

**Name:**

**Date:**

# ***Pygmalion***

## **A ROMANCE IN FIVE ACTS**

**by**  
**George Bernard Shaw**



## **Act One**

1. What is the weather? Why is it important to the action of the plot? What could the weather foreshadow?
2. What is revealed about Freddy's character and his relationship with his mother and sister in the argument about the cab?
3. Describe the flower girl's physical appearance.
4. What is the mother's true motivation for giving the flower girl sixpence since it is neither charity nor a flower sale? What is the mother worried about?
5. Why is the flower girl so upset that the gentleman is recording her speech?
6. What does the flower girl mean when she cries, "My character is the same to me as any lady's"?
7. What did Higgins mean when he told Pickering, "This is the age of upstarts"?
8. What idea is the note taker trying to emphasize with the speech which begins, "A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds ..."?
9. Why would better English be required of a lady's maid or shop assistant than that of a lady?

10. What does Higgins boast that he could do?
  
11. What is Shaw implying by introducing these people without actual names?
  
12. What reminds Higgins to throw the girl a handful of coins as he leaves?
  
13. Why does the girl tell the taxi driver to take her to "Bucknam Pellis" (Buckingham Palace)?
  
14. Why does the taxi driver tell her to keep her money?
  
15. Describe Eliza's home.
  
16. Identify each of the following characters, including their social class. Fill in the names of the actual characters if you have them (use the character list on page 1):
  - The Gentleman:
  
  - The Flower Girl:
  
  - The Note Taker:
  
  - The Mother:
  
  - The Daughter:
  
  - The Bystander:
  
17. What is the **symbolic** significance of having the play open with all types of people huddled under the portico of St. Paul's church after a theatrical performance?

## **Act Two**

1. For what has Eliza come to Higgins' house? What does she plan to accomplish with the new skill she plans to acquire?
2. Why does Eliza think she has to pay sixty pounds for Professor Higgins' services? (In other words, how is Eliza's offer comparable to a wealthy woman paying sixty pounds?)
3. What does Pickering suggest to Higgins? Give the details of the bet.
4. When Pickering reminds Higgins that "the girl has some feelings," how does Higgins respond? (Quote it-page 23)
5. While Higgins is the most obvious Pygmalion, that is, the master of Eliza's transformation, who are the other two characters acting as informal Pygmalions? What examples of **alliteration** suggest this to the reader? (HINT: *Pygmalion*,.....)
6. As Eliza is planning to leave, how does Higgins tempt her to stay?
7. Summarize the arrangement Higgins proposes to Eliza on page 25.
8. Explain Eliza's perspectives on taking a bath, wearing a nightgown, and mirrors. How do these reactions relate to her social and economic standing?
9. Why won't Higgins let a woman into his life?

10. What habits does Mrs. Pearce suggest Higgins refrains from while Eliza is present? Explain the ironies that arise in this exchange.
  
11. What does Doolittle first imply is the reason he is at Higgins' house? How does he react when Higgins says Doolittle can take the girl back with him? What is his real purpose for coming?
  
12. Explain Doolittle's idea of what it means to be a member of "the undeserving poor."
  
13. What does Doolittle say he will do with the money Higgins gives him? How is this ironic?
  
14. What does Higgins demand that Doolittle do? What indicates that Doolittle will not?
  
15. Why does Eliza want Colonel Pickering to call her "Miss Doolittle" again?
  
16. Why does Eliza want to take a taxi to Tottenham Court Road?
  
17. Explain the roles of Higgins, Pickering, and Eliza during a typical lesson.
  
18. Cite four examples of Higgins treating Eliza poorly in this act.

## **Act Three**

1. **Characterize** Mrs. Higgins based on the description of her home in the stage direction at the beginning of this act. **Contrast** this setting with the description of Higgins and his home on pages 15-16.
2. Explain the **irony** of Mrs. Higgins' reaction to Henry Higgins' arrival.
3. Identify & evaluate Higgins' description of a perfect woman.
4. Why has Higgins come to his mother's at-home?
5. Higgins feels that his "habits lie too deep to be changed." Considering his undertaking with Eliza, how is this **ironic**?
6. What is Higgins' opinion of Eliza's progress? What still concerns him?
7. Evaluate Higgins' behavior at Mrs. Higgins' at-home.
8. What are Eliza's two errors in her conversation with the Eynsford Hills? How do Higgins & Pickering cover up these errors?
9. What does Mrs. Eynsford Hill admit about Clara?

10. What is Mrs. Higgins' opinion of Higgins' progress?
11. What does Mrs. Higgins refer to Higgins' plan as on page 53? (Quote it) Is she correct?
12. What does Higgins see himself doing with Eliza? What abstract goal is he reaching for?
13. Higgins believes that Eliza will leave him with "all the advantages that I have given her." What does Mrs. Higgins point out to Henry?
14. Do Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering understand what concerns Mrs. Higgins regarding Eliza's future? On what does Mrs. Higgins blame this? (HINT: It's the last thing she exclaims when they leave.)
15. Who is Nepommuck? With what humorous name does Shaw first introduce him?
16. Both men teach phonetics, but how does Nepommuck's work differ from Higgins' work?
17. How is Eliza received at the ball?
18. How does Shaw tease the audience with Nepommuck's and Higgins' opinions of Eliza's background? What literary technique does Shaw use to create tension in these moments?

19. For what does Eliza apologize to Pickering at the end of the act? Does Pickering agree? How are both Eliza's and Pickering's assessments correct?

## **Act Four**

1. **Contrast** Higgins' mood with Eliza's mood as they return to Wimpole Street.
2. How does Eliza appear almost invisible in the beginning of this scene?
3. How does Higgins feel about the whole endeavor of creating an "artificial duchess"? (Quote it-page 63) Why does he feel this way?
4. According to Pickering, why is it that many real aristocrats do not have style?
5. What has Eliza so upset?
6. What does Higgins suggest Eliza do this evening to feel better? How does he say she will feel in the morning? (Quote it-page 65) What does he recommend she do with her future? Why does she object? (Quote it-page 66). Comment on the **irony** of Higgins' suggestion.
7. Name two things Higgins says or does that show he is genuinely hurt by Eliza's actions.
8. Name two things that Eliza says or does that support the idea that she cares deeply for Higgins.



9. Explain what Eliza does in her room before she leaves Higgins' house? What is wrong with her actions? These actions prove her concerns have been correct?
  
10. Whom does Eliza encounter as she leaves Higgins' house? Why is this person here?
  
11. Name two things Eliza does in this act that show she is an independent spirit in the face of Higgins' bullying.

## **Act Five**

1. Mrs. Higgins understands that Higgins and Pickering have been treating Eliza as if she were an object, not a person. What two statements does she make that indicate this is her belief?
  
2. According to Doolittle, what has Higgins "done to" him? What problems does he face as a result? How is his reaction ironic?
  
3. Evaluate the accuracy of Pickering's explanation of how he and Higgins treated Eliza last night.
  
4. How does Eliza behave when she comes downstairs?
  
5. What trick does Higgins accuse her of using? What does he think of her "transformation?"

6. For what does Eliza thank Colonel Pickering? What effect has his behavior had on her (what has she learned from Pickering)? Why does Eliza say it was difficult to learn from Professor Higgins?
  
7. Why will Eliza always be a flower girl to Henry Higgins? (Quote it-page 80). Do you agree? Explain your opinion.
  
8. Eliza's stepmother was once a woman who could only be rude and cruel to Eliza. Why has she changed?
  
9. What misconception does Pickering have about Doolittle and Eliza's mother? What explanation does Doolittle give about "ways"? (Quote it-page 82)
  
10. Why does Doolittle unbegrudgingly accept that Higgins and Pickering have "g[otten]... the better of Eliza"?
  
11. According to Higgins, what is "The great secret" about manners?
  
12. What does Higgins feel about Eliza's defiance (as opposed to her submissiveness when she brings him his slippers)?
  
13. For what reason does Henry think Eliza should return to Wimpole Street with him? (Quote it-page 85)

14. Why will Eliza marry Freddy? What makes Freddy desirable to Eliza? What is Higgins' opinion of Freddy as a marriage prospect for Eliza? Who is correct?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. Eliza says she is "a slave now, for all my fine clothes." How has Higgins ruined Eliza's life? How is this **ironic**?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. Why doesn't Eliza expect Freddy to work? Explain Eliza's plan to support herself and Freddy.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. What does Eliza intend to do at the end of the play? How does Higgins react?