

# Pygmalion: An Annotated Masterpiece by George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* is a brilliant and thought-provoking play that explores the themes of class, language, and gender. First performed in 1913, it has since become one of Shaw's most famous works. The play follows the story of Eliza Doolittle, a cockney flower girl who is taken in by Professor Henry Higgins, a renowned phonetician. Higgins bets his friend Colonel Pickering that he can pass Eliza off as a duchess at an ambassador's ball.

*Pygmalion* is a complex and nuanced play that has been interpreted in many different ways. In this annotated version, we will provide background information on the play, as well as annotations on some of the most important passages.

*Pygmalion* is based on the Greek myth of Pygmalion, a sculptor who falls in love with his own creation, a statue of a woman named Galatea. In the play, Shaw updates the myth and sets it in Edwardian England.



## **Pygmalion (Annotated)** by George Bernard Shaw

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 494 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 102 pages



The play was written at a time of great social change in England. The Industrial Revolution had led to the rise of a new middle class, and the old class distinctions were beginning to break down. Shaw's play reflects this changing social landscape and explores the ways in which class and language can shape our identities.

- **Eliza Doolittle:** A cockney flower girl who Higgins takes in to prove his theory that anyone can be taught to speak proper English.
- **Professor Henry Higgins:** A renowned phonetician who is convinced that he can transform Eliza into a duchess.
- **Colonel Pickering:** Higgins' friend and a retired army officer who is more sympathetic to Eliza than Higgins is.
- **Mrs. Higgins:** Higgins' mother, a kind and gentle woman who is horrified by her son's treatment of Eliza.

The play begins with Eliza Doolittle begging Higgins to teach her to speak proper English so that she can get a better job. Higgins agrees, and Eliza moves into his home. Higgins and Eliza work together for months, and Eliza gradually learns to speak and behave like a duchess.

However, Higgins' experiment goes too far when he begins to treat Eliza like a mere object. Eliza rebels against Higgins and leaves his home. She eventually finds her own way in life and becomes a successful flower shop owner.

Pygmalion explores a number of important themes, including:

- **Class:** The play examines the ways in which class can shape our lives and opportunities. Eliza's journey from a cockney flower girl to a duchess highlights the power of class distinctions.
- **Language:** The play also explores the role of language in our lives. Higgins believes that language is a key to social success, but Eliza learns that there is more to life than just speaking "proper" English.
- **Gender:** The play also explores gender roles and expectations. Higgins treats Eliza like a mere object, and Eliza rebels against his control. Eliza's journey shows that women are capable of achieving great things if they are given the opportunity.

Here are some annotations on some of the most important passages in Pygmalion:

- **"I'm a good girl, I am." (Eliza)** This is one of the first things Eliza says in the play. It is a simple statement, but it reveals a lot about her character. Eliza is a good girl, even though she comes from a poor background and speaks in a cockney accent. She is kind, honest, and hardworking.
- **"I don't care what you call me. I don't care if you call me a duchess or a dustbin." (Eliza)** Eliza says this to Higgins after he has been treating her like a mere object. It is a powerful statement that shows Eliza's strength and independence. She does not need Higgins' approval or validation.
- **"The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain." (Eliza)** This is the sentence that Eliza practices over and over again in her efforts to learn

to speak proper English. It is a simple sentence, but it is also a difficult one to say correctly. Eliza's struggle to say this sentence highlights the challenges that she faces as she tries to change her class and language.

Pygmalion is a brilliant and thought-provoking play that continues to be relevant today. The play explores important themes such as class, language, and gender, and it offers a complex and nuanced view of human nature. Shaw's wit and humor make the play a pleasure to read, and his characters are unforgettable. Pygmalion is a play that will stay with you long after you finish reading it.



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