

Kate's Final Speech / Words from the Woman Formerly Known as Shrew

The Katherina that gives the final speech in *The Taming of the Shrew* is quite a departure from the Katherina we were introduced to in Act I. This new Kate is modest, quiet and obedient. All of these qualities were not present until Act V. Such a profound personality change prompts the questions how this happened and what purpose do her changes serve?

The answer to the first question, how did this happen, is simple to answer: Petruchio has tamed her. His taming tactics are comparable to that of a military officer and a patient mentor: He is ruthless and unwilling to bend the rules in order to make her learn, however, he is content to let her learn at her own pace. The text for his lessons is Kate's own temper, actions and words. By spewing her deeds back into her face at an unrelenting pace, she is forced to see how ridiculous she has been acting, and it is at this point that the transformation begins.

Due to the nature of Petruchio's teachings, *The Taming of the Shrew* can be seen as a rather sexist play, painting women as servants and possessions to be ruled over. I think that if one wants to see it that way, one can. However, I believe the opposite. This play makes a statement about shallowness, the partnership of a married couple and what virtues are truly valuable.

During the course of the entire play, all of the characters except Petruchio treat Kate with disrespect. Baptista, her father, is especially insensitive to his daughter's feelings. When Petruchio comes to inquire about Kate, he describes her as fair and virtuous woman. Her father neglects to acknowledge that it was possible that his daughter could have those fine qualities (II.i.42-63).

While teaching Kate, Petruchio's outbursts were directed at other people, not at her. When speaking to her, he was careful to be gracious and kind, even when the situation was seemingly humiliating. Overall, Petruchio was the only character who showed appreciation for Kate. I believe that she appreciated this, albeit begrudgingly at first, and that this appreciation is what led her to give her final speech.

In essence, all Petruchio did was teach Kate not to be so brash and rebellious. He showed her how awful her actions looked, and on her own, she made the decision to change her demeanor. She could have remained bitter and feisty, but it would have been in vain, and I believe that she realized that her actions had been no worse than the vanity and shallowness she witnessed in the people of Padua.

As Kate was taming herself, she could see the benefits to being a partner with her husband rather than a rival. In her speech, Kate says that "thy husband is thy lord, thy life, thy keeper,/thy head, thy sovereign; one that cares for thee,/and for thy maintenance" (V.ii.146-148), trying to explain to the other wives that their husbands have chosen to care and provide for them. A few lines later, she basically asks what is the nobility in waging war with someone who is trying to be nice to you? (V.ii.159-160). Take that one step further, and Kate's transformation makes perfect sense. Petruchio would treat Kate with respect if she did the same towards him, so the benefits to her changing her behavior were beneficial to both.

Personally, I see nothing sexist about mutual respect and good will. It is a proven fact even today that a relationship will not survive unless both parties respect each other, so it seems clear to me that Kate and Petruchio, as a team and individually, won in the end.