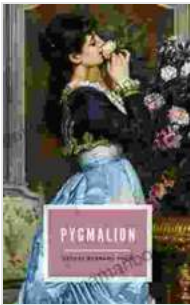


Pygmalion: The 1913 Romantic Comedy Classic Annotated

In the realm of romantic comedies, few works have left an enduring legacy as profound as George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion. First performed in 1913, this witty and thought-provoking play has captivated audiences for over a century with its exploration of class, language, and the transformative power of human potential.

This annotated exploration delves into the intricacies of Pygmalion's text, providing insights into its historical context, literary devices, and enduring significance. From the play's iconic characters to its incisive social commentary, we will uncover the layers of meaning that have made this classic an enduring masterpiece.



Pygmalion: The 1913 Romantic Comedy Classic

(Annotated) by George Bernard Shaw

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language	: English
Paperback	: 24 pages
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Act I

The play opens with a rainstorm in Covent Garden, where a group of people from various social classes have sought shelter. Among them is Professor Henry Higgins, a brilliant but irascible phonetician, who encounters Eliza Doolittle, a flower girl with a strong Cockney accent. Higgins bets his friend Colonel Pickering that he can transform Eliza into a "lady" by teaching her proper English.

Professor Henry Higgins, the Phonetician:



Higgins is an enigmatic character, driven by an insatiable curiosity for the human voice. He sees Eliza not as an individual, but as an experiment, a

challenge to his phonetic prowess. Yet, beneath his brusque exterior lies a keen intellect and a longing for companionship.

Eliza Doolittle, the Flower Girl:



Eliza is a complex and resilient young woman. Initially perceived as a street urchin, she possesses a quick wit and a fierce determination to improve her

life. Her journey of transformation reveals her true potential and challenges the rigid class boundaries of Edwardian society.

Colonel George Pickering, the Linguist:



Pickering serves as a counterbalance to Higgins' eccentricities. A kind and open-minded man, he recognizes Eliza's inherent worthiness and encourages her growth. His presence humanizes Higgins' experiment and adds depth to the play's exploration of class and social mobility.

Act II

Higgins and Pickering take Eliza to Higgins' home to begin her transformation. Eliza's struggles with etiquette, grammar, and proper pronunciation provide both humor and poignant moments. As she gradually absorbs the lessons, tensions arise between her and Higgins, who remains aloof and condescending.

The Transformation of Eliza Doolittle: Eliza's journey is a metaphor for the transformative power of education and self-discovery. Through her lessons with Higgins, she not only learns to speak "proper" English but also gains confidence and a sense of her own dignity. Her transformation challenges the notion that class and language are predetermined.

The Pygmalion Myth: The play's title alludes to the Greek myth of Pygmalion, a sculptor who falls in love with his own creation, a statue named Galatea. Higgins' bet with Pickering echoes this myth, as he attempts to mold Eliza into his ideal of a "perfect lady." However, as the play progresses, the boundaries between creator and creation blur, and Higgins finds himself drawn to Eliza's genuine qualities.

Act III

Higgins' experiment takes an unexpected turn when Eliza attends an Embassy ball, where she passes as a Hungarian princess. However, her triumph is short-lived as she realizes the superficiality of society's judgments. Disillusioned, she confronts Higgins, who fails to understand her emotional turmoil.

The Embassy Ball: The Embassy ball is a pivotal moment in the play, showcasing Eliza's transformation and her newfound sense of agency. Her success in mimicking the upper-class mannerisms reveals the arbitrary

nature of social distinctions. Yet, her subsequent rejection of the society that accepts her based on her appearance highlights her growing independence and self-awareness.

The Battle of the Sexes: Underlying the transformative plot is a battle of the sexes. Higgins, with his scientific objectivity, views Eliza as an object of study, while she gradually asserts her independence and refuses to be defined by his expectations. This tension adds a layer of complexity to the play's exploration of class and gender dynamics.

Act IV

As the play reaches its climax, Higgins' realization of his feelings for Eliza is met with resistance from both her and Pickering. Eliza's journey has empowered her, and she refuses to be treated as Higgins' possession. The play ends with an ambiguous resolution, leaving the audience to ponder the complexities of their relationship and the transformative power of love.

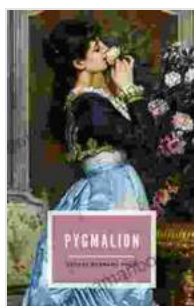
The Question of Love: The play's ending has been interpreted in various ways. Some see it as a rejection of romantic love, emphasizing the importance of personal growth and independence. Others view it as a bittersweet recognition that love can transcend social boundaries but is often accompanied by challenges and misunderstandings.

Enduring Significance

Pygmalion's enduring significance lies in its timeless themes and insightful exploration of human nature. The play's characters and their dilemmas resonate with audiences across cultures and generations. Its incisive social commentary on class, language, and gender dynamics remains relevant in today's world.

Beyond its theatrical brilliance, Pygmalion has inspired numerous adaptations, including the popular musical My Fair Lady. Its characters and themes continue to be studied and debated in classrooms and academic circles, solidifying its status as a classic of English literature.

George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion is a masterpiece of romantic comedy that transcends its time and genre. Its intricate characters, witty dialogue, and incisive social commentary have captivated audiences for over a century. Through this annotated exploration, we have delved into the text's historical context, analyzed its literary devices, and examined its enduring significance. Whether enjoyed on stage or in print, Pygmalion remains an enduring testament to the transformative power of human potential and the complexities of love, class, and identity.



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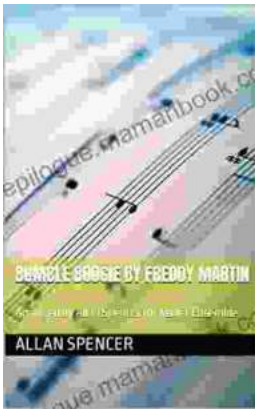
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