

ENRICHED
CLASSICS

**Simon & Schuster Classroom Activities
for the Enriched Classic edition of
Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw
1-4165-0040-5 • \$5.50 / \$7.99 Can.**

Activities created by Katie Gideon

Each of the three activities includes:

- NCTE standards covered
- An estimate of the time needed
- A complete list of materials needed
- Step-by-step instructions
- Questions to help you evaluate the results

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“Not At All a Romantic Figure” **(A Lesson in Artistic Interpretation)**

This activity is a great way to introduce theatrical design to students unfamiliar with dramatic productions. In this lesson, students will literally illustrate the class differences between Eliza Doolittle and Henry Higgins. The visual nature of this activity may be especially powerful for students developing English language proficiency.

This lesson will take one full fifty-minute class period, plus part of the next day. Students will need to prepare with a homework assignment.

NCTE Standards Covered:

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
9. Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

What To Do:

1. This lesson builds upon the assumption that students have already completed reading Act One. Prior to the activity, assign them the opening stage directions of Act Two for homework. As students read the italicized setting notes, they should compare the descriptions of Higgins to earlier descriptions of Eliza.
2. If you’ve not yet done so, briefly explain the Greek myth of the sculptor Pygmalion. Lead students in a brief discussion of how Shaw’s choice of protagonists changes the story. Encourage them to draw comparisons to the Cinderella fairy tale. Ask students how the story might change once again if someone rewrote *Pygmalion* today. Brainstorm a list of potential contemporary protagonists for this new play. How would the protagonists change to portray today’s society, and how would their language and relationship reflect that change?

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3. Explain that theatrical directors, actors, and technicians use a variety of techniques to convey the meaning of a production. Costumes are key to conveying character; as evidenced by the attention lavished to describing the attire of Eliza (p.13) and Higgins (p.30).
4. Pass out Handout #1. Students will consult the stage descriptions to create faithful representations of Shaw's protagonists. Their drawings in the left-hand column will show what these characters would look like in a traditional production of "Pygmalion."
5. In the right-hand column, students will imagine what the characters might look like if *Pygmalion*, as brainstormed earlier, were updated for the 21st century. Students will draw Higgins and Eliza as they might appear in a creative, contemporary production of the play.
6. On the back of their drawings, students will write a paragraph explaining the rationale behind their updates—for instance, why they chose to change the characters' genders, professions, or class backgrounds.
7. Students will turn in drawings at the end of class. When they arrive the next day, their artwork should be posted around the room. Allow enough time for students to walk around, viewing and processing one another's work. Ask students to analyze similarities between the traditional and updated costume depictions; have them identify and explain why they found certain updates compelling. What commentary do the updated versions of *Pygmalion* offer on contemporary society? How do the costumes they've designed enhance that commentary?

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Pygmalion* (1416504005) for each student

Class copies of Handout #1

Drawing and coloring materials (pencils, pens, crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc.)

How Did It Go?

Do the students understand how theatrical design tools can help convey the meaning of a play? Did their costumes depict the social differences between Eliza and Higgins? Could they find examples of the *Pygmalion* dynamic in modern society?

“A New Station in Life” **(A Lesson in Theme)**

This close reading activity encourages students to investigate Shaw’s complex treatment of British class divisions at the turn of the century. They will examine Shaw’s many references to education, economics, birth, and dialect to seek possible interpretations of the social order he portrayed.

This lesson could be adapted for a study of any of the recurring themes in the play. It will require one or two fifty-minute class periods.

NCTE Standards Covered:

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

What To Do:

1. Tell the students that today you’ll be discussing class differences. Give the students about five minutes to scribble down any associations they have with the words “class” or “status.” Have students share their thoughts. Explain that it’s important to identify personal opinions before attempting to interpret those of George Bernard Shaw.
2. Notify students that they’ll be having a class discussion concerning the following questions: what is the most important factor for determining social status in *Pygmalion*? Can Shaw’s characters change their social status—and if so, how?
3. Now place students in small groups, hand each group a copy of Handout #2, and ask them to find at least six references to class divisions in the play. This work will help them prepare for the class discussion.

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4. Be sure the students copy out their quotations onto the handout. Beside each quotation, they should provide context for their passage and address what the evidence indicates about class divisions in Shaw's society. For example:

"You see this creature with her kerbstone English: the English that will keep her in the gutter to the end of her days. Well, sir, in three months I could pass that girl off as a duchess at an ambassador's garden party. I could even get her a place as lady's maid..." (Higgins, p. 23)

Higgins indicates to Pickering that language is the most important factor for preserving class division. Through education, he could improve Eliza's social status—but only so far. Tutoring could get her a better job, but she could merely "pass" and never hope to be an actual aristocrat.

5. Ask each group to complete the following sentence: "According to Shaw, class divisions exist mainly due to..." Also have them indicate whether or not it is possible to eradicate class distinctions.

6. Begin by having each group share their sentence. As the discussion opens up to more general comments, remind students that their task is to build consensus. Encourage the groups to persuade each other by citing the text, listening critically, asking clarifying questions, and building on the ideas of others.

7. After students reach consensus, encourage them to consider the sentences they created in step 5—their thesis statements. Encourage the class to clarify their shared, modified opinion with a new thesis. Then, have each group classify the evidence they found as a supporter or detractor of the new thesis.

8. For homework, have students write a journal entry about what evidence they would use if they had to write an essay using the class thesis statement.

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Pygmalion* (1416504005) for each student

Copies of Handout #2

How Did It Go?

Did the students properly cite passages in the text? Were they able to identify quotes and incidents that concern class divisions? Did they correctly interpret their selected passages? Could the students provide a conclusion to the sentence as supported by the text? Did the class discussion reflect their thought process and the evolution of a united viewpoint?

“From ‘Deliberately Didactic’ to Broadway Musical” **(A Lesson in Comparative Analysis)**

As we are reminded in the Questions for Discussion section, the lack of loving fulfillment between Eliza and Higgins “has remained one of the most controversial aspects of *Pygmalion*.” (p. 191) This activity asks students to consider why Shaw refused to pair off his protagonists—and why later screen and stage versions created a more conventional romance between Eliza and Higgins.

This activity takes one fifty-minute class period, followed by a homework assignment.

NCTE Standards Covered:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.

What To Do:

1. Prior to the lesson’s beginning, students should finish the play and read its sequel. Ask them to spend a few moments discussing the ending in small groups. Were they surprised that Eliza married Freddy? Did they find the ending satisfying? Why or why not?

2. Notify students that later versions of the *Pygmalion* story ignored the sequel entirely—indeed, Shaw himself co-wrote the screenplay for the 1938 version, and it had a much more conventional ending. Ask students why this might be.

3. Play students the version of Act Five as adapted in Lerner and Lowe’s musical *My Fair Lady*. Instruct them to take notes—what’s different between the two versions?

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What's similar? After the viewing, have students discuss their observations back in small groups.

4. Lead a final discussion concerning the following two questions: how does the relationship between Higgins and Eliza advance the play's message about class division? Does a change in their relationship signify a change in the play's message?

5. For homework, students will write a persuasive essay. Allow them to choose between two prompts. They can argue whether or not the play is better as a less didactic musical, or they can argue whether the play is better if Eliza and Higgins fall in love. In responding to either prompt, students must explain their definition of "better." Their five-paragraph essay should reference two passages from the text and one example from the movie.

6. Inform students that they will be graded based on effectiveness of argument; they should give compelling explanations of how their evidence supports their thesis statement.

What You Need:

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Pygmalion* (1416504005) for each student

A copy of *My Fair Lady* (VHS or DVD, 1964)

How Did It Go?

Were your students able to identify the subtle as well as obvious differences between the dramatic and musical versions? Did their writing make connections between the different sources? Did they understand how the protagonists' relationship reflects the play's larger messages about class differences? Could they use rhetorical analysis to formulate and support a persuasive argument? Could they express their opinions in an organized essay?

Costume Design for Eliza Doolittle

Directions: In the left-hand column, draw Eliza in her costume as Shaw’s stage directions initially describe her (page 13). Then, consider how the character would change if you staged an updated version of *Pygmalion*. In the right-hand column, draw the new Eliza in a contemporary costume. On the back of this paper, explain the rationale for your update.

Traditional Eliza	Contemporary Eliza

Costume Design for Henry Higgins

Directions: In the left-hand column, draw Higgins in his costume as Shaw’s stage directions describe him (page 30). Then, consider how the character would change if you staged an updated version of *Pygmalion*. In the right-hand column, draw the new Higgins in a contemporary costume. On the back of this paper, explain the rationale for your update.

Traditional Higgins	Contemporary Higgins

Class Divisions

As you fill out he chart, consider the characters in *Pygmalion*. How important is economic or family position in determining their social status? What role does personal presentation—including manner of speaking—play? Do the options for characters change with education—and if so, how?

Quotations/Incidents	Context	Interpretation