

The main desire of  
hortensio in  
shakespeare's taming  
of the shrew



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Sometimes aiming for basic, minimal goals instead of striving for greater desires produces sub-standard results. In the case of Hortensio in *The Taming of the Shrew* by William Shakespeare, Hortensio's only goal is simply to marry. In a want to marry quickly, Hortensio sacrifices quality to achieve this goal; instead of striving for his true desire, he settles for an easy-to-get widow, giving him much trouble later on.

In the beginning of the play, Hortensio wants to marry Bianca, his ultimate desire and prize, but Lucentio appears to beat Hortensio in the race for Bianca's hand. Settling for defeat, Hortensio declares he will not pursue Bianca anymore: "Here I firmly vow/ Never to woo her more" (4. 2. 28-29). By giving up his pursuit for Bianca, Hortensio is going to pursue a wife that is not as desirable as Bianca is, but easier to win over. Instead of fighting for Bianca's hand to demonstrate his strengths, he cowers behind a thin veil of defeat. This retreat, causing problems for Hortensio later on, forces Hortensio to give up his true desire in exchange for a lesser one. When Hortensio will only "have a lusty widow now" (4. 2. 52), he is settling for a lesser desire. Winning over the widow may be easier than winning over Bianca, but Hortensio does not take into consideration his troubles as a future husband of the widow. The widow is Hortensio's secondary option in marriage, and not his true desire. By settling for an easier bride to achieve his goal of marriage, Hortensio commits a mistake. Hortensio is settling for a wife that he does not truly desire, undermining the quality of the marriage. Hortensio thinks that he will easily be able to handle the widow, a wife that he does not truly love, but that does not go well.

Hortensio's second choice wife actually causes him more trouble. In order to improve his chances of a good marriage, Hortensio attends a wife taming school where " Petruchio is the master" (4. 2. 58), showing that his second choice wife is causing him more trouble. Instead of concentrating his efforts on winning over Bianca, a cause that is not completely lost, Hortensio simply gives up at the smallest sign of failure to win over Bianca. Giving up Bianca forces Hortensio to choose the widow as his wife, which later causes him troubles, which in turn forces him to learn how to tame her. In addition, when Hortensio's wife disobeys him when " she will not come" (5. 2. 103), she is proving that his choice to settle for the widow is causing him more trouble. This scene proves that by settling for a wife that he does not truly desire, Hortensio is creating a marriage in which the wife does not obey the husband. This stems from Hortensio's lack of desire for the widow, as Hortensio does not have the willpower to implement any of the wife-taming skills learned from Petruchio's " school" to tame his older and more experienced wife, a wife that he does not love. Thus, the trouble caused by Hortensio's second-choice wife makes settling for the widow—who is easier to win over than Bianca is—an illogical choice.

In his bid to achieve his goal of getting married, Hortensio sets aside his true desires to achieve this goal quicker, resulting in many troubles later on. By only wanting to marry, he seeks easier results instead quality ones. By giving up Bianca and instead pursuing a widow, Hortensio ignores his true wish, to achieve his goal of marriage through a simpler path. Achieving goals through easy shortcuts produces less than desired results.