**LITERATURES IN ENGLISH**

**UNIT 1 – MODULE 1**

***THE TAMING OF THE SHREW***

**Consider the following question.**

“Disguise is central to the dramatic impact of *The Taming of the Shrew*; no other features of the drama are important.”

Discuss the extent to which you agree with this statement.

After reading the mark scheme included on this document, please write this essay. You should type it, double spaced and submit to the class email. **This is due Next week Friday April 5, 2020.**

This is the CAPE Mark Scheme for this question:

**Regardless of the approach taken to this question candidates should bear the following in mind.**

**(*This is what should guide your introduction, a general statement on Shakespearian Comedy which can then be linked to the play.)***

Shakespearean Comedies focus on mistaken identity. One person is taken for another; thus two persons seemingly lose their relations to the society around them, and the society loses its relation to them. The effect is that the natural order of things is reversed; the norms of life are compromised or destroyed as seen with Sly in the introduction of *The Taming of the Shrew*, along with Lucentio and Tranio in the main plot. A man with a strong head may preserve his identity in the confusion as seen with Petruchio through his soliloquies.

The mistakes of identity are often portrayed through the use of disguise. The characters in *The Taming of the Shrew* utilized disguise intentionally, whether it be a physical or emotional disguise. The latter is evinced by characters such as Bianca, Kate and Petruchio who reflect Kate’s shrewish behaviour. Some of the other characters of the play may be fooled by the mask, and take the appearance for the reality, for instance Lucentio with Bianca.

In Shakespearean comedies, love and marriage are central to the plot. Additionally, most of the comedies end in multiple wedding celebrations and there is always a happy ending. *The Taming of the Shrew* exemplifies these features both in the main plot and subplots.

His comedies develop one or more than one sub-plot which equally develop with the main plot as seen in the Bianca and Lucentio subplot which mirrors that of Katherina and Petruchio. Shakespeare succeeds in skilfully interweaving that sub-plot to the main plot.

Women are vital to the development of the conflict in Shakespeare's comedies, displaying liveliness and wit. Katherina embodies these characteristics in *The Taming of the Shrew*. As a result, she is branded as shrewish by the patriarchal society in which she exists and which does not recognize her depth of intellect manifested in her repartees.

In Shakespearean comedies, men and women of different classes appear. They accentuate the clash of values and complex moods inherent in any society, triggering mirth and laughter through their interaction. This is evident in the relationships between the masters and their servants, as well as in the interactions between the males and females.

Lastly, fools are vital to Shakespeare’s comedies. The audience can laugh with the fools but never laugh at them as they are quick witted and lively characters. Not only do they make the audience laugh, but help to analyse and criticize other characters in the play. The audience is amused by their humorous actions, and at the same time is impressed with their verbal acuity and ready wit. Tranio is noteworthy in the display of such traits.

In examining *The Taming of the Shrew,* several questions must be asked. Is the use of disguise a central motif in the play? Does the ingenious technique of the use of mistaken identity heighten the humour in the play? How important is the language used by the playwright to the dramatic impact of the play? Is the portrayal of women of paramount importance to the development of plot and theme?

Candidates may wish to agree fully with the assertion OR they may agree to a certain extent OR they may disagree.

**Candidates who agree may discuss the following:**

**Language as disguise of character’s true personality:**

* Katherina’s shrewish statements are a mere cover for her vulnerability as a woman. She changes after her husband has ‘tamed’her and seemingly loves her.
* Bianca’s politeness, kindness and lady-like behaviour is a mere façade until she marries and shows her true colours in the final act of the play.

**Revelation of key themes through the use of disguise**

* Social class boundaries: obscured and transcended by disguise e.g. Sly in the induction; Tranio dressing as Lucentio.
* Identity: characters donning the disguise remain unchanged, apart from the clothing e.g. Petruchio
* Marriage as an economic transaction: Petruchio’s interest in Katherina may be more out of selfish financial gain than love, yet he pretends to woo her initially.

**Disguise adds humour to the play**

* Sly’s reaction to his supposed nobility and the reaction of the lord and his servant’s to Sly’s gaucherie.
* Competition by suitors who are donning disguises is somewhat farcical at times with Tranio outbidding Gremio, even though he does not have the resources he claims to have.
* Another example is the confusion that ensues when Tranio, the pedant who is pretending to be Vincentio, and Vincentio meet.
* Petruchio’s attire and behaviour during the wedding ceremony

**Disguise and by extension illusion are key to the structural elements in play**

* Play within the play: Tranio pretending to be Lucentio mirrors Sly’s seeming elevation to lordship which highlights the constructedness of theatre.
* Asides: Hortensio and Gremio in Act 1 Scene 2 commenting on action in the play, thereby adding humour.
* Soliloquy: Petruchio’s plan for breaking Kate in Act 2 Scene 1 is captured just before she meets him for the first time. It clearly highlights the plan to disguise his true intention to break her, not court her, thereby providing a focus on conflict and themes.
* Visual impact: Description of Petruchio’s appearance (disguise) before and during the nuptials which underscores the idea that the clothes do not make the man.

**Candidates who disagree may present the following in their discussion**

**Language used in the dialogue:**

* Irony, for instance the sistersare not quite what they seem; their roles/behaviours seemreversed by the end of the play,
* puns and metaphors e.g. Act 1 Scene 1- sexual conversation between Tranio and Lucentio.

**Plot and sub-plots:**

* The conflict involved in the process of taming the shrew, Bianca and her suitors, as well as Hortensio and the widow underscore significant themes such as romantic love and reveal important aspects of male and female characters, along with master/servant relationships

**Characterisation:**

* Petruchio’s farcical but repugnant behaviour and salacious statement engage audience attention;
* The stereotypical shrew, Kate, whose voice is somewhat muted by the patriarchal society she exists in; Bianca’s change from the demure young lady to a rebellious married woman is rather intriguing to the audience.

**Candidates who neither fully agree nor disagree might discuss a mixture of the two, blending elements of disguise with the other elements such as language.**