

William Shakespeare

# The Taming of the Shrew



free Audiobook



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Text adaptation, notes and activities  
by  
James Butler and Lucia de Vanna



# The Taming of the Shrew

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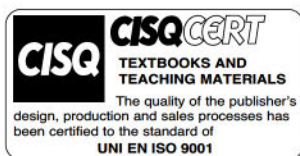
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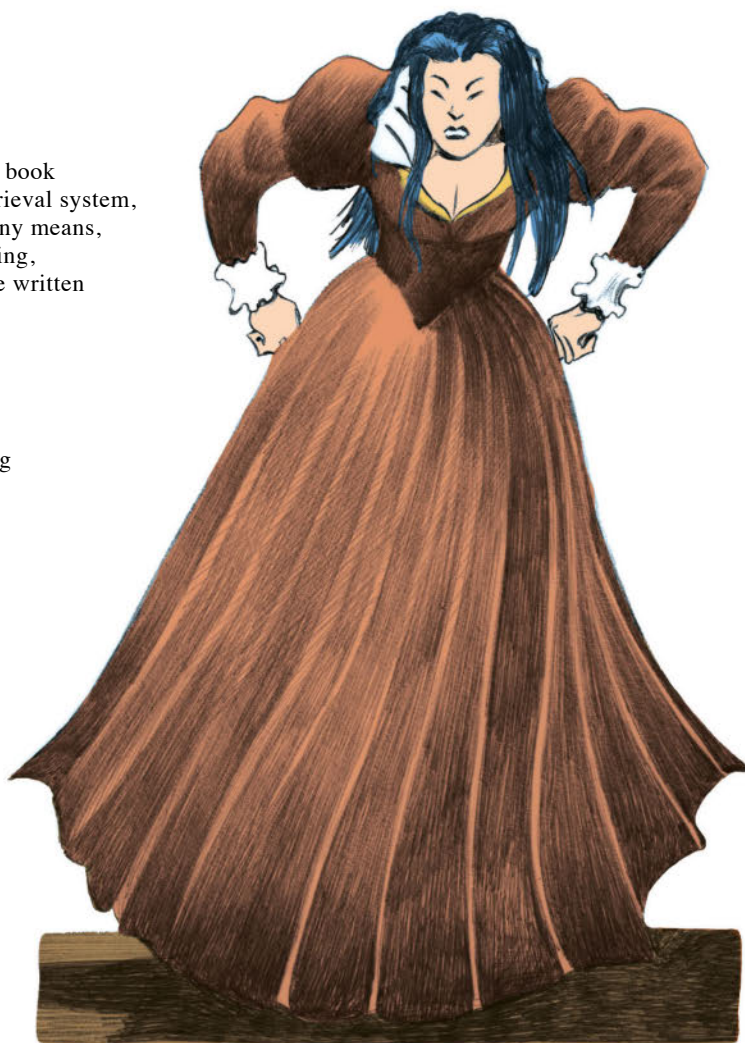
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The story is recorded in full.

**FCE** Cambridge Level Three First Certificate in English.



# The Life of William Shakespeare

**W**illiam Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. His father, John, who took an active part in local politics, was an important man in the town.

Very little is known about the early years of William Shakespeare's life, although it is believed that he was educated at the grammar school, where boys were instructed in Latin.

When he was eighteen years old the young Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, who was eight years older than him. They had three children, Susanna, Hamnet and Judith.

Above: the 'Flower' portrait of Shakespeare. (Royal Shakespeare Theatre Collection, Stratford.)

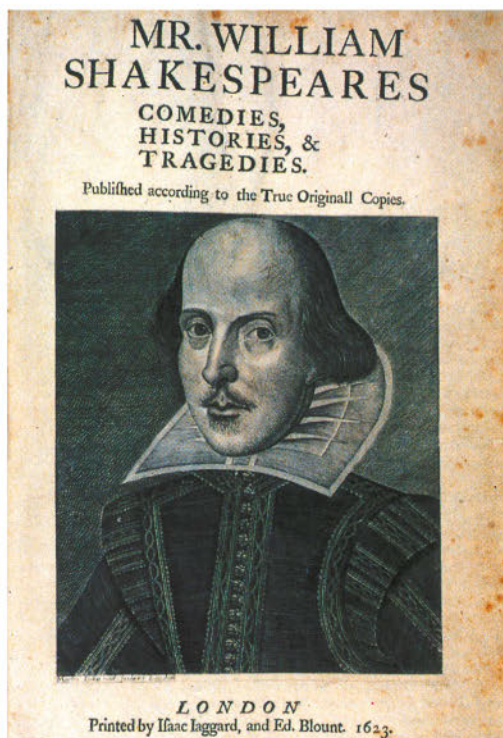


It is not known what kind of work Shakespeare did in the few years that followed his marriage, although biographers have conjectured that he may have worked in his father's glove factory or been employed as a tutor.

When he was about twenty-three years old Shakespeare went to London where he worked in the theatre, at first as an actor and then as a playwright. He became a member of the Lord Chamberlain's Men, the most important theatrical company in London. This company built the famous Globe Theatre in London. The Lord Chamberlain's Men became the King's Men in 1603. Their principal theatre after 1609 was the Blackfriars.



*The Globe Theatre* by George Shepherd.



Portrait of William Shakespeare by Martin Droeshout, in the 1623 First Folio, the first edition of his collected plays.

Shakespeare wrote a total of thirty-eight plays, including histories, Roman plays, tragedies and comedies. His work was gathered together and published after his death.

He had a very successful career as a playwright and shareholder in the theatres where his plays were performed. It is estimated that his earnings as a shareholder were more than ten times the average earnings of a schoolmaster. At the end of his career Shakespeare had made enough money to retire in some style to his native town of Stratford-upon-Avon. He died on 23rd April 1616.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in blue ink. The signature on the left is "William Shakespeare" and the signature on the right is "Isaac Iaggard".

**1** Answer the following questions.

- Where was Shakespeare born?
- How old was Shakespeare when he married Anne Hathaway?
- What was his father's profession?
- Which theatre did Shakespeare's company build?
- When did Shakespeare die?



# The Taming of the Shrew

**I**t is not known exactly when Shakespeare wrote *The Taming<sup>1</sup> of the Shrew<sup>2</sup>*, but a likely date seems to be 1592. A play entitled *The Taming of a Shrew* was published in 1594, and this was thought for many years to be the main source for Shakespeare's own play. Scholars now believe that the 1594 play was a corrupt version of Shakespeare's work. The text of Shakespeare's play was published in 1623.

*The Taming of the Shrew* is one of the most popular of Shakespeare's comedies. The play begins with an induction,<sup>3</sup> which is set in Warwickshire. A drunken tinker,<sup>4</sup> Christopher Sly, is brought to a lord's house, where he is dressed in fine clothes and persuaded that he is really a lord who has been mad for many years. Sly is then taken to see a performance of the play which follows.

The main part of *The Taming of the Shrew* is set in Italy. It tells the story of a young man, Lucentio, who comes to Padua and falls in love with a merchant's daughter, Bianca. He exchanges positions with his servant, Tranio, in order to gain admittance to Bianca's house as a tutor. After a series of deceptions and intrigues Lucentio and Bianca are married.

Bianca has an older sister, Katharine, whom no one wants to marry because of her rude and quarrelsome<sup>5</sup> behaviour. Another young man, Petruchio, comes to Padua in search of a rich wife. He decides to marry Katharine, and to make her

1. **Taming** : bringing under control.
2. **Shrew** : (here) a bad-tempered or aggressively assertive woman.
3. **induction** : introduction.
4. **tinker** : homeless traveller who repairs metal objects.
5. **quarrelsome** : argumentative.



Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton in  
*The Taming of the Shrew*, 1966.

change her behaviour. He undertakes to ‘tame’ her by depriving her of food and sleep, and forcing her to accept that whatever he says is true, even when he makes patently <sup>1</sup> false statements. At the end of the play Katharine has learned a new way of behaving, and the marriage between her and Petruchio seems founded on genuine and mutual respect and love.



The final scene in *The Taming of the Shrew*,  
Royal Shakespeare Theatre, 1960.

1. **patently** : obviously.

# Dramatis Personae

## In the Induction

*A Lord*

**CHRISTOPHER SLY** *a drunken tinker*

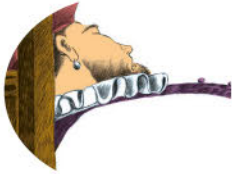
*A landlady*<sup>1</sup>

*Page*

*Player*

*Huntsmen*

*Servants*



## Characters of the play-within-the-play

**BAPTISTA** *a rich gentleman of Padua*

**VINCENTIO** *an old gentleman of Pisa*

**LUCENTIO** *son of Vincentio, in love with Bianca*

**PETRUCHIO** *a gentleman of Verona, suitor to Katharine*

**GREMIO** *suitors*<sup>2</sup> *to Bianca*

**HORTENSIO** *servants of Lucentio*

**TRANIO**

**BIONDELLO** *Petruchio's servant*

**GRUMIO**



*A merchant of Mantua*

**KATHARINE** *Baptista's daughters*

**BIANCA**

*A widow*

*Tailor*

*Haberdasher*<sup>3</sup>

*Servants of Baptista and Petruchio*



1. **landlady** : owner of a property.

2. **suitors** : men who pursue a relationship with a woman they would like to marry.

3. **Haberdasher** : a man who sells articles for making clothes.



## PART ONE

# Christopher Sly becomes a Lord



he tavern <sup>1</sup> door opened suddenly, and a man was pushed out into the road. He was very drunk and very angry. He fell onto the ground. Then he picked himself up, and shook the dust <sup>2</sup> from his clothes. He turned round and glared. <sup>3</sup>

‘You can’t treat me <sup>4</sup> like this!’ he shouted to the landlady of the tavern. ‘How dare you throw me into the street!’

The landlady stood on the steps of the tavern, and looked down on the man. She, too, was angry, and her face was red.



track 02

- 
1. **tavern** : a public house selling beer and other alcoholic drinks.
  2. **dust** : dirt.
  3. **glared** : looked angrily.
  4. **treat me** : behave to me.

# The Taming of the Shrew



‘Will you pay for the glasses you’ve broken?’ she demanded.

‘Never!’ cried the man. ‘My name is Sly, and my family is an old one. We’re not the kind of people you can treat without respect.’

The landlady looked at him with disgust. She knew that Christopher Sly was not an important man at all – she could tell by the clothes he was wearing, and by the way he spoke and behaved.

‘Very well,’ she told him, ‘I’m going to call a constable. <sup>1</sup> He’ll make you pay for those broken glasses!’

The landlady went back inside the tavern, and slammed <sup>2</sup> the door shut.

‘A constable. You send for anyone you like!’ Christopher Sly shouted at the closed door. ‘What do I care? I’m staying here – I won’t move until he comes.’

Christopher Sly sat down on the ground. He was tired now, and his head was beginning to hurt. He had drunk a lot of beer, and he wanted to

rest. He rolled over, and went to sleep under a bush. In a few minutes he was fast asleep, and snoring loudly.

Soon there was the sound of horses in the road. Someone blew a horn. <sup>3</sup> It was a hunting party, <sup>4</sup> returning from the field. <sup>5</sup> The lord of the hunting party was talking to his servants. He loved hunting, and he was fond of <sup>6</sup> his hounds. <sup>7</sup>



---

1. **constable** : officer of the law.

2. **slammed** : closed with a sudden movement.

3. **horn** : a conical shaped instrument.

4. **hunting party** : group of people who chase and kill animals for pleasure.

5. **field** : hunting area.

6. **fond of** : attached to.

7. **hounds** : special dogs used for hunting.

# Christopher Sly becomes a Lord



‘Did you see how well Silver did today?’ he asked one of his men. ‘That dog is a marvel. <sup>1</sup> I wouldn’t sell him for twenty pounds!’

‘Bellman’s a good dog, too, my lord,’ the man replied. ‘He did well in the field today, too. I think he’s better than Silver.’

‘You’re a fool. You don’t know what you’re talking about,’ the lord said coldly. ‘Now take all the hounds, and give them some food. I want to hunt again tomorrow. Look after them well, do you hear me?’

The lord looked down at the ground, and caught sight of Christopher Sly lying there. Sly was still sleeping soundly. The lord was disgusted – he hated drunkenness.

‘Look at that fellow,’ <sup>2</sup> he said to one of his servants, ‘what a filthy <sup>3</sup> animal he is!’ Then he had an idea. He began to smile. He spoke to the



servant again.

‘What do you think that fellow would imagine,’ he asked, ‘if he found himself in a comfortable bed when he wakes – with jewels on his fingers, and servants standing round him? What would he do, do you think?’

‘He wouldn’t know what had happened,’ the servant replied. ‘He wouldn’t know who he was.’



---

1. **marvel** : wonder.

2. **fellow** : man, (here) used with scorn.

3. **filthy** : dirty.

# The Taming of the Shrew



‘We’ll play a trick <sup>1</sup> on him, the drunken brute!’<sup>2</sup> the lord decided.

He told some of his servants what to do. He wanted them to carry Christopher Sly to his own house, and to put him to bed. They were to <sup>3</sup> wash the dirt off him, and to dress him in fine clothes. Then, when he woke up, they were to make sure that musicians played wonderful music outside the door of the bedroom.

‘If he speaks to you,’ the lord told his men, ‘answer him with the greatest respect. Treat him as if he were me. Offer him everything he could want. Make him think he is a lord, and that he has been ill for a long time. If he says that he is Christopher Sly, explain that he has been mad for a long time – that he is really a great lord. Tell him that his wife is desperate because of his illness. Make him believe what you say.’

The servants did what they had been told to do by their master. They picked Christopher Sly up, and carried him very gently to the lord’s house. He was still asleep, and showed no sign of waking.

A group of travelling actors now appeared on the road. When they saw the hunting party they stopped, and greeted the lord politely. The lord enjoyed all forms of entertainment, and he was happy to see the actors.

‘Have you come to perform at my house?’ he asked them.

‘We would like to perform for you, sir,’ one of the actors replied.

‘Excellent!’ the lord cried. ‘I’m very glad to see you, and you can help me. I’m playing a trick on someone, and you can be a part of it. There’s an important lord staying in my house tonight,’ he told them. ‘He’s a strange man, and he’s never seen a play before. When you perform for us, pay no attention if he behaves strangely. Carry on <sup>4</sup> as if you’d noticed nothing odd <sup>5</sup> at all. Will you be able to do that, do you think?’

---

1. **trick** : joke or action designed to deceive someone.

2. **brute** : literally animal, (here) used as an insult.

3. **were to** : had been told to.

4. **carry on** : continue.

5. **odd** : strange.



# The Taming of the Shrew



‘Certainly we can, sir,’ one of the actors replied. ‘We are actors, we know how to control ourselves. Whatever he does, we will show no sign of surprise at his behaviour. I can promise you that.’

‘Then you are very welcome to my house,’ the lord told them.

The servants who were carrying Christopher Sly arrived at the house before the actors and their master. They did everything that their master had instructed. They put the sleeping man into the lord’s own bed. They washed him, and dressed him in fine clothes. They put jewellery on his fingers. Then they waited for him to wake up.

Christopher Sly groaned in his sleep, and turned over. Then he opened one eye, and immediately closed it again. He had drunk a lot of beer earlier in the day, and he had a headache. After a while, he moved again.

‘Beer!’ he called. ‘Bring me some beer. I need a drink.’

One of the lord’s servants stepped forward.

‘Would your lordship care for some wine?’ he asked.

Another servant stepped forward.

‘Perhaps your lordship would like something delicate to eat?’ he enquired.

A third servant stepped forward.

‘What will your lordship wear today?’ he asked.

‘Eh! What’s all this?’ Christopher Sly said. He looked around the room. He did not know where he was. He had never seen such luxury before.

‘Why are you calling me “your lordship”, and asking me about wine, and food, and clothes? My name is Christopher Sly. I’ve never drunk wine in my life – I don’t eat “delicate” things, I eat beef. And why are you asking me about what clothes I want to wear? I’ve only got one set of clothes!’



# Christopher Sly becomes a Lord



At that moment the lord entered the bedroom. He thought the joke was going very well, and he was amused at Christopher Sly's confusion. He began to speak.

'What a pity it is,' he said very sadly, 'to see a great nobleman as mad as this!'

Christopher Sly looked at him doubtfully.

'What do you mean?' he asked. 'I'm Christopher Sly, I tell you! Ask the landlady of the tavern at Wincot who I am. She'll tell you all about me, and how much I owe her for beer.'

One of the servants offered Christopher Sly a glass, and he began to drink greedily.

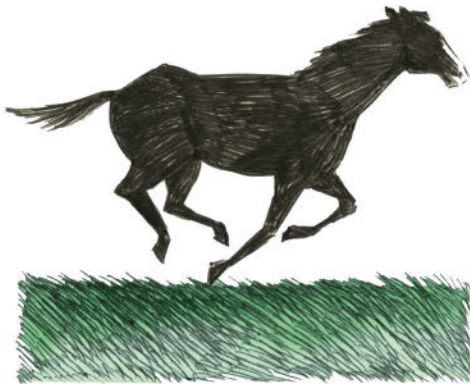
'This is the cause of the problem,' the lord said. 'You drink too much. This is why your family avoids you, and why you went mad. Please think carefully, your lordship. Remember who you are, and forget these dreams about Christopher Sly. He doesn't exist. He's just a sign of your illness.'

Christopher Sly was more confused than ever now. Perhaps it was all true. Perhaps he really was an important and rich lord, as everyone was saying!

'Remember all the pleasures that wait for you,' the lord continued softly. 'You can have anything you want,' he said. 'If you want music, here it is – the sweetest music in the world!'

Suddenly the musicians outside the room began to play.

'You own a beautiful estate<sup>1</sup> that you can walk around,' the lord told him. 'And wonderful horses, if you



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1. **estate** : area of land.

# The Taming of the Shrew



want to ride. Your hounds are ready for you, if you want to hunt. Or if you want to look at beautiful pictures, you have a fine collection of those. You are a lord, I tell you,' he repeated. 'And you have a wife who loves you – she's a beautiful woman, and your illness has made her very unhappy.'

Now Christopher Sly was convinced.

'I really am a lord, then?' he said. 'And you say I've got a beautiful wife who loves me?'

He turned to one of the servants.

'Bring her to me at once. And bring me some beer, as well,' he commanded.

'We're so happy to see you well once more!' one of the servants told him. 'You've been mad for a long time, my lord. Fifteen years it's been since you knew who you were!'

'Fifteen years!' Christopher Sly said slowly. 'But in all that time, didn't I say anything? Didn't I speak at all?'

'You spoke, my lord,' the servant said, 'but you spoke nonsense all the time. You talked about Christopher Sly. You spoke about taverns and arguments about paying for beer. Nothing you said made any sense.'

'It was all a dream, then!' Christopher Sly said. 'I've been dreaming all this time. I don't know what to say.'

Now a lady in fine clothes entered the room. The lady was really the lord's page.<sup>1</sup> He, too, was obeying his master's orders.

'My lord,' the page said. 'I'm happy to see you.'

'Are you my wife?' Christopher Sly asked. 'Why do you call me "lord", and not "husband"?'

'Forgive me, husband,' said the page. 'You are both my husband and my lord.'

---

1. **page** : servant boy.

# Christopher Sly becomes a Lord



‘What’s her name?’ Christopher Sly asked one of the servants. ‘What do I call her?’

‘You call her “madam”,’ the lord told him. ‘That’s how lords address their ladies.’

Christopher Sly looked at the page in the woman’s clothes. He thought he was a lucky man to have such a fine wife.

‘Leave us!’ he ordered the servants. ‘My wife and I wish to be alone for a while.’

The servants and the lord left the room. It was difficult for them not to laugh. They were pleased at the success of the joke against Christopher Sly.

‘Come here, my dear,’ Sly commanded. ‘They tell me we have not been together for fifteen years. Come to bed with me.’

The page had been instructed what to say by the lord.

‘We must be patient,’ he said. ‘The doctors want you to be very quiet for a few days. They think that excitement might bring back your madness. We must wait.’

‘Very well,’ Christopher Sly agreed. ‘We’ll wait for a few days. I don’t want to go mad again.’

A servant now came into the room.

‘The actors are ready, my lord,’ the servant announced. ‘They have heard that you are better, and they want to perform for you. The doctors think a play would be good for you.’

‘A play? I don’t mind seeing a play,’ Christopher Sly decided. ‘Come on, madam, let’s go and see this performance. You can sit by my side.’

## Understanding the plot

### 1 Answer the following questions.

- a. Why is Christopher Sly angry with the landlady of the tavern?
- b. Why is the landlady angry with Christopher Sly?
- c. How can the landlady tell that Christopher Sly is not an important man?
- d. What threat does the landlady make?
- e. How does Christopher Sly respond to the landlady's threat?
- f. What is the trick that the lord decides to play on Christopher Sly?
- g. What does the lord tell the actors about the 'important lord'?
- h. Who is the 'important lord'?
- i. What does Christopher Sly ask for when he wakes up?
- j. Complete the chart below to show what the servants offer Christopher Sly when he wakes up, and how he reacts to their offers.

What they offer him	How he reacts

- k. The lord tells Christopher Sly that he has been mad. What does he say was the cause of his madness?
- l. The lord lists six pleasures that Christopher Sly can enjoy. What are they?
- m. One of the servants tells Christopher Sly that he has been mad for a long time. What time period does he mention?
- n. What reason does his 'wife' give for not coming to bed?
- o. What kind of entertainment does Christopher Sly agree to watch?



## The characters

**2** Complete the sentences with the appropriate words from the box.

fond of sport and pleasure    an educated and sophisticated man  
 a lover of hunting and women    an intellectual and sensitive man  
 a habitual drunkard and a simple man    a sensitive and highly moral man

- a. Christopher Sly is .....  
 .....  
 b. The lord is .....  
 .....

**3** What evidence is there in the text that Christopher Sly may not be a completely honest man?

**4** What evidence is there in the text that the lord may be a cruel man?

### FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

#### Am to, am not to

We use '**am to**' to talk about **arrangements** made for the future.

*We **are to** go to London next week.*

*They **are to** perform on Sunday.*

We also use '**am to**' to imply an **obligation**.

*You **are to** be here at nine o'clock in the morning.*

We use '**am not to**' to imply a **negative obligation**.

*You **are not to** go out until you have finished your homework.*

We use '**was to**', '**were to**' to talk about arrangements made in the past.

In the text you read:

They **were to** wash the dirt off him, and to dress him in fine clothes.

Then, when he woke up, they **were to** make sure that musicians played wonderful music outside the door of the bedroom.

**5** Decide if these sentences express arrangements made for the future (A) or obligations (O).

- ☐ You are to go to the police station immediately.
- ☐ He is to perform for one week in August.
- ☐ Students are not to smoke on school premises.
- ☐ They are to contact me by the end of the month.
- ☐ We are to meet them in Paris.

**6** Fill in the gaps in these sentences with *am to*, *is to*, *are to*, *was to*, or *were to*. Remember to include *not* where necessary!

- She ..... get married last year, but the wedding was cancelled.
- She is very upset. You ..... ask about it.
- You ..... pretend that you do not know anything.
- She ..... be worried by silly questions.
- We ..... behave as if nothing were wrong.

**7** Match the words in column A with the definitions in column B.

A

B

trick	statement with words that have two meanings, or words with the same sound, designed to amuse someone
joke	confusing statement, question or description, designed to test someone's ingenuity
hoax	remark or story designed to amuse someone
riddle	question or toy designed to test someone's ingenuity
puzzle	action designed to deceive someone
pun	action designed to deceive someone for the sake of amusement

## Listening



track 02

- 8** Listen to Part One of *The Taming of the Shrew*. You will then hear a short extract from the original text of the play. Listen carefully, and put the words from the box into the correct places.

burn      low      gently      command  
music      head      pictures      manage

LORD: Then take him up, and ..... well the jest:

Carry him ..... to my fairest chamber, <sup>1</sup>

And hang it round with all my wanton <sup>2</sup> .....

Balm <sup>3</sup> his foul <sup>4</sup> ..... in warm distilled waters,

And ..... sweet wood to make lodging sweet:

Procure me ..... ready when he wakes,

To make a dulcet <sup>5</sup> and a heavenly sound;

And if he chance to speak, be ready straight <sup>6</sup>

And with a ..... submissive reverence

Say 'What is it your honour will .....?'

## Discussion point

- 9** What do you think of the trick that the lord plays on Christopher Sly?  
Is it cruel, or does Christopher Sly deserve it?

1. **fairest chamber** : most beautiful room.
2. **wanton** : delightful.
3. **balm** : bathe.
4. **foul** : dirty.
5. **dulcet** : pleasing.
6. **straight** : immediately.