

Who's Who in William Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*?

Directions: Read the following descriptions of the most significant characters. As you read the play, record additional observations and insights. Consider that each character is quite multidimensional, meaning that they wear a façade (or a mask) in public while having a completely different truth that lies beneath the surface. It may be cliché, but we shouldn't judge a book (or a character) by its cover! What could be the REAL story behind each character's façade? In addition, keep in mind that Shakespeare loved to use character foils in his plays—using characters' words, actions, and reactions to characterize one another through dialogue. Which characters serve as each others' foils, and what characteristics and qualities do they bring out in one another for the reader? Finally, be prepared to compare characters and themes of *Pride and Prejudice* to those of Shakespeare's comedy.

Baptista Minola is a wealthy gentleman in Padua and a widower with two unmarried daughters, Katherina (aka Kate) and Bianca. Baptista has a problem on his hands: everyone wants to marry his younger daughter Bianca, but no one wants to marry his elder daughter Katherina. Tradition dictates that the elder daughter ought to marry before the younger one does, but it is not a law—not until Baptista decides that just such a tradition might help him find a husband for Kate!

Katherina (aka Kate) Minola is the older of Baptista Minola's two daughters. She and her sister are very different, and their differences are at the root of the play's conflict and Baptista's problem. Even though Kate is outspoken and often quite verbally vicious, she is also strikingly beautiful in an unconventional and nontraditional way.

Bianca Minola is the younger of Baptista Minola's two daughters. She is traditionally beautiful, gentle, sweet, and everything else an eligible bachelor could possibly want in a wife. Tradition and her father's decree keep Bianca captive until Kate has a husband. Thankfully, Bianca is not missing out on too much yet since none of the men in Padua have captured her heart.

Bianca's Suitors from Padua: Gremio and Hortensio

Gremio is an older bachelor of Padua, one who is quite interested in the sweet and gentle Bianca Minola. **Hortensio** is another Paduan who wishes to marry Bianca. While he is younger than Gremio, neither man is handsome enough to tempt Bianca, who is not in love with either of them even though they both are head-over-heels in love with her.

The New Men in Town: Lucentio, Tranio, Petruchio, and Grumio

Lucentio is the son of the wealthy Vincentio of Pisa, and he is arriving in Padua with the scholarly goal of attending classes and increasing his intellect—at least that is his goal until he sees the beautiful Bianca out of the corner of his eye. Go to class or woo Bianca? His loyal servant **Tranio** is never short of ideas for cutting class and finding something more fun to do, even if it does get the two into trouble.

Petruchio is the only heir to the wealthy Antonio of Verona, and he has one—and only one—goal in mind: marry a wealthy woman to add to his inherited wealth. Quite opposite of the scholastic Lucentio, Petruchio is quite wild: he loves a good party and wants to marry for money as quickly as possible. His somewhat loyal and quite comedic servant **Grumio** loves one-liners and cracks a joke at every chance, especially when the joke is on Petruchio. Note: don't confuse Grumio with Gremio!