

STORY THREE *Kesh Kumay*

The Taming of the Shrew is set in Padua, Italy, where three men want to marry Bianca. But her wealthy father, Baptista, says no one may court her until her older sister, Kate, is married. Soldier of fortune Petruchio arrives on the scene looking for a rich wife and agrees to marry Kate sight unseen. Kate has a reputation for being bad-tempered and the rest of the play depicts Petruchio's attempts to turn Kate into an obedient wife by mirroring her outrageous behaviour. *Kesh Kumay* is set in the nomadic lands of modern-day Kyrgyzstan, where Emil wants to marry Aigul but her father, Usen, says Aigul's older sister, Kyal, must find a husband first. Emil can't marry, either, until his older brother, Jyrgal, does, so Usen decides to arrange a match between Kyal and Jyrgal.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

If you're into Shakespeare

1. How is marriage as a financial contract depicted in both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Kesh Kumay*?
2. How do the two sets of sisters—Kate and Bianca, Kyal and Aigul—react to the expectations of them as women?
3. Are the women in both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Kesh Kumay* oppressed, or do they have power equal to men's?
4. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kate is often referred to as a wild animal that must be domesticated or “tamed.” In *Kesh Kumay*, how is this motif echoed, countered, or both?
5. In what scene does *Kesh Kumay* allude to Petruchio's and Kate's famous sun/moon speeches?
6. What effect do the differences between Petruchio and Jyrgal have on your reading of the play and the story? What is it about Petruchio that attracts Kate enough to marry him? What is it about Jyrgal that attracts Kyal enough to agree to stay with him for a while?
7. What inner conflicts do Kate and Kyal experience? Are they similar or different?
8. Both *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Kesh Kumay* explore how courtship affects not only the prospective bride and groom, but also their family and friends. According to some scholars, the moral of the play is that society flourishes only if everyone plays his or her prescribed role. To what extent is this the message in *Kesh Kumay*?
9. In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Kate seems to have no choice but to adapt to her social role as wife. Is Kyal's situation the same?

If you're not

1. How is marriage as a financial contract depicted in *Kesh Kumay*?
2. How do Kyal and Aigul react to the expectations of them as women?
3. Are the women in *Kesh Kumay* oppressed or do they do they have power equal to men's?
4. What do the scenes with horses tell us about Kyal?
5. What are Kyal's options after she's kidnapped? What are the pros and cons of each?
6. Is Jyrgal a "good man," as Dimira says he is? What is it about him that attracts Kyal enough to agree to stay with him for a while?
7. What inner conflict does Kyal experience?
8. How is the theme of freedom woven throughout?
9. What does this line near the end of the story imply about Kyal's decision?
She feels the ground throb beneath her, feels part of an eternal flow of events.
10. The ancient custom of bride kidnapping has experienced resurgence since Kyrgyzstan's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Why do you think some women, as depicted in *Kesh Kumay*, help keep this custom alive?