1. Exam Essay 3 Prompt 2: Select **one** work of music, or literature from the 17th or 18th century. Analyze its content and explore its influence on its culture. You may also include why you believe this work has lasting value into the modern age.

*The Taming of the Shrew*, written by William Shakespeare and originally published in The First Folio in 1623, is one of Shakespeare’s most infamous pieces of literature. It is notoriously known for its depiction of a women’s role in marriage, and how one’s socioeconomic status plays an integral part of marriage. The play presents a unique story still told in the modern world, which can be seen in numerous different cinematic adaptations. A women’s desire for independence, and the notion of putting an end to the patriarchal power in the western world encapsulate the cultural influences derived from the play in the modern world. However, at the time of its publication *The Taming of the Shrew*’s influence served as a reinforcement of societal norms, highlighting the subjugation of women.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, one of the most prevalent themes seen throughout the play is the concept of marriage revolving around one’s socioeconomic status. This is demonstrated on multiple different occasions. For example, after failing to woo Bianca, Hortensio (one of Bianca’s suitors in the play) states that “I will be married to a wealthy widow” (page 46 line 37), as he gives up on Bianca, and only cares about his future wealth. Another instance of wealth playing an integral part of marriage is shown when Petruchio asks Baptista (Katharina’s father) “what dowry shall I have with her to wife”? (page 24 line 121), as Petruchio was marrying Katharina for the dowry he would receive, as opposed to marrying her for love. Arranged marriages revolving around dowry’s were common in this time period, and the basic principle of choosing money over love can even be seen today, although to a lesser degree. According to a survey done by a division of Bank of America, 56% of people would rather marry for financial security as opposed to love. The frequent instances of marriage based around money and status in the play represented the nature of society in this time period. This arguably further influenced the normalization of betrothal for dowry and name.

This isn’t the only theme presented however, as there are misogynistic attitudes expressed repeatedly throughout the play. The entire basis of this piece of literature is dependent upon the concept of “taming” the “shrew”, in other words, training an independent woman to become obedient to her husband. This mindset of viewing women as that of an animal who needs to be trained is engrained in almost every scene. This ties into cultural views of the early 17th century of what the ideal women should be and how she should act. According to Gervase Markham, this included being “of chaste thought…patient… pleasant…and not bitter or talkative” (Murphy 2012 citing Markham). In the play, Katharina exhibits none of these qualities, and is reprimanded for it as a result. This fuels the entire plot, as Petruchio uses torturous and twisted techniques (albeit they were deemed acceptable as there was no physical violence) to coerce Katharina to obey his every command. This was shown by Katharina saying “Am starv’d for meat, giddy for lack of sleep” (page 48 line 9), as Petruchio starved her, and didn’t allow her to sleep, so that she would obey him. Contrary to how Petruchio displayed blatant misogyny via torture, Lucentio displayed misogynistic views by the objectification of Bianca. Valuing her beauty and youth, Lucentio says “O yes, I saw sweet beauty in her face” (page 12 line 171), as he coveted her looks and more mild, timid personality. The treatment of women as that of property, instead of as people, was once again typical of this era. Thus, the popularization of this play influenced and helped reinforce and perpetuate the misogynistic attitudes of society that were seen as commonplace. Ironically enough, the play ends with Katharina being the most obedient wife, whereas Bianca and The Widow exhibit independence, essentially positively reinforcing Petruchio’s abuse of Katharina, further placing emphasis on the subjugation of women. This was determined by a bet won by Petruchio against both Lucentio and Hortensio, “shall win the wager which we will propose” (page 63 line 68) once again insinuating that women are objects to bet on, as opposed to being seen as equivalent counterparts.

While *The Taming of the Shrew* served as a representation for how women were viewed in the 17th and 18th century, many of its principles and concepts have been combatted over the years as women have gained equality in society. This is predominantly found in its influence on the core concepts of modern feminism. Chief among these core concepts in modern day feminism that was not present in the play, is the development of women’s independence. In the play (and thereby during this time period) women were viewed as a man’s property and had virtually no individual freedom of choice, “not to bestow my youngest daughter before I have a husband for the elder” (page 9 lines 50-51) including lacking the freedom of choice to get married on their own terms. They were under their father’s rule from birth until being forced to wed in their father’s accordance, to which they were then entirely under their husband’s control. This depicted how life was for women, until the mid-19th century as the Women’s Rights Movement began to come to fruition. Over the next 150 years, women would gain the right to vote, gain property rights, join the workforce, gain representation within the government, and gain true independence from being under a man’s control. These events effectively ended the misogyny and marginalization of women that can seen in *The Taming of the Shrew*. However, there are certain other problems that persist in the modern age which were presented in the play, specifically issues relating to the domestic abuse that occurs between Petruchio and Katharina. Some sources estimate that roughly “22% - 25% of women will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives” (Florida Department of Children and Families), demonstrating that while society has come a long way, there is still work to be done in certain areas to improve quality of life for women in today’s world.

The relevance of Shakespearean literature on the modern world, regarding its lasting value can be viewed in modern day cinematic adaptations of his plays, and *The Taming of the Shrew* is no different. The best example of this is *10 Things I Hate About You*, directed by Gil Junger and Starring both Heath Ledger and Julia Stiles. The film showcases a modern take on the play while still honoring the core elements. The movie pays homage to the play in multiple ways, including the naming of the characters (for example Petruchio’s character is named Patrick Verona, and Verona is where Petruchio is from in the play) and the general plot the movie follows. The biggest change the movie has, is that Kat truly falls in love with Patrick because of his charm and their connection, whereas in the play it is due to forced coercion. This is expressed in one of the final scenes of the movie, where Kat delivers her infamous monologue showcasing her love for Patrick and states “But mostly I hate the way I don’t hate you, not even close, not even a little bit, not even at all” (Junger, 10 things I Hate About You). This change was necessary of course, as it illustrates the progression in the treatment of women in society from the 17th century to the modern day. Other adaptations of *The Taming of the Shrew* can be found in cinema, such as *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948) and *Deliver us from Eva* (2003). The lasting value of The Taming of the Shrew is ultimately expressed by its adaptations onto the big screen, and how the story has evolved over time to account for change and progress that’s been made within society.

*The Taming of the Shrew* portrayed and influenced the economic ramifications and the sexist nature of marriage during its time period. Simultaneously, it’s managed to influence modern day culture, ranging from the likes of gender inequality, all the way to adaptations into cinema that is watched for leisure. For these reasons, *The Taming of the Shrew* impacted culture both past and present, and still is relevant in the modern age.

The Taming of the Shrew (Shakespeare)

10 Things I Hate About You (Junger)

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/domestic-violence/statistics.shtml#:~:text=Domestic%20Violence%20Statistics-,Florida,domestic%20violence%20and%20their%20children>.

<http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/projects/brightonline/issue-number-three/was-there-a-gender-revolution-in-the-seventeenth-century>

<https://www.marketwatch.com/story/do-single-americans-choose-love-over-money-finally-an-answer-2017-11-30>