

Sample Debate Script Graphic Organizer

Roles: All team members must contribute to the planning but individuals will need to take on a specific role(s) during the debate:	
Opening Statement: Will	Rebuttal #1: Teegan
Argument #1: Meredith	Rebuttal #2: Ray
Argument #2: Nina	Rebuttal #3: Matteo
Argument #3: Isa	Closing Statement: Denzel

A. Opening Statement

Take a moment and imagine yourself at the movie theater eating popcorn and laughing at funny quips from the actors and actresses in the film. You are smiling and enjoying yourself. Now imagine yourself reading Act 4, Scene 1 as Petruchio withholds sleep and food from Katherine. Are you laughing? You shouldn't be! This is, without a doubt, abusive behavior. Yet, traditionally, *The Taming of the Shrew* is classified as one of William Shakespeare's comedy plays alongside *As You Like It* and *The Comedy of Errors*. While the play contains disguise, deception, and wordplay, which are typically associated with comedies, it is impossible to ignore the problematic behavior in the play. Therefore, today, we are here to argue in opposition to the unequivocally false statement that *The Taming of the Shrew* is a comedy. We take this position because we firmly believe that the play should be classified as a tragedy due to Katherine being ignored, abused, and silenced. By the end of this debate, we are confident that you, too, will believe that *The Taming of the Shrew* is misclassified.

B. Arguments

Argument #1	<i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> could be classified as a tragedy because Katherine's wishes are ignored throughout the play. In Act 1, Scene 1, Katherine asks her father in lines 57–58, "I pray you, sir, is it your will / To make a stale of me amongst these mates?" She wants to know her father's intentions with the suitors, but Baptista does not even bother to reply to his daughter about a decision that would affect the rest of her life. Likewise, in Act 3, Scene 2, Katherine wants to enjoy her wedding feast, but Petruchio refuses in lines 233 and 235, saying that "she must with me" because he is the "master of what is mine own." It seems as if Petruchio might think Katherine is his property, and he now expects complete obedience from her, regardless of her own needs and wants. There is nothing comedic about men continually ignoring a woman's wishes and well-being.
Argument #2	In our second argument, we will explain that <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i>

	<p>should be classified as a tragedy because Katherine is physically and mentally abused in the play. Act 4 of the play contains the most disturbing scenes in the entirety of the script. In lines 190–191 of Scene 1, Petruchio states, "My falcon now is sharp and passing empty, / And, till she stoop, she must not be full-gorged." The falcon is a metaphor for Katherine, and it is despicable that he refuses to provide food for his wife until she is so weak that she is unable to get up. In this same scene in lines 206 and 209, he states that if Katherine falls asleep, he will "rail and brawl" to keep her awake until he "curb[s] her mad and headstrong humor." It is common sense that not being able to sleep is abusive, but even the United Nations has condemned sleep deprivation as torture. The abusive tactics of Petruchio firmly place <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> in the tragedy category.</p>
Argument #3	<p>Thirdly, we will argue that the play should be classified as a tragedy. In Act 4, Petruchio lectures and yells at Katherine. She has no idea what to do as he yells at her, and she is unable to speak up. Furthermore, in Act 5, it is clear that Katherine has lost her voice. Even though she gives a lengthy speech, it is all about how a woman should be obedient to her husband. This is not the bold, honest Katherine from Acts 1 and 2. Her voice has been silenced due to her oppressive husband. These events are tragic, not comedic.</p>

C. Rebuttal Section	
Rebuttal #1	<p>The other team is in favor of classifying <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> as a comedy because it contains wordplay and puns. While it is true that wordplay and puns can be comedic, these points do not outweigh the fact that Petruchio ignores Katherine's wishes throughout the play. For example, Katherine says, "They call me Katherine that do talk of me" in line 192 to clearly state that she prefers to be called Katherine. In response, Petruchio makes a pun with "Kate" and "cake" in line 196. At first glance, this seems like innocent, comedic wordplay, but further reading reveals that Petruchio is not joking but forcing his will on Katherine. He continually calls her "Kate," even though she has explicitly said her name is Katherine. He continues on to say in line 286, "will you, nill you, I will marry you." Forcing a name on Katherine is the first step in forcing a marriage on her. Therefore, despite comedic elements, the play's content makes it a tragedy.</p>
Rebuttal #2	<p>It is false that disguise and deception go hand in hand. For example, Lucentio's disguise, while on the surface light-hearted, in actuality leads to Katherine and Petruchio's marriage, Bianca deceiving her father, and Lucentio's father almost being arrested.</p>
Rebuttal #3	<p>In the previous argument, Brian stated that <i>The Taming of the Shrew</i> is a comedy because the play ends with all the couples happily married, but he is wrong. The couples are not happily married in Act 5, Scene 2. In line 19, Petruchio</p>

	says to the widow, "I mean Hortensio is afeard of you," meaning that Hortensio is afraid of his wife. Katherine has to speak sarcastically and ironically in her final speech to get her point across that women should not be subservient to men. Lastly, Bianca calls Lucentio a "fool" in line 143 for betting on her obedience. Brian needs to rethink his argument.
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D. Closing Statement

In today's debate, we opposed the statement that *The Taming of the Shrew* is correctly classified as a comedy. Instead, we think that the play could be reclassified as a tragedy because Katherine is ignored, abused, and silenced in the text. Our first piece of evidence outlined how men, such as Petruchio and Baptista, sometimes ignore Katherine's questions, desires, and needs in the play. Secondly, we provided evidence for the abuse Katherine suffers by proving that she is physically and mentally abused by Petruchio in Act 4, which likely leads to her losing the ability to freely speak her mind. We think her ironic final monologue highlights that she may have lost her voice and must resort to sarcasm to truly speak her mind. The proponents of the statement that *The Taming of the Shrew* is correctly classified as a comedy argued that wordplay and disguise prove that the play is comedic, but simply having comedic elements does not necessarily make a play a comedy. The abuse and silencing far outweigh any clever puns. Therefore, we hope you might join us in standing up for Katherine and perhaps advocating that the play be reclassified as a tragedy.