

Study Questions for “Kate” (*The Taming of the Shrew*)
from chris wind’s *Soliloquies: the lady doth indeed protest*

Kate

With great disturbance, I hear it said
My story doth much to entertain,
'Tis light and with a happy end,
In short, 'tis thought a comedy!

Dost thou laugh to see a shrew?
Indeed, I pray thee, what is a shrew?
What am I that I be so named?
'Tis said I am froward and I vow 'tis true—
But for a man to be so bold is not a fault.
And some doth complain o' my scolding tongue—
Then I am wisely critical, not content
With any and all. Others bewail
I am wilful, with strong spirits—
But I see a woman may be made a fool
If she hath not a spirit to resist,
And surely in a man this is much applauded.
Further, 'tis said, I am bitter and bad-tempered—
I pray thee, what is the standard of measure?
'Tis true I am not mild, but neither is my father
Yet none doth therefore curse *his* name.
I am more strained than pleasant, I confess
But methinks perchance you would be too:
To be auctioned off as a piece of chattel,
To know the suitors who come
Court your father's wealth—
'Tis not my mind to smile at greed;
And to know that my father will give his money
To a man who is a stranger
'Fore he will give it to his own daughter—
How shall I be sweet under that offense?
I ask again, then, what is a shrew?
Observe and see that any man

Not favoured by a certain woman
Will fall to insult and slander anon.
Witness Hortensio, who once called her jewel,
Doth declare Bianca a disdainful haggard
As soon as she prefers another.
Thus, all I have done to gain this name

Is fail to praise and stroke men's pride.

Perhaps thou dost laugh to see me tamed?
I think it sad to make all alike,
To force the spirited to be subdued.
Do you find it amusing to see me starved
Of food and sleep 'till I am giddy,
Weak of mind and body? To see me subject
To Petruchio's emotional whips and whims:
He presents a feast then throws it out
Or allows instead another to eat.
He gives me a beautiful cap and gown
Then rips it to shreds before my eyes.
He offers me everything then takes it away.
Back and forth, up and down—to be sure it overcomes,
This confusion, fear, and exhaustion.

To see me tamed.

Only a man blinded by some grand fantasy
Would call me tamed. Any woman is suspect.
My final speech is odd, unexpected.
One can see neither reason nor cause
For this absolute and sudden change.
'Tis true. One sees it not.
For it lies in an unwritten scene.
Heed not that speech of obedience and submission—
'Twas made with Petruchio near
And therefore under unspoken threat.
Did ye not notice Act Four?
In scene one, my arrival, he begins his plan,
Depriving me of food and sleep.
By scene three, my body is weak and begging,
Though my spirit still resists.
He toys with me, dismisses the tailor,

And announces anon we are to travel
To my father's house. On the road
In scene five, it is a mere eleven lines
'Till I submit and agree with his every word.
Did you not wonder what happened between,
While the men bought and sold my sister?

I was beaten.

And I mean not to speak in metaphor.
You know well that Petruchio strikes

His other servants, doth it surprise thee then
That he struck me? Over and again—
He locked the room, 'trusted Grumio as guard—
And therefore, on the road, to my father's house,
You see, that was my escape:
I could not have left alone,
His servants in league, under similar fear,
And even if I got away, perchance along the—
—At least Petruchio was only one.

But what then to do? Whither should I go?
If I confess to father, would he believe me?
He cannot, for he has given the dowry—
It and I belong to Petruchio,
And he has not the money to sell me to another
(Even if that be possible).
I cannot live at home forever
(Would that he take me back),
He'd be the laughing stock of the town,
A married then unmarried shrew.
I cannot go out on my own—
I have no money, and it is only to be made
As strumpet.
No, that marriage had to be, whatever the price.
And, I'd already enough humiliation:
To go and then come back would be worse
Far worse than it was not going,
No one else would have me,
And I shall not dance barefoot,
Nor shall Bianca be made to wait again.
Is't not then the answer

To submit while he is near and pretend to be his
So at all other times, I can truly be mine own?
Having house and food is much—
And anon, I trust, he will travel oft away—
'Twas a bargain: prisoner to him
For freedom from the rest.
Lip service was all—usually—
And if a word spoken against my will
Can stop a blow against my body—
Well, you heard the speech.

Yet soft, 'twas not all false:

Carefully I say women are simple
To offer war when they are bound to serve,
Love and obey. And they *are* bound.
But not by God or nature, no—
By commerce and social custom alone
Is thy husband thy lord, thy life, thy keeper.
Remember that, I pray thee.

Is't not then tragedy, to name me shrew?
And worse, to seek to tame such a one?
Worse still is't to call the end gay;
But the worst tragedy is to be entertained by it,
To take it not seriously,
Indeed to call it, my story, comedy.

(But fast, I'll tell thee the comedy:
Hast thou forgotten 'twas a play within a play?
Remember ye not Sly, the drunkard, and the noble man?
The old version ends not with me
But with Sly, just as it began:
The story was part of a dream.
To be sure, a sick dream, and a dangerous one too,
Nevertheless, 'twas a male fantasy:
To be honourable, to be wealthy, to be powerful.
But recall, alas, 'twas also a joke,
Played on the drunkard by the other:
And to be sure, that women should be
So obedient and submissive to men—

Aye, that *'tis* a laugh!

1. How does Kate respond to the complaint that she has a “scolding tongue”? How does she respond to the complaint that she is “bitter and bad-tempered”?
2. Is Kate’s description of events consistent with Shakespeare’s play? Explain.
3. What does Kate identify as “the worst tragedy”?

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Study Questions are also available for “Juliet”, “Ophelia”, “Lady MacBeth”, “Portia”, “Desdemona”, and “Miranda”.