

AT3 - A Comparison Between Taming Of The Shrew And Ten Things I Hate About You

Shakespeare's sixteenth-century play, 'Taming of the Shrew' ('TOTS'), explored gender and status norms and values of the time. Many modern audiences would regard the play to reveal prejudiced attitudes while hidden within an 'innocent' comedy. Long since Shakespeare, gender roles and values have developed exponentially, opening more opportunities and responsibilities for women and men. This change in thinking has granted people a more accepting attitude resulting in increased freedom for women and men, though in different ways. The 1999 film adaptation, 'Ten Things I Hate About You,' directed by Gil Junger, acknowledges these shifts in society, transforming the original text into a relevant piece making it more palatable for the modern audience.

The growing independence amongst men and women is demonstrated in 'Ten Things' through a change in the character traits and power dynamics revealing the rigid social structure of Shakespeare's time. Katherine is introduced in the play as a strong-willed woman separate from the needs and desires of men. Petruchio is introduced as a suitor with the part of taming the shrew; his role is that of a nobleman and a husband. This is expressed during the verbal duel between Katherine and Petruchio; Katherine strikes Petruchio imploring him to hit her back and reveal his ungentlemanly qualities. Despite being in power, Petruchio does not hit her in order to maintain his gentleman status. 'So may you lose your arms: If you strike me, you are no gentleman; And if no gentleman, why then no arms.' When Katherine says he may lose his arms, she alludes to his physical arms and a gentleman's coat of arms, a symbol of nobility. Just as Katherine is weighted down by the standards expected of her, Petruchio must abide by his role as a nobleman, even if he does not care about Katherine's feelings.

In comparison, the people of Padua High School each have their groups and gatherings tailored to personal inclinations and desires, exercising their independence from the class structure. When Cameron is first shown around the school by Michael, Michael describes the different groups: 'The AV Club, the basic beautiful people, the coffee kids, the Rasta group, and the MBA's.' The entire scene takes place in almost one continuous camera shot stressing the number of groups all situated in the small area, demonstrating the larger collective they all belong to. Yet all of the groups are controlled by one driving force, popularity. Unlike nobility, popularity is not born into but determined by looks, success, wealth and a willingness to express these traits. Some of these qualities appear in other groups such as Bogey Lowenstein's MBA club or even Kat herself, but are let down by their restrained attitudes. The aforementioned shows that birthrights and success no longer matter in today's society but rather a personality to accompany it. This shift in values shows the importance of the individual's temperament. Additionally, the motive of a gentleman has changed in modern culture whilst the means has stayed the same. Petruchio was a gentleman not because he cared about Katherine but because he cared about his status. Cameron is a

gentleman not because of nobility or popularity but because he cares about Bianca's feelings. The paralleling concepts of nobility and popularity inevitably reflect the changes between the sixteenth-century and modern society. This allows audiences to understand the differences and similarities of both eras, noting the timeless social structure that many people still live within.

The growing freedom among both males and females is likewise expressed through Junger's plot. In 1590, Petruchio was not expected to change, but rather the shrewish Katherine. In 'Ten Things' Patrick and Kat are both brought down to the same level and develop as characters. Thus revealing society's acceptance of egalitarian gender roles, and the breaking down of objectification. Katherine's objectification is indicated during Act III Scene II, whilst Petruchio monologues about her new role as a wife. 'I will be master of what is mine own: She is my goods, my chattels; she is my house, my household stuff, my field, my barn, my horse, my ox, my ass, my anything.' The word 'my' is repeated throughout the statement, highlighting the possessive power dynamic. Katherine is viewed simply as property and must do everything in her ability to comfort and conform to her husband. As the play moves on, Katherine comes to terms with her role because she slowly realises that no matter how hard she rebels, she cannot change the combined beliefs of the time period. Towards the end of the play, the final monologue from Katherine reveals an entirely different person, describing the disgraceful actions of Bianca and the widow, characterising them as 'ungrateful traitors.' Shakespeare has contrasted the shrewish Katherine and the reformed Katherine adding depth to the play's end, this being considered a positive conclusion, demonstrating the era's typical view of women as voiceless property governed by men. Petruchio's personality is turned on its head in 'Ten Things' and remodelled into the more redeemable protagonist, Patrick. At the movie's start, Patrick is Hollywood's stereotypical rebel; he smokes, associates with unruly people, and is concealed by a shroud of rumours. To date Kat he asks for money, similar to Petruchio. However, unlike Petruchio, Patrick changes. This is displayed at the end of the prom scene, 'No, I didn't care about the money, okay? I cared... I cared about you.' During this confrontation, several over the shoulder shots are used to show how they see each other; the close-ups of Kat and Patrick's faces convey the similar emotions they are feeling and allow the audience to empathise with both characters after each camera transition. Both Kat and Patrick's emotions matter to the audience by the end of the film, differing from 'TOTS's' insensitive and amoral final scene. The aforementioned inevitably reveal the differing morals and values pursued by the modern audience. The character development of a man is accepted as necessary, just as for a woman, and requires a display of strong emotions from both parties. With this, the audience can understand the important conventions essential for a healthy relationship—highlighting the importance of collective individualism.

The film adaptation of 'Taming of the Shrew,' 'Ten Things I Hate About You' has created a relevant story in the eyes of a contemporary audience, expressing new and built upon roles and values. 'Ten Things' explores the increased independence amongst cliques, classes and genders, valuing liberal individualism over the family or society. The paralleling conventions of nobility and popularity reflect the differences and similarities of the two era's social hierarchies. 'Ten Things' additionally highlights gender conventions apparent in 'TOTS' through the several relationships in the film. Junger's modernisation shows the importance of notions such as class, wealth, and gender, allowing the audience to reflect upon the connections between modern and sixteenth-century society.