The Taming Of The Shrew: Two Value Themes In A Play

William Shakespeare’s play ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ (1590), is regarding a young lady who is sarcastic, temperamental, prone to violence and is particularly against anyone who tries to marry her. Shakespeare explores themes relevant to his Elizabethan audience such as, marriage and gender roles throughout the play. The storyline of ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ centres on the marriages of Baptista's two daughters. One of the two daughters, Bianca, is extremely admired by the men in the village and her sister is envious of her. Baptista has told Bianca she will not have permission to wed anyone unless her older sister is wed first as Katherina is a burden on her family. Throughout the play issues related to gender roles are enormously significant in this play, which focuses around Petruchio 'taming' Katherine and forcing her into the traditionally obedient role of a wife.

Financial greed and wealth was a fundamental aspect of marriage for most families in Shakespeare’s era. Marriage was used a financial agreement between the father and male suitors, the daughters were not given the privilege to have a decision on whom they marry. It was recognised as an important business venture in a man’s life and was a way to gain social status, power, wealth and a political move for the man. “I come to wive it wealthily in Padua; If wealthily, then happily in Padua,” Petruchio is completely open about his wealth- pursuing ways. Marriage brings happiness, not for love's sake, but because marrying into a wealthy family brings in a lot of money, which according to Petruchio, is happiness. “I promised we would be contributors and bear his charging of wooing whatsoe'er.” In this quote, Hortensio is having a conversation with Germio about the negotiation among competing suitors as to who will wed Bianca.

Gender roles form a major issue explored in ‘The Taming of the Shrew’ as the Elizabethan society was patriarchal and relied on the social standings of a household. On Earth, God created a social order for everybody and chose where you belonged. This order related to the roles of women and men. Women were raised to be submissive to men and did not have choices. disobedience was regarded as a crime against religion. ‘Well, I say no. And therefore, for assurance let's each one send unto his wife, and he whose wife is most obedient to come at first when he doth send for her shall win the wager which we will propose.” Petruchio's gamble on his wife's obedience suggests that women are always seen as investment. Hefty dowries are used in every marriage so that the male suitor will wed the daughter.