

List of characters

The Induction

(set in Warwickshire)

CHRISTOPHER SLY	a tinker
HOSTESS	of an alehouse
LORD	
BARTHOLOMEW	the Lord's page (pretends to be Sly's wife)
Huntsmen and Servingmen attending the Lord	
A Troupe of Actors visiting the Lord	

who present

The Taming of the Shrew

(set in Padua)

The Minola family

KATHERINA	the Shrew
BIANCA	her younger sister
BAPTISTA MINOLA	her father

The suitors

PETRUCHIO	
LUCENTIO	(pretends to be Cambio)
HORTENSIO	(pretends to be Litio)
GREMIO	a rich old man

The servants

GRUMIO	Petruchio's personal servant
TRANIO	Lucentio's personal servant (pretends to be Lucentio)
BIONDELLO	Lucentio's second servant
CURTIS, NATHANIEL, PHILIP, JOSEPH, NICHOLAS, PETER	} Petruchio's servants
Servants attending on Baptista and Lucentio	

Other characters

VINCENTIO	Lucentio's father	MERCHANT	(pretends to be Vincentio)
WIDOW	in love with Hortensio	TAILOR	
HABERDASHER			

The Taming of the Shrew

Christopher Sly quarrels with the Hostess as she throws him out of her tavern. He falls into a drunken sleep. A nobleman returns from the hunt and talks about the day's sport.

1 Sit up and pay attention! (in groups of five)

The Induction opens in the middle of an aggressive argument between a man and a woman. Different productions have tried elaborate ways of grabbing the audience's attention. One was set in a modern wine-bar; others in a working-men's club, in a pub outside Stratford-upon-Avon, in an Italian café, even on a cruise ship. The 1978 RSC production had a particularly dramatic opening (see p. 180). Some have decided to cut it altogether and begin with Act 1 Scene 1.

From lines 1–11, gather information about the setting and mood. Three of you act as director, designer and stage manager and decide on the most appropriate location. Consider adding music, other characters, appropriate accents and the necessary props.

Rehearse and present lines 1–11 to the rest of the class.

2 Christopher Sly (in groups of three)

Sly does not say much, but his few lines suggest a great deal about his character. Each person chooses a short extract from lines 1–11 and works out a short mime to show something about Sly, using their extract as a caption. After the mimes have been shown, talk about Sly's appearance, costume and accent. Do you all agree about what he is like?

3 The Lord (in pairs)

The Lord uses a different style of language from Sly's. He has been hunting and tells how one of his hounds is foaming at the mouth from exhaustion ('embossed') and how another detected the scent when all the other hounds seemed to have lost it ('made it good'), putting a high value on the latter's head.

Compare the entrances of Sly and the Lord, and describe the kind of society you think Shakespeare presents to us at the start of this play.

feeze fix

Richard Conqueror Sly's error for William

paucas pallabris few words

Sessa! Be quiet! (or push off!)

denier French coin of low value

thirdborough officer

Wind horns Blow the horns

brach bitch

in the coldest fault where we nearly lost the scent

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 Edited by Michael Fynes-Clinton and Perry Mills
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

The Taming of the Shrew

Induction 1

Outside an Alehouse in Warwickshire

Enter CHRISTOPHER SLY and the HOSTESS.

SLY I'll feeze you, in faith.

HOSTESS A pair of stocks, you rogue!

SLY Y'are a baggage, the Slys are no rogues. Look in the Chronicles;
 we came in with Richard Conqueror. Therefore *paucas pallabris*,
 let the world slide. Sessa!

5

HOSTESS You will not pay for the glasses you have burst?

SLY No, not a denier. Go by, Saint Jeronimy, go to thy cold bed and
 warm thee.

[He lies down.]

HOSTESS I know my remedy; I must go fetch the thirdborough. *[Exit]*

SLY Third, or fourth, or fifth borough, I'll answer him by law. I'll not
 budge an inch, boy. Let him come, and kindly.

10

He falls asleep.

*Wind horns. Enter a LORD from hunting, with his train [of
 HUNTSMEN and SERVINGMEN].*

LORD Huntsman, I charge thee, tender well my hounds.

Breathe Merriman – the poor cur is embossed –
 And couple Clowder with the deep-mouthed brach.

Saw'st thou not, boy, how Silver made it good
 At the hedge corner, in the coldest fault?

15

I would not lose the dog for twenty pound.

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The Lord challenges the Huntsman's assessment of his hounds. Seeing Sly asleep, he decides to play a trick on the drunkard. When the low-born Sly wakes, everyone will pretend he is really a nobleman.

1 The foul beast (in small groups)



This 1978 Royal Shakespeare Company production's staging of the entry of the huntsmen very much echoes the style of Stanley Kubrick's film of Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange*, another story of social engineering. Describe the impression created by this stage image.

While one person reads lines 30–1 aloud, the others form a tableau (frozen picture) which features Sly, the Lord and the others in the positions you imagine them to hold at that point. Your postures should project a sense of your character. Talk together about what you want to suggest by your particular choice of staging.

2 The jest (in pairs)

The Lord decides to play a 'jest' (amusing trick) on Sly. Deception is an important motif in the play and this first example comes very early. Read lines 32–50 alternately, a line at a time. Why does the Lord want to play a trick on Sly and make him 'forget himself'? If it's a 'jest', how funny is it? Is it fair?

fleet fast
sup feed
practise play a trick
wanton erotic or sexy

Balm bathe, anoint
distillèd fragrant, perfumed
dulcet melodious

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Induction 1

- I HUNTSMAN Why, Belman is as good as he, my lord;
 He cried upon it at the merest loss,
 And twice today picked out the dullest scent. 20
 Trust me, I take him for the better dog.
- LORD Thou art a fool. If Echo were as fleet
 I would esteem him worth a dozen such.
 But sup them well, and look unto them all:
 Tomorrow I intend to hunt again. 25
- I HUNTSMAN I will, my lord.
- LORD What's here? One dead, or drunk? See, doth he breathe?
- 2 HUNTSMAN He breathes, my lord. Were he not warmed with ale,
 This were a bed but cold to sleep so soundly.
- LORD O monstrous beast, how like a swine he lies! 30
 Grim death, how foul and loathsome is thine image!
 Sirs, I will practise on this drunken man.
 What think you, if he were conveyed to bed,
 Wrapped in sweet clothes, rings put upon his fingers,
 A most delicious banquet by his bed, 35
 And brave attendants near him when he wakes –
 Would not the beggar then forget himself?
- I HUNTSMAN Believe me, lord, I think he cannot choose.
- 2 HUNTSMAN It would seem strange unto him when he waked –
- LORD Even as a flatt'ring dream or worthless fancy. 40
 Then take him up, and manage well the jest.
 Carry him gently to my fairest chamber
 And hang it round with all my wanton pictures;
 Balm his foul head in warm distillèd waters
 And burn sweet wood to make the lodging sweet; 45
 Procure me music ready when he wakes
 To make a dulcet and a heavenly sound;
 And if he chance to speak, be ready straight
 And with a low submissive reverence
 Say, 'What is it your honour will command?' 50

The Taming of the Shrew

The Lord gives detailed instructions for the execution of his plan, and Sly is carried off to the Lord's house. Trumpets sound, which herald the arrival of a company of Actors.

1 Luxury (in groups of five)

One person reads aloud lines 42–64. Enjoy the language, which is full of sensuous details. The others 'echo' words that they associate with certain topics: one takes wealth, one anything suggesting a master–servant relationship, the third any words to do with sex, the fourth concentrates on verbs. The most appropriate way to do this is to whisper the words back to the reader as soon as you hear them. Repeat the exercise, changing roles, then talk together about what you notice.

2 'husbanded with modesty' (in groups of four)

The Lord is sure the trick will be very entertaining as long as no one takes things too far (line 64). Of course, it is the Lord himself who decides where to draw the line.

Discuss what you think about the rules of this particular game. How successful are practical jokes, in general?

3 Hidden stage directions (in small groups)

Lines 68–76 contain several directions to the actors about movement, entries and exits, and sound effects. It is interesting to consider how closely the Lord's orders might be followed. For example, is the Servingman who reports the arrival of the players the one who goes off earlier? And when and how exactly does Sly's exit happen? Does he perhaps come awake as he is moved?

Rehearse a version of this passage that you think would be successful on stage.

ewer large jug
diaper towel
kindly naturally, convincingly

passing extremely
to his office perform his duty
An't if it

- Let one attend him with a silver basin
 Full of rose-water and bestrewed with flowers;
 Another bear the ewer, the third a diaper,
 And say, 'Will't please your lordship cool your hands?'
 Some one be ready with a costly suit 55
 And ask him what apparel he will wear;
 Another tell him of his hounds and horse,
 And that his lady mourns at his disease.
 Persuade him that he hath been lunatic,
 And when he says he is, say that he dreams, 60
 For he is nothing but a mighty lord.
 This do, and do it kindly, gentle sirs.
 It will be pastime passing excellent,
 If it be husbanded with modesty.
- I HUNTSMAN My lord, I warrant you we will play our part 65
 As he shall think by our true diligence
 He is no less than what we say he is.
- LORD Take him up gently and to bed with him,
 And each one to his office when he wakes.
 [*Sly is carried off*]
- Sound trumpets.*
- Sirrah, go see what trumpet 'tis that sounds. 70
 [*Exit Servingman*]
- Belike some noble gentleman that means,
 Travelling some journey, to repose him here.
Enter Servingman.
- How now? Who is it?
- SERVINGMAN An't please your honour, players
 That offer service to your lordship.
- LORD Bid them come near.

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The Taming of the Shrew

The Lord welcomes the players and willingly agrees that they should stay at his house. He asks them to perform before a 'Lord' (Sly), but warns them that the 'Lord' is given to strange behaviour.

1 The players' entry (in large groups)



This staging of the entry of the players from the 1992 RSC production appears deliberately low key and perhaps, therefore, more real because opting for modern dress allowed the *actual* actors to wear clothes that they would wear in real life for rehearsal or for travelling from one venue to another. Other productions have made more theatrically bold decisions by featuring, for example, a *commedia dell'arte* troupe, acrobats and musicians – even Elizabethan players with a look-alike William Shakespeare.

You are staging a modern-dress production of the play. Act out the arrival of the players in all their glory. What is their mood as they enter and what is their relationship with the Lord? Think carefully about the effect you want their arrival to have on the audience.

in happy time just at the right time
The rather for more especially
 because
doubtful . . . modesties uncertain
 whether you can control yourselves
over-eyeing observing

merry passion fit of merriment
veriest antic oddest and most
 complete buffoon
buttery pantry/kitchen
want lack

Enter PLAYERS.

- Now, fellows, you are welcome. 75
- PLAYERS We thank your honour.
- LORD Do you intend to stay with me tonight?
- I PLAYER So please your lordship to accept our duty.
- LORD With all my heart. This fellow I remember
 Since once he played a farmer's eldest son – 80
 'Twas where you wooed the gentlewoman so well –
 I have forgot your name, but sure that part
 Was aptly fitted and naturally performed.
- 2 PLAYER I think 'twas Soto that your honour means.
- LORD 'Tis very true; thou didst it excellent. 85
 Well, you are come to me in happy time,
 The rather for I have some sport in hand
 Wherein your cunning can assist me much.
 There is a lord will hear you play tonight –
 But I am doubtful of your modesties, 90
 Lest over-eyeing of his odd behaviour
 (For yet his honour never heard a play)
 You break into some merry passion
 And so offend him; for I tell you, sirs,
 If you should smile, he grows impatient. 95
- I PLAYER Fear not, my lord, we can contain ourselves
 Were he the veriest antic in the world.
- LORD Go, sirrah, take them to the buttery
 And give them friendly welcome every one.
 Let them want nothing that my house affords. 100

Exit one with the Players

The Taming of the Shrew

The Lord has a further idea. He will provide Sly with a 'wife' in the shape of a young page dressed as a woman. The Lord himself will act as the calming influence to dampen excessive hilarity.

1 One view of women (in groups of three)

The Lord gives elaborate instructions for his page Bartholomew to follow so that he can give a convincing performance when he is dressed up as Sly's dutiful 'wife'. Bartholomew is the first example of many characters in the play pretending to be someone they are not, and the duty a wife owes to her husband will become a central theme in the play.

- One person reads through lines 101–24. The others note down the key words that suggest how the Lord sees women.
- Work together to present a tableau that reflects this view of women.
- One person reads lines 114–24 aloud while the others mime appropriate actions for Sly and his 'wife'. Remember, the audience knows his 'wife' is really a man, Sly does not.

2 Laughing with the Lord (in small groups)

A volunteer slowly reads lines 127–34 as the Lord. The rest of the group become his servants, who are keen to win his favour. Whenever you have the chance, laugh at the idea of Sly and his 'wife' to show your approval of the Lord's wit. Notice that the Lord assumes that the absurdity of the situation will come, not from a boy pretending to be a woman, but from a tinker thinking he is a lord!

At the end of the exercise, the Lord and two of the servants are cross-questioned by the others about what they feel about master–servant relationships.

lowly courtesy humble curtsy
esteemed him thought himself
commanded forced
shift purpose
in despite against nature
usurp assume, feign

Haply perhaps
abate control
over-merry spleen excessive
 impulse to laughter (the spleen was
 thought to be the seat of the
 emotions)