

A comparison between "Taming of the Shrew" and "Napoleon Dynamite"

Widely considered as history's greatest writer, William Shakespeare runs into controversy in the modern age with his *The Taming of the Shrew*. His depiction of women and the role of a wife cause disgust in many readers. Some vehement fans of the English playwright even refuse to touch it. Why is it, then, that this story's influence seemed to spread to so many modern movies of the same genre. Modern classic, *Napoleon Dynamite*, although not a romantic comedy, shares many similarities to the problematic play in its romance and comedy. The topics and themes of male courtship and boyfriends and girlfriends as status symbols are present and prominent in both stories.

In the first act of *Napoleon Dynamite*, Pedro and Napoleon try to find dates for their school dance. Their plight is extremely reminiscent to that of Bianca's suitors. Both sets of characters try to win over their love interests by using creative gifts and talents that ultimately fail in a hilarious way. The male characters in both stories spend time showing off their girlfriends and wives and use them as trophies.

Luc. Heere Madam: Hic Ibat Simois, hic est sigeria tellus, hic steterat Priami regia
Celsa senis.

Bian. Conster them.

Luc. Hic Ibat, as I told you before, Simois, I am Lu centio, hic est, sonne vnto
Vincentio of Pisa, Sigeria te llus, disguised thus to get your loue, hic steterat, and
that Lucentio that comes a wooing, priami, is my man Tra nio, regia, bearing my
port, celsa senis that we might be guile the old Pantalowne.

Hort. Madam, my Instrument's in tune.

Bian. Let's heare, oh fie, the treble iarres.

Luc. Spit in the hole man, and tune againe.

Bian. Now let mee see if I can conster it. Hic ibat si mois, I know you not, hic est
sigeria tellus, I trust you not, hic staterat priami, take heede he heare vs not, regia

pre sume not, Celsa senis, despaire not.”

(Act 3, Scene I)

Lucentio and Hortensio pretend to teach Bianca music, but instead use this disguise to try to woo her. In this quote, Lucentio is rejected immediately. This quote shows how men think that, to win a girl over, they have to use special skills or talents to impress them.

You then **TRANSITION** into your comparative scene from a movie. Include a transition sentence and then put in the screenshot:

Similarly, in Napoleon Dynamite, Napoleon and his friend Pedro discuss which skill Napoleon could use to impress a potential date.



Napoleon: Well, nobody's gonna go out with me.

Pedro: Have you asked anybody yet?

Napoleon: No, but who would? I don't even have any good skills.

Pedro: What do you mean?

Napoleon: You know, like numchuck skills, bow hunting skills, computer hacking skills. Girls only want boyfriends who have great skills.

Pedro: Aren't you pretty good at drawing, like, animals and warriors and stuff?

Napoleon: Yes. Probably the best that I know of.

Pedro: Just draw a picture of the girl you want to take out, and give it to her for, like, a gift or something.

Napoleon: That's a pretty good idea.

Napoleon is saddened when Pedro asks the girl to the prom that Napoleon has a crush on. Pedro makes Napoleon feel better by convincing him that he has skills that he could use to ask someone out with. In the past, Pedro has used his skills in baking and such to ask girls out. Napoleon also has a preconceived notion that this is important. When the plan plays out, it ultimately works, but not for the reason that Napoleon was led to believe.

Kat. What is your will sir, that you send for me?

Petr. Where is your sister, and Hortensios wife?

Kate. They sit conferring by the Parler fire.

Petr. Goe fetch them hither, if they denie to come, Swinge me them soundly forth vnto their husbands: Away I say, and bring them hither straight.

Luc. Here is a wonder, if you talke of a wonder.

Hor. And so it is: I wonder what it boads

(Act 5, Scene II)

Kat. Fie, fie, vnknit that threatning vnkinde brow, And dart not scornefull glances from those eies, To wound thy Lord, thy King, thy Gouvernour. It blots thy beautie, as frosts doe bite the Meads, Confounds thy fame, as whirlwinds shake faire budds, And in no sence is meete or amiable. A woman mou'd, is like a fountaine troubled, Muddie, ill seeming, thicke, bereft of beautie, And while it is so, none so dry or thirstie Will daigne to sip, or touch one drop of it. Thy husband is thy Lord, thy life, thy keeper, Thy head, thy soueraigne: One that cares for thee, And for thy maintenance. Commits his body To painfull labour, both by sea and land: To watch the night in stormes, the day in cold, Whil'st thou ly'st warme at home, secure and safe, And craues no other tribute at thy hands, But loue, faire looks, and true obedience; Too little payment for so great a debt. Such dutie as the subiect owes the Prince, Euen such a woman oweth to her husband: And when she is froward, peeuish, sullen, sowre, And not obedient to his honest will, What is she but a foule contending Rebell, And gracelesse Traitor to her louing Lord? I am asham'd that women are so simple, To offer warre, where they should kneele for peace: Or seeke for rule, supremacie, and sway, When they are bound to serue, loue, and obey. Why are our bodies soft, and weake, and smooth, Vnapt to toyle and trouble in the world, But that our soft conditions, and our harts, Should well agree with our externall parts? Come, come, you froward and vnable wormes, My minde hath bin as bigge as one of yours, My heart as great, my reason haplie more, To bandie word for word, and frowne for frowne; But now I see our Launces are but strawes: Our strength as weake, our weakenesse past compare, That seeming to be most, which we indeed least are. Then vale your stomackes, for it is no boote, And place your hands below your husbands foote: In token of which dutie, if he please, My hand is readie, may it do him ease.

In the end of Taming of the Shrew, the men compare the obedience of their wives. Petruchio shows off Katherine's desirability as well as displayed the male want for a wife to be obedient.

In Napoleon Dynamite, the character Rex teaches a martial arts class and demonstrates his thoughts on the role of women as well as shows off his desirable wife.



Rex: I'm Rex, founder of the Rex Kwon Do Self-Defense System. After one week with me in my dojo, you'll be prepared to defend yourself with the strength of a grizzly... the reflexes of a puma... and the wisdom of a man. So come down today for your free trial lesson!



Rex: Last off, my students will learn about self-respect. Do you think anybody thinks I'm a failure because I go home to Starla at night? Forget about it!

Rex in the first quotes mentions “the wisdom of a man” while putting a woman in a headlock. This shows that Rex sees the role of women as subordinate to men. In the second quote, Rex says that he has a desirable wife, so no one thinks he’s a failure. Both of these together shows that Rex is like Petruchio because he has similar values.

In both the play, “The Taming of the Shrew”, and the movie, “Napoleon Dynamite” characters resemble each other to a great degree. Napoleon and Pedro resemble Lucentio and Hortensio in how they go about courting women. Furthermore, Rex resembles Petruchio is both how he thinks of and treats women.