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Comedic Devices in The Taming of the Shrew

Comedic devices play an important role within a story to help develop the plot and make it more alluring to the reader. *The Taming of the Shrew* is an excellent example of a story that does just that; using such devices as disguises to create the element of mistaken identity, unexpected plot twists to surprise the audience, and ending with harmony to close out the story with a happy ending. Overall, the use of these devices helps to show that the shrew changed in the same treatment that is given. *The Taming of the Shrew* uses comedic devices such as disguises, unexpected plot twists, and ending with harmony to effectively develop the plot of the story, in which Petruchio is able to “tame the shrew.”

Disguises are often used in stories to create the effect of mistaken identity, where characters often try to get away with fooling people to get away with doing something. They also “*allow the playwright to demonstrate dramatic irony*,” (Lee). In Act I of the play Tranio says “*You will be the schoolmaster and undertake the teaching of the maid: That’s your device*,” (Shakespeare). Throughout the story Petruchio, Tranio, and Lucentio disguise themselves as a music teacher, tutor, and Lucentio in order to get closer with Kate and Bianca; as well as fool their father Baptista in the process.

Unexpected plot twists are also used within the story to add an element of surprise, as well as “*to keep the audience guessing,*” (Cheever). The wedding scene in Act III is a perfect example of this, in which Petruchio shows up to the wedding horribly mismatched and on an old/broken-down horse. In the story, Biondello says at the ceremony “*Why, Petruchio is coming in a new hat and an old jerkin, a pair of old breeches thrice turned, a pair of boots that have been candle-cases, one buckled, another laced, an old rusty sword ta'en out of the town-armory, with a broken hilt, and chapeless; with two broken points: his horse hipped with an old mothy saddle and stirrups of no kindred,*” (Shakespeare). Nobody would expect someone like him to show up to their wedding like that, especially after all the work he put in to marry Kate in the first place.

To end the story with a happy ending, Shakespeare uses an ending with harmony. It allows “*Shakespeare to end on a hopeful note,*” (Edley), as well as give joy/reassurance to the reader. A banquet is held at the end of the story for the three couples to celebrate their marriages. After making a bet to see whose wife would be the most obedient, they were surprised to see that Kate was the most obedient wife; having been the first wife to return after being called upon. In the end, Petruchio and Kate happily went home together; meaning that Kate has been tamed. “*Now, go thy ways; thou hast tamed a curst shrew. 'Tis a wonder, by your leave, she will be tamed so,*” (Shakespeare).

On the other side, it can be said that these comedic devices do not help develop the plot, and just simply distract from what is going on. However, these comedic devices help the story have that intriguing feel, in which the reader is fully interested in what they are reading. Just imagine what this story would be like without these devices, it honestly would be quite boring. Nevertheless, these devices help keep the story engaging for the audience.

The Taming of the Shrew is an excellent example of a story that uses comedic devices to help develop the plot and to keep the audience engaged with what is going on. Through devices such as disguises that create the element of mistaken identity, unexpected plot twists to surprise the audience, and ending with harmony to give the story that “happily ever after” effect to close it out, Shakespeare does an excellent job of keeping the readers hooked throughout the entire story, while showing that the shrew changed in the same treatment that is given.

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