

CRAZY THING CALLED: You Don't Like Someone, But Maybe You Do

Remember how, in elementary school, some kids showed that they liked someone by hitting them on the arm or doing something similar? Little children don't know how to ask for positive attention, so they demand it with physical contact. Katherine and Petruchio seem to be stuck in that level of relating to each other. But Shakespeare shows us that they really do like each other by how their dialogue is written. Even though they act like enemies, Shakespeare shows us that these two are so well-matched, verbally, that everyone else in the play and the whole audience knows they are destined to be together, no matter how much they protest. In the following dialogue, note how each person picks up on the words (in bold) the other has used, using them to craft another insult:

PETRUCHIO: Come, come, you **wasp**; i' faith, you are too angry.

KATHERINE : If I be **waspish**, best beware my **sting**.

PETRUCHIO : My remedy is then, to pluck **it** out.

KATHERINE : Ay, if the fool could find **it where** it lies.

PETRUCHIO: Who knows not **where** a wasp does wear his **sting**? In his **tail**.

KATHERINE : In his **tongue**.

PETRUCHIO : Whose **tongue**?

KATHERINE: Yours, if you talk of **tails**, and so farewell.

PETRUCHIO: What, with my **tongue** in your **tail**?

Shakespeare suggests that this couple is well-suited to one another by their shared ability to connect through the wordplay of matching and one-upmanship.

For Students

Do you know someone who tries to get someone's attention by doing things like teasing, pretending to steal things from them, or just hanging around a lot?

Write a six-line argument between Katherine and Petruchio using modern-day insults. Remember to keep it playful and fun—these characters really like each other.

See Resources: Books and Internet on page 22 for a link to a Shakespearan insult page.
See "Go Girls!" on page 19 for further information on women and Elizabethan culture.

