

PYGMALION
BY
GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



Classroom Notes Part 1
For MA English, Semester II
ENGL4007: Modern Drama

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A note on these notes...

- Do you think this PPT can replace an actual classroom, where you gossip with your friends and peacefully sleep during by my long-winded antics?
- **Of course, not.**
- Do you think this PPT can replace the texts prescribed in your syllabus?
- **Of course, not. Then what are these notes worth?**
- These notes are just to excite your curiosity for the ideas discussed. To reap most benefits of the notes, read the texts first.
- By the time, you must have noticed there are two inks used here. It's an interactive PPT. The black ink is for me and the red is yours. Pause and think when the **red ink** appears. Wow end-rhyme.



George Bernard Shaw

- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) was an Irish playwright of the 19th and 20th century. **Wow, do you remember any other famous Irish authors...**
- For his works, Shaw was bestowed the Nobel Prize in Literature (1925), the Oscar Award for an Adapted Screenplay in 1938 and the Order of Merit in 1946. **Okay, he bagged both the Nobel and the Oscar. Who got the Literature Nobel Prize in 2016?**
- Shaw has written more than 67 stage plays, more than 5 novels, more than 2000 pages of theatre and musical reviews, many political writings including *The Intelligent Woman's Guide* and *Everybody's Political What's What*, screen plays for radio, television and movies, numerous pamphlets for Fabian Socialism, and many numerous works of prose.
- **Really, one could spend an entire lifetime browsing through his pages. What's Fabian Socialism? Lemme find out...**



George Bernard Shaw

- We imagine G B Shaw as an old, bearded, cantankerous, opinionated man.
- After his failed attempts at being a novelist in London, Shaw, an Irish young man, turned to music and theatre reviews and slowly began his career as a playwright.
- Shaw was influenced by Henrik Ibsen and he wrote *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*.
- Shaw used his plays to disseminate his ideas concerning society. Therefore, his plays are sometimes called theatre of ideas, discussion plays, and discursive plays.
- Shaw was also influenced by Fredrick Nietzsche. Shaw described the idea of 'Life Force' in his play *Man and Superman* and *Back to Methuselah*.
- Some people call Ibsen the Father of Modern European Drama. Why?
- Who is Fredrick Nietzsche. Lemme find out.



Most memorable plays by Shaw:

- Mrs Warren's Profession (1893)
- Arms and the Man (1894)
- Candida (1894)
- The Devil's Disciple (1896)
- Man and Superman (1902)
- Major Barbara (1905)
- The Doctor's Dilemma (1906)
- Heartbreak House (1917)
- Back to Methuselah (1921)
- Saint Joan (1923)
- The Apple Cart (1929)

Do you know Shaw wrote a play ***Shake versus Shav*** in which Shakespeare and Shaw compete against each other as dramatists.

You can hear Shaw's voice in YouTube reading ***Spoken English & Broken English***. You can also go there by clicking here.



Pygmalion: Staging and Adaptation

Pygmalion (original play) was composed in 1912.

It was first staged in Vienna in 1913.

Pygmalion was adapted to a British movie in 1938.

My Fair Lady, a musical adaptation of the play, was staged in 1956.

My Fair Lady was adapted to a Hollywood movie in 1964.



Pygmalion in India

Pygmalion was adapted to a Marathi Play titled *Tee Fulrani* by P.L. Deshpande in 1960.

It was adapted to a Hindi movie named *Man Pasand*, starring Dev Anand and Tina Munim in 1980, directed by Basu Chatterjee.

A Gujarati film named *Santu Rangeeli* (1976) was based on this play. It starred Urmila Bhatt and Aruna Irani.

Bengali movie *Ogo Bodhu Shundori* (1981) directed by Salil Dutta was inspired by this play starring Moushumi Chatterjee and Uttam Kumar.



Pygmalion: The Plot

- A poor flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, finds a suspicious man noting down her speech as she sells flowers in a busy London Street.
- The man turns out to be Prof. Henry Higgins, famous linguist, who collects samples of peculiar speech.
- At the same time Higgins meets Col. Pickering, another linguist, recently returned from India, having written a treatise on Sanskrit.
- The girl eavesdrops their conversation as Higgins boasts of his power to teach her proper English and pass her off as a duchess in 6 months.
- The next morning, the girl goes to the house of Higgins and demands tuition in proper English so that her improvement can help her seeking better means of livelihood.
- At first hesitant, Higgins takes the offer as Col Pickering makes a bet. In case Higgins could pass her off as a duchess, he would pay for her tuitions.
- **Is it like a Spoken English Class? Why should an English girl learn English? Think...**



Pygmalion: The Plot

- Higgins convinces Eliza to stay at his place for six months. In case she could learn, all her boarding and other expenses will be borne by Higgins and Pickering.
- As Eliza stays with Higgins, her father Alfred Doolittle comes to their house. Knowing their intentions, he demands 5 pounds in exchange of his daughter.
- When Higgins confronts him regarding his lack of morality, he says as a poor man, he can't afford to have morality.
- Over a period of time, Eliza makes progress in her studies. Higgins takes her to his mother's house for a party. Eliza embarrasses herself with her coarse English while a young man Freddy falls in love with her.
- After a few months, Pickering and Higgins take her to an Ambassador's Party dressed as a duchess. As Eliza impresses the dignified people in the party with her manners and perfect English, Higgins and Pickering feel exalted with their accomplishment.
- The same night, after they return from the party, Eliza throws her slippers at Higgins feeling insulted. **Why?**



Pygmalion: The Plot

- As Higgins does not complement Eliza for their accomplishment, she feels furious.
- Eliza leaves their house in the night and the next morning Pickering and Higgins find her at the house of Mrs Higgins. Meanwhile, her father Alfred Doolittle has become a rich person owing to a letter by Higgins. He has become a middle class moralist.
- **Why did Eliza leave the house of Higgins?**
- When Higgins and Eliza discuss the last day's happenings, Eliza says that she does not get the respect she is due at Higgins' house.
- Now that she has learnt the language properly and has changed her life, she can't go back to her old station. Higgins has been insensitive to her as a person.
- Eliza excites his fury by telling him that she will compete with him as a linguist.
- Higgins is happy to learn that Eliza has finally gained a standing of her own to confront him. Yet, he is hopeful that Eliza will comeback to his house.
- The play end as they leave to attend Alfred's marriage at a church.
- **Do you think Eliza will comeback?**



Pygmalion: The Ending

- The original version of the play ends as Eliza leaves Higgins without a promise to return.
- Do you like this ending? And why?
- In many stage versions, Eliza does return to bring a happy ending to the play.
- In the British and Hollywood movie versions, Eliza returns to the house of Higgins, much to the dismay of Shaw.
- Shaw wrote a note titled “[What Happened Afterwards](#)” justifying his ending. Lemme read the essay by clicking the hyperlink.
- Do you know Pygmalion is the name of a mythical Greek artist who fell in love with a sculpture he made named Galatea.
- How does the name “My Fair Lady”, the title of a musical and film adaptation of the play change the focus of the title?



Questions for you...

Read the text to find answer to these questions.

1. Why does Eliza leave the house of Higgins after the party?
2. Why did many versions of the play change the ending?
3. Why does language play such an important role in someone's social life?
4. Why does Eliza go to the house of Mrs Higgins to find solace?
5. If you were to write a character sketch of Eliza, will it be different before the party and after the party?
6. What does the title of the play "Pygmalion" suggest?



“...the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she's treated” says Eliza

Do you agree?

