

The Taming Of The Shrew

We think people act the way that their true identity is. Every person has disguised their true identity at one point in time has. We display these false characters or put on our masks for some personal gain. Many times, complicated situations occur because of the changing of people's masks between reality and illusion (Cahn 39). In a similar way, *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare, does just that. He creates a soap operasituation by placing different masks on his characters. Katharina does not know how to properly act to gain attention, but instead she places a mask on herself that becomes her reality. She is known throughout Padua as the shrew of the town. In the story, you could imply that her mother is dead. Therefore, when Katharina was young, she played the role of mother to Bianca (Leonard 23). As the sisters grew older, Katharina did not need to play the maternal role to her younger sibling by being harsh. However, Katharina could not switch the gears of that character since everyone already knew her by that personality. She knows about Bianca's deceptive ways. Bianca is being courted by several men and has her choice of prospective husbands. However, due to customs in that era, Katharina, must be married before her younger sister. In the early acts, Katharina's attitude appears as if she does not care at all about getting married. Instead, she yearns for her father's attention, but she goes about getting it in the wrong ways. Unlike her elder sister, Bianca appears to be of a more complacent nature. Katharina dislikes her because their father shows favoritism towards her. Katharina talks back to everyone with her cold but creative remarks and makes her presence known in Act 1 Scene 1: Katharina: I'faith, sir, you shall never need to fear. I wis it to not halfway to her heart – But if it were, doubt not her care should be To comb your noodle with a three-legged stool And paint your face and use you like a fool. Act I, Scene I A main characteristic of Katharina is that she is easily upset, becoming verbally and physically violent. She even goes so far as to hit her newly appointed music teacher, Hortensio (Act I, Scene I). Not long after, she hits the only suitor that would woo her, Petruchio. Katharina is convinced that her father does not care for her, especially because he wanted Petruchio to marry her. Perhaps Katharina's belief is true (Cahn 43). Baptista would rather talk to Bianca because of her pleasant personality rather than arguing every point with Katharina. Katharina wants the attention that Bianca receives, but she tries to call the attention in the wrong ways by acting out physically and verbally. Petruchio has to break Katharina out of her shrew character by becoming a character himself. Petruchio came into Padua not knowing what would happen. When he found out about Katharina, he was eager to meet her for two reasons: to gain her wealth and for the challenge of taming her (Act I Scene II). Petruchio's character is that of a gentleman. He opens doors for ladies and is kind and courteous to everyone. As the play goes on, Petruchio marries Katharina. He plans to tame her and unveil her beautiful inner self so he would have a lovely wife (Leonard 31). He begins to show her who is in command starting on their wedding day. Petruchio shows up late to the wedding and caused Katharina to become angry and scared of being stood up. After being married, Petruchio starts the taming process. He refuses to let her sleep and restricts food from her (Act IV, Scene III). Soon Katharina breaks down and starts to act obedient to Petruchio with her mask still being within her reach. Then he shows Katharina who is in command of the relationship by not allowing Katharina to get elegant clothing that she wants. Instead, Petruchio yells at the haberdasher and tailor that brought them and yelling how they are not made correctly. Petruchio is trying to show Katharina what she does and why no one likes that mask. Overtime, Katharina breaks away chunks of her mask until her old personality has disappeared (Act IV, Scene III). Katharina is truly tamed when she agrees with Petruchio on a disagreement on if the sun or moon is out, even though what he said was false, she agrees with him. She says: Katharina: Then God be blessed, it is the blessed sun. But sun it is not, when you say it is not, And the moon changes even as your mind. What you will have it named, even that it is, And so it shall be so for Katharine. Act IV, Scene V Katharina is trying to be how Bianca is towards others. The tutors want to act like themselves so their students could love them as who they are. The first and most prominent role change is the one between Lucentio and Tranio. Lucentio, in order to marry Bianca, exchanges outfits with his servant Tranio in order to become Bianca's tutor (Act I, Scene I). Although Tranio appears to be a nobleman, he is really just a simple servant. His identity did not change despite the fact that his outfit did. In the same fashion, Lucentio becomes Cambio,

the tutor. His true self is as a nobleman, but due to his love of Bianca he tries to change himself (Goddard 111). Just like Tranio, despite the change of outfit, Lucentio's real personality remains the same. Then there is Hortensio, the least successful pretender who tries to woo Bianca. He, too, becomes a tutor for Bianca, but is rejected by her. Before he changes clothes, Hortensio is in competition with Lucentio for Bianca. Lucentio had to create a couple of masks in order to accomplish his goal. The first mask that he created was Cambio. Lucentio dressed up as Cambio to get closer to Bianca. Being Cambio paid off by his eventually marrying Bianca. However, for him to be able to marry her he would have to produce his father. What he needed was a person to take the place of his real father, Vincentio (Act II, Scene III). The person that Lucentio's servant found was a merchant from Mantua. Tranio talks him into becoming Lucentio's father by saying how if anyone from Mantua is in Padua, he will be put to death. In trade for his not being turned in is that he will become Lucentio's father. So the second mask that Lucentio creates is the one that he shows to Baptista. Baptista does not know of this scheme and he gives his blessing to Lucentio to marry Bianca. Bianca had the greatest mask of them all, she caused other men to do anything just so they can be close to her which she loved. People view Bianca as a sweet and gentle person, a false precept, devoting herself to her studies and never wanting anything else out of life. She knows how people want her to be and does act that way (Goddard 126). Bianca also wants her father's love and favoritism. Yet once she achieves her goal, to be married, her true self appears. She becomes quarrelsome and apathetic, not coming at the call of Lucentio or accusing him of simply hunting her, not at all caring for her. She becomes almost what her sister was. Lucentio is after Bianca, and to fall head over heels in love with her. To fall in love with someone can also be to find out about them and see who they really are in their heart. All people have worn a mask at some point in their lives to gain what they want. In today's society, we see masks every day. There are many stories of people changing their clothes, just as the tutors did, to gain something. They change their clothes when going to a car dealer so they appear less wealthy than what they really are. This is to help them achieve their goal of receiving a lower price on the car. People also change their clothes when they go to court. Defendants of a crime often wear nice, fancy clothing to appear professional. They are hoping that the verdict will be not guilty or have a lighter sentence as compared to if they wore their everyday street clothes into the courtroom. In today's society, wearing a mask is necessary. Some people are Biancas that act nicely so they do not show their true personality of being unfriendly. Whether it is in *The Taming of the Shrew* or in today's society, we act differently to gain what we want. We can see that in Katharina's wanting attention, Petruchio who wanted a perfect wife, Bianca who wanted to be married, Lucentio who wanted to marry Bianca, and whatever that drives each one of us to create a mask. A mask is necessary when we must play a character to gain what we need.