000 words which are now a part of the English language, for example the word bubbles. (2)**

If you want to know something interesting about both my plays, they both have a play within a play structure. In 'Taming', everything that is going on with Katerina and Bianca is a play being put on by players trying to entertain themselves by making the drunkard Christopher Sly believe he is a lord. In this play the structure provides comic entertainment and allows you the audience an insight to what is going on which some of the characters do not have. Sly learns to know his place, an important lesson in our society. After all, we are as God intends us. In Hamlet I used this same structure when Hamlet made a group of players put a play on for his uncle and an

audience of what happened when his Uncle murdered his father. When Claudius, shocked by what he was seeing, gets up and leaves mid-way through the play it shows the audience that the dead King's ghost was telling the truth and we reveal the murderer.

Actually, when I think of it, both of these plays give people a good insight into how we must maintain the natural order, as dictated by the idea of the Great Chain of Being. If we upset this, then terrible things go wrong –Look at Hamlet, Ghosts walk, People go mad and every one ends up dead in the end. (5) Of course, this situation was doubly bad because the natural order was upset at the top end. After all, the King is God's chosen representative. I thought it was a good idea to write a play like this because there have been plots against our own Queen on a number of occasions and people need to know that you cannot do that kind of thing.

Most of the comedies in this day and age usually finish with the wedding; however I wanted to explore life for couples after the wedding; that is why I decided to put the wedding in my play towards the beginning. This way I could explore the issues of marriage itself. I wanted to explore the reality of romantic love, the "perfect couple", Bianca and Lucentio end up having issues after their marriage while Katerina and Petruchio although they had a rough beginning they end up acquiring a mutual respect for each other. In Elizabethan times we thought of marriages as an economic institution. (4) Fathers would arrange their daughter's marriages with their future sons in law and would give their daughter's hand to the suitor with the highest dowry price. This is what angered Katerina so much, that she didn't get a say in whom she spent the rest of her life with. I hear you people in the future focus more in the love side of marriage however in this time that would be nonsense. Now I'm going to introduce you to Queen Gertrude from "Hamlet".

G: Hello to you all. I'm Queen Gertrude, wife to King Claudius and mother to Prince Hamlet. I am so worried about my beloved son; ever since his father and my late husband, King Hamlet passed away he has not been the same. This made me, just like everyone, else end up thinking "Alas he is mad". After all he is speaking in blank verse which is only spoken by low class or mad people Royalty like us talk in iambic pentameter. (2) The sudden death of his Ophelia seems to have made everything worst. It has been so hard for him we were not able to give Ophelia a proper burial because "her death was doubtful" and there is a chance that she might have taken her own life. Of course this goes against our protestant religion. That she had a burial at all is due to the fact that although not royal her family is still upper class. It is against God to take one's own life and of course it is frowned upon by society. Such a thing would bring terrible shame upon your family. God forbid Hamlet ever contemplating such a terrible act. He has mentioned something that has me worried, he has said he has seen his father's ghost –may his soul rest in peace- of course ghosts only appear when something in the great chain of being has been put out of place. Just earlier Hamlet organized this group of players to put on a play; in this play the players acted out a scene where a king was murderer by his own brother. Half way through the play Claudius got us while looking very distressed and angry and left. His strange behaviour is very worrying. I think Hamlet might have gotten the idea that this is what happened to his father as I hear he said, "The play is the thing in which I'll catch the conscience of the King", I do worry for his sanity. (5) Although Claudius' behaviour leaves me to ponder if maybe he is telling the truth. But if my king killed his brother then it is he who upset the great chain of being. The King is God's representative on earth and he upset the divine right of Kings. After all, Kings are chosen by God and second only to god and the angels in the great chain of being, killing one is a great sin. I must be gone now, fair well.

H: Of course now Gertrude had to decide whether to believe her son or her new husband. If she believed her son then she was committing treason by standing by the man who killed her late husband. And if she believed her husband she had to face the fact that her son was going mad.

I hope you have all enjoyed meeting these two striking characters, I better get going now, fair well to you all.