⊗ Refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore the themes of social order and disorder, focusing on the conventions of comedy.

❖ **Opening exercise:** Teach the concept of the 'Great Chain of Being', whereby everyone has a place and a duty in a hierarchy under God. See ***The Taming of the Shrew*: f)i Social order and disorder Image of 'The Great Chain of Being' handout**. Elizabethans also had a strong sense of their place according to biblical injunctions, for example:

  ▪ Servants are to submit to masters
  ▪ Children to parents
  ▪ Wives to husbands.

Consider the potential of the theatre to upset the social order e.g. on stage, commoners temporarily become kings, men dress as women.

➢ Mind-map all the types of social disorder in *The Taming of the Shrew* whereby characters upset their natural role in the social hierarchy (parents and children, servants and masters, patriarchy/male-female, social status, etc.) with examples.

➢ Disorder brings complications, conflict, and confusion. Briefly consider: How does Shakespeare use the different examples of social disorder to create comedy?
  ⊗ *The Taming of the Shrew* > Themes > Duplicity and disguise; Social status – gender roles and class; Family relationships and filial duty; Illusion, metamorphosis, and reality

❖ **Textual examination:** Introduce the following (artificial) subdivisions of the theme of social order and disorder, using ***The Taming of the Shrew*: f)ii Types of order/disorder posters a)-d)** (enlarged to A3) placed around the classroom. Students are to hunt for examples of these across the play from allocated scenes:

  ▪ Induction, Scenes 1 and 2
  ▪ Act 1, Scene 1
  ▪ Act 1, Scene 2
  ▪ Act 3, Scene 1
  ▪ Act 3, Scene 2
  ▪ Act 4, Scene 2
  ▪ Act 4, Scene 4
  ▪ Act 5, Scene 1
  ▪ Act 5, Scene 2

➢ For their allocated scene, students are to find examples of the themes of social order and disorder, and add them to the relevant posters around the room, using close textual references with act and scene numbers, or quotations.
  ⊗ *The Taming of the Shrew* > Synopses and commentaries
  ⊗ *The Taming of the Shrew* > Themes > Duplicity and disguise; Social status – gender roles and class; Family relationships and filial duty; Illusion, metamorphosis, and reality

➢ Distribute ***The Taming of the Shrew*: f)iii Social order and disorder table** to students, to record the examples from the posters for their own notes.

❖ **Discussion ideas:** To what extent is order restored at the end of the play?

➢ Consider how satisfying we find the end of the play, in terms of whether all the characters are back in their rightful places, with authority given to/submission given by the right characters.

➢ Which examples of disorder are left unresolved (e.g. Sly)?

➢ Why is it important that order is restored at the end of the play?
  ▪ What lessons are learnt by the characters?
  ▪ What messages are communicated?

⊗ Refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

- ▪ What does Shakespeare illustrate about the fragility of social order?
- ➢ Is social disorder only funny because it is temporary?
  - ▪ Does the audience only laugh at the duplicity and confusion, safe in the knowledge that all will be well at the end?
- ➢ Does considering the idea of the restoration of order affect our interpretation of Katherina's speech?

  ⊗ *The Taming of the Shrew >* Themes > Duplicity and disguise; Social status – gender roles and class; Family relationships and filial duty; Illusion, metamorphosis, and reality

  ⊗ *Taming of the Shrew* > Synopses and commentaries > Act 5 > Scene 1; Act 5 > Scene 2

- ❖ **Recreative task:** Experiment with alternative endings. How could the play work, if social order were *not* seen to be resolved (for example, if characters were still pretending to be other people)?
  - ➢ Could this still work within the conventions of comedy?

- ❖ **Critical task:** 'Evaluate the extent to which the final act is a satisfying restoration of the disorder of the rest of the play.'

  ⊗ *Taming of the Shrew* > Synopses and commentaries > Act 5 > Scene 1; Act 5 > Scene 2

- ❖ **Extension task:** Research/watch other Shakespearean comedies e.g. *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*, looking out for examples of how disorder is created and then order is restored.
  - ➢ Which types of social disorder seem to be most prevalent?
  - ➢ What patterns do you notice in the plots regarding this theme?