



## Pygmalion

*George Bernard Shaw*

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Shaw wrote the part of Eliza Doolittle - an east-end dona with an apron and three orange and red ostrich feathers - for Mrs Patrick Campbell, with whom he had a passionate but unconsummated affair. From the outset the play was a sensational success, although Shaw, irritated by its popularity at the expense of his artistic intentions, dismissed it as a potboiler. The Pygmalion of legend falls in love with his perfect female statue and persuades Venus to bring her to life so that he can marry her. But Shaw radically reworks Ovid's tale to give it a feminist slant: while Higgins teaches Eliza to speak and act like a duchess, she also asserts her independence, adamantly refusing to be his creation.

## Pygmalion Details

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## From Reader Review Pygmalion for online ebook

Nataliya says

*"Eliza has no use for the foolish romantic tradition that all women love to be mastered, if not actually bullied and beaten,"*<sup>1</sup> says G.B.Shaw in the afterword to his famous play.

<sup>1</sup>By the way, I think this quote should be memorized and repeated on the daily basis by the contemporary authors, especially in the YA genre, who attempt to create female characters. Really. Maybe I can start a campaign encouraging authors' awareness of this quote. Hmmmm...

This was one of the first plays I've ever read, and to this day is one of my favorites. **The combination of Shaw's wit and satire with creating an amazingly strong heroine was a treat to read!** The play is brilliant, as witnessed by its continuing success - but it's the afterword from the author that ultimately made it into a five-star read. The afterword that takes this story and makes it wonderfully and firmly grounded in reality (even if it's a reality with *somewhat* outdated early 20th century reasoning).

*The many faces of Eliza Doolittle.*

Most people know this story, right? If not from reading the play then from seeing the classic Hollywood's production of *My Fair Lady* musical, right? The 1912 story of a **simple London Cockney flower girl Eliza** who learns how to speak like a proper British lady from a renown phoneticist (and, honestly, a rather miserable person) Henry Higgins. **Both Higgins and Eliza have remarkably strong characters and no wonder that problems ensue** (*well, because of that and because of the fact that a well-mannered British woman in the early 20th century seemingly did not really have that many choices besides finding herself a man*). According to the famous movie, sparks also fly between Eliza and Higgins. But do they, really? In the words of Shaw himself,

*"Nevertheless, people in all directions have assumed, for no other reason than that she became the heroine of a romance, that she must have married the hero of it."*

And that's where the Audrey Hepburn movie lost me. After all, haven't the movie makers read the famous afterword by Shaw himself (*and I honestly think that it's just as interesting as the play itself!*), where he painstakingly details the future lives of his characters and **destroys every notion of the happily ever after for Eliza and Higgins** - the ever-after that was already clearly doomed in the play itself:

*"LIZA [desperate]: Oh, you are a cruel tyrant. I can't talk to you: you turn everything against me: I'm always in the wrong. But you know very well all the time that you're nothing but a bully. You know I can't go back to the gutter, as you call it, and that I have no real friends in the world but you and the Colonel. You know well I couldn't bear to live with a low common man after you two; and it's wicked and cruel of you to insult me by pretending I could. You think I must go back to Wimpole Street because I have nowhere else to go but father's. But don't you be too sure that you have me under your feet to be trampled on and talked down. I'll marry Freddy, I will, as soon as he's able to support me."*

After all, it would not be in character for Eliza, who is not really a romantic character but **a strong**,

**pragmatic, and independent young woman who would not settle for a life of bringing Higgins his slippers** (oh, that awful last line of the movie!!!) and being ignored; a woman who is not beyond a well-aimed slippers throw to the face:

*"This being the state of human affairs, what is Eliza fairly sure to do when she is placed between Freddy and Higgins? Will she look forward to a lifetime of fetching Higgins's slippers or to a lifetime of Freddy fetching hers? There can be no doubt about the answer. Unless Freddy is biologically repulsive to her, and Higgins biologically attractive to a degree that overwhelms all her other instincts, she will, if she marries either of them, marry Freddy. And that is just what Eliza did."*

**No, Eliza Doolittle is not a woman to be ignored.** She is a strong, independent and level-headed heroine who has guts and self-worth even before her 'magical' lady-like transformation. She knows what she wants, and she determinedly sets out on the path that she thinks would lead her to her dream - working in a flower shop. She may be comical and pathetic in the beginning - **but she knows she's not nothing** (*unlike the view of her that Henry Higgins has*). She stands up for herself even when she is clearly in an unfavorable situation - a woman vs. a man, a social nothing vs. a respected gentleman, a physically weaker creature vs. a physically more intimidating one:

*"I won't be called a baggage when I've offered to pay like any lady."*

And from the afterword:

*"Even had there been no mother-rival, she would still have refused to accept an interest in herself that was secondary to philosophic interests."*

And her feeling of self-worth only increases as the horizons of the society open up more for her. She refuses to play second fiddle even to a powerful and intimidating Higgins. The thing is - **Higgins, contrary to his belief, did not "create" Eliza, like the famous literary Pygmalion created his Galatea; he merely gave her more power to achieve what she wants.** And what she wants does not include being ignored and fetching him his bloody slippers. He is a strong man - well, she is an equally strong woman who will have what's best for her. And even if in the end - the afterword - Eliza's independence is not complete and she continues to owe a lot to the duo of Higgins and Pickering - but again, somehow on her own terms.

***"But to admire a strong person and to live under that strong person's thumb are two different things."***

This was my first time reading this play in English, and reading it in the language it was intended to be read in highlighted even more the brilliance of Shaw as a playwright and the exquisite humor of it. Shaw skillfully deconstructs the notions of the British class system - and does it with easily felt pleasure and enjoyment, and continues to do so in the afterword, which I enjoyed so much. **In the end, it's not about Eliza becoming a lady on Henry Higgins' terms; it's all about the shrewd future florist/greengrocer Eliza, and that's the awesomeness of it.** It is an excellent read, a timeless one, thoroughly entertaining and thought-provoking. **Easy 5 stars!**

*"Galatea never does quite like Pygmalion: his relation to her is too godlike to be altogether agreeable."*

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### Duane says

My vision of Eliza Doolittle will always be Audrey Hepburn from the 1964 movie *My Fair Lady*. But eight years earlier (1956) Julie Andrews nailed her portrayal of Eliza in the Broadway production of the musical. Of course both of these award winning productions were based on George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*. In the first London stage production Eliza was performed by Mrs. Patrick Campbell, Shaw having written it with her in mind because of their unrequited love affair. I enjoyed reading the play; the characters so remarkably unique, and Shaw takes a slap at the British class conscious society, and especially its impact on women.

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### Bruce says

One of George Bernard Shaw's most beloved plays, *Pygmalion* is the work on which the subsequent musical comedy, *My Fair Lady*, is based. But the two works have important differences. Shaw's work is far less sentimental and is throughout more ambiguous, especially in its ending. Furthermore, in order that it might be readable, the accents of the various characters are not attempted in the text, except at the very beginning (primarily to show that it would be unreadable if attempted). Those readers who are familiar with the musical will be reminded of many parallel episodes and even some precise lines of dialogue, but on the whole the play is more incisive, with more than a hint of bitterness. Because of demands on the part of readers and audiences for a happier and less uncertain ending, Shaw was frequently pressured to make changes, changes he resisted as being out of keeping with the story and his intent. Eventually he added a postscript essay, "What Happened Afterward," and this is worth reading.

Shaw's plays make interesting reading in part because his stage directions and the editorial comments he makes throughout his writings illuminate the social and political issues and concerns that motivated much of his writing. This play includes many such, and they make rich reading. The reader is left pondering moral and social issues that are troubling, issues that are still with us today.

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### Kaila says

#### 4/5 stars

**"I sold flowers. I didn't sell myself. Now you've made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else."**

**Oh, I loved this play!** It is **hilarious, wildly entertaining** and is also **profound** in its criticisms of class structure and traditional gender roles. If you have no idea what *Pygmalion* is, it is based on a Greek myth of the same name. Now, I'm lazy, and can't be bothered paraphrasing the myth to you or even researching it in detail for myself. *Pygmalion* is more commonly associated with the movie, *My Fair Lady* that is loosely

based off of the play. Basically, just think of it as the inspiration for the Audrey Hepburn movie.

Eliza is a common, poor woman who makes a living on selling flowers on the street. After an encounter with Mr. Higgins, a phoneticist who prides himself on everything regarding diction and speech, Eliza wishes for Mr. Higgins to change her voice to pass her off as a lady and get her out of the slums. Making a bet of the situation, Higgins says that in a matter of months he will be able to pass Eliza off as a duchess. Only, the chauvinistic, rude and quite frankly socially inept Higgins never thought of what would happen to Eliza after the experiment and failed to recognise her as an equal person instead of a mere "guttersnipe".

**"I can't turn your soul on. Leave me those feelings; and you can take away the voice and the face. They are not you."**

I know that in my short description I made Higgins out to be some kind of awful character, but he actually brought most of the hilarity to the play. I believe that most of the time he didn't mean to be rude, he just didn't care or understand social customs. I think of him as just a few notches down from an olden day Sheldon Cooper. The way he interacted with people and used his blunt, matter-of-fact language made me laugh out loud on so many occasions. **People who call all classics boring have obviously never read this play!**

I absolutely flew through this page which isn't exactly surprising since it's only around 100 pages long. But the play was just **so entertaining** and it never faltered. It made it so much better because I listened to the audiobook whilst reading it which I don't normally do. I've never been into audiobooks but this one was downright amazing and I truly believe that the play wouldn't have had such a great effect on me if I just read it. Plus, drama is meant to be performed and not just read like a book so the audiobook was just perfect for experiencing the play.

**"I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will."**

At face value, I found this to be a super entertaining, cute and hilarious play that I one day hope to see live. But after much consideration, I realise that it's much more profound and clever than just entertainment. Hours after reading it, I decided to pick it up again and read it again but much more critically. In this second reading, I realised how many clever and witty ways that the author criticised the class system and also gender roles. I always liked Eliza but I only really appreciated how strong she was whilst reading it for the second time. Now, I have this greater respect for the play and love it a whole lot more!

Like many short stories and plays, I can't really give this five stars because it's always hard to get fully connected to a 100 page story. I'm also under the impression that I can never fully judge a play script until I've seen it in theatres or at least watch the play version on the internet.

I do feel like this play is quite under appreciated and would love for more people to read it or see it! Trust me, it is so darn entertaining as well as profound, **you won't regret experiencing it!**

FREDDY [opening the door for her] Are you walking across the Park, Miss Doolittle?  
LIZA. Walk! Not bloody likely. I am going in a taxi. [She goes out].

This was my favourite line in the play, though I don't know how funny it is out of context...but I just couldn't leave it out of my review!

**Carol says**

I was surprised.....this is **not** a love story. I only vaguely remember the musical, and the outcome I envisioned is **not** what happens in the play.

I remember Eliza Dolittle as a poor flower girl, and the bet between two upper class gentlemen to turn a street "guttersnipe" into a proper lady, but **not** the horribly chauvinistic treatment she receives or the choices she makes in the end.

Totally enjoyed it!

## Ahmad Sharabiani says

## Pygmalion, George Bernard Shaw

Pygmalion is a play by George Bernard Shaw, named after a Greek mythological figure. It was first presented on stage to the public in 1913. In ancient Greek mythology, Pygmalion fell in love with one of his sculptures, which then came to life. The general idea of that myth was a popular subject for Victorian era English playwrights, including one of Shaw's influences, W. S. Gilbert, who wrote a successful play based on the story called Pygmalion and Galatea that was first presented in 1871. Shaw would also have been familiar with the burlesque version, Galatea, or Pygmalion Reversed. Shaw's play has been adapted numerous times, most notably as the musical *My Fair Lady* and its film version.

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**Yani says**

Una lectura que no tenía planeada en estos días. Por suerte, el desvío de los planes salió genial. *Pigmalión* es una obra de teatro distinta, que hace foco en un tema que no se aborda en estos días y que se lee rapidísimo porque divierte. Así de sencillo.

Cuento un poco el argumento, aunque ya muchos deben conocerlo por las versiones cinematográficas: un especialista en fonética (Henry Higgins) se encuentra casualmente con una vendedora de flores (Eliza Doolittle) cuya boca es, sin más ni menos, una cloaca. No sólo por las expresiones que usa, si no por lo mal que las pronuncia. Entonces él apuesta con un compañero/colega que puede transformarla en una señorita (lingüísticamente hablando, aunque también se espera un cambio superficial) y hacerla pasar por una dama de alta sociedad.

Y cuando yo creí que ya le había visto los hilos a todo esto, caí en la trampa y me llevé una sorpresa. No tomó la dirección que imaginé. Estas cosas, en lugar de decepcionarme, me producen una inmensa alegría. En primer lugar, los personajes no son como uno quiere, sino que se comportan de forma distante. El protagonista no es un héroe y tiene un carácter horrendo, a tal punto de comportarse duramente con la muchacha. Ella genera simpatía al instante (incluso cuando habla como habla) y vuelve más amenas las escenas en donde se tensa un poco la cuestión. Hay muchos personajes que se encargan de decir lo que uno no quiere escuchar y otros que dicen cosas que uno no esperaba que dijeran (pido disculpas por el trabalenguas). En segundo lugar, los diálogos son divertidos, pero también hay actitudes que molestan e incomodan. Nada que no pueda superarse con un "menos mal que es sólo una ficción".

La historia tiene un contexto construido por el mismo Shaw, porque hay un prefacio en donde explica su inspiración y un apéndice en donde termina de redondear la historia porque, al parecer, muchos espectadores de la obra no salían del teatro contentos con el final. A mí me gustó y no me pareció necesaria una explicación. La obra en general es bastante atípica, sobre todo por el carácter de los personajes principales, así que no esperaba menos. Fue una buena lectura y me sacó del sopor que me producen los libros pesados en verano. Tres hurras por *Pigmalión*.

**Brina says**

Reposting in honor of George Bernard Shaw's birthday, July 26.

I am writing this review to honor my grandmother who recently passed away. I lost track of the number of times we listened to the soundtrack of *My Fair Lady* either in her car, her apartment, or my house growing up. To me Eliza Doolittle, Henry Higgins, and Colonel Pickering are as much the actors who played them as they are the memories I created with my grandmother and great aunt while watching the movie or listening to its timeless songs.

By the time I finally read *Pygmalion* in script form in eighth grade English class and then subsequently watched the movie in class, I had the entire script memorized. My entire class asked me for assistance in all the assignments associated with this unit, and of course, I demurred. Ask me today, I still have most of the songs memorized, which of course came from Shaw's brilliant script.

My daughters' favorite classic film is *My Fair Lady* because of the gorgeous costumes they see at Ascot race track and the Royal ball. But what makes this Cinderella story timeless is not the costumes but the prose down to the last line, "Eliza, where the devil are my slippers." For those who have not read this tale or seen the film, take the time to do so. You too could be captivated by Eliza the flower girl turned language pupil and create generations of memories.

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### **Manny says**

If you happen to be the Wayans Brothers and are stuck for ideas about where your next racist, sexist, gratuituously offensive comedy is going to come from, have you considered doing a gender- and color-reversed version of *Pygmalion*? I feel it has real potential. My first thought is to reunite Bernie Mac and Ashton Kutcher from *Guess Who*. Mac, in drag, plays Henrietta, a black linguist who bets her friend Picky (Oprah) that she can turn preppy white-boy Kutcher into a bro' within six weeks. Here's the warm-up joke, which I was told many years ago at a linguistics conference by a black colleague:

So there's this black dude and this white dude, and they're arguing about what color God is. In the end, they agree that there's only one way to find out. They get down on their knees, and they pray to God to reveal this important piece of information to His unworthy servants. There's a peal of thunder, and then they hear this booming voice from the sky saying:

### **I AM WHAT I AM**

"Well, you was right!" says the black dude. "Cuz if He was black, He'd have said 'Ah IS what Ah IS!'"

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### **Jonathan Terrington says**

This is the last book I will finish in 2012 as there are only 6 hours remaining in my day. It is certainly a fitting book (or rather play inside a book) to end the year on. For *Pygmalion* is a story about new beginnings and about transformation. What better book to symbolise the changing of the year, I say!

The classic musical *My Fair Lady* is perhaps my favourite musical film that I have seen. The acting is superb, the plotting excellent and all the music serves to add to the humorous feel of the film. If you've seen

*My Fair Lady* the plot of *Pygmalion* will not be too unfamiliar to you. It is the tale of one professor of phonetics by the name of Henry Higgins who makes a bet that he can transform a girl from the street, Eliza Doolittle, into a woman of breeding - a lady - simply by changing her vocabulary and language. Of course if you have seen the musical I must add that the ending in *Pygmalion* is different, in a way that suits the differences apparent in the play.

The author of this play, George Bernard Shaw, is an interesting character. A man credited with wanting to use the intricacies of the English language to spell 'fish' as 'ghoti'. Which makes indefinitely more sense, who wouldn't want to catch a ghoti? I say 'credited' because various references indicate he likely did not come up with the idea in the first place. Bernard Shaw also won an oscar for the screenplay for *My Fair Lady*, which makes the differences between the two very interesting to observe. However it is clear as to why Bernard Shaw, with his obsession with language, chose to write a play with a phonetician as its protagonist, something not often done in literature.

The two notable themes I observed in this play are the presence and power of language as it connects to everyday life and also the idea of responsibility for that which we create. This second idea is apparent in connection particularly to the various mythological and literary references visible in *Pygmalion*.

## Language

Language, I have always believed, is power. It is the power to shape the world and change lives. If you've seen the incredible *Dead Poets Society* you may remember (apart from 'carpe diem') the line about how language was made to 'woo women'. I believe language is far more than about romance or emotion however, though the idea in that line when expanded holds true: that language can influence people. Why else do we have the Biblical creation story where 'And God said "let there be light", and there was light.' (Genesis 1:3)? Why else do we have countless fairytales and fantasy stories where magic is produced through speaking language? Why do we find that the great leaders of all time were also great writers, thinkers and orators? Think of Winston Churchill or Adolf Hitler, a man who manipulated people with words! It is because words, language, has power. Power to affect our thinking processes, those parts of us connected to language and which control us. Language is what truly separates us from animals in many ways.

In *Pygmalion* language is shown in its transformative ability. The language of Liza Doolittle to begin with is atrocious and as such she belongs to the streets, selling flowers. Later she becomes a lady, largely thanks to the change of her vocabulary. It must also be noted, particularly in the garden party scene, how language among the upper classes is a thing of both culture and triviality. When Liza for a moment slips back into her street language the upper class gentry she is among think she is speaking with a new form of popular slang and though taken aback by her cursing something as 'bloody' consider this language progressive. Another instance of transformation is shown in Liza's father who has an eloquence with his tongue in regards to politics to begin with but later becomes a gentlemen because of this language ability.

## Literary References

*Pygmalion* is full of references to literature. In particular John Milton's brilliant *Paradise Lost* (a must read for all literature lovers by the way), *Frankenstein* and the myth of Pygmalion and Galatea. According to this myth Pygmalion was a sculptor who created the most beautiful and lifelike sculpture of a woman, having vowed he never would marry. He did however fall in love with this sculpture thanks to Venus (or Aphrodite depending on the version I suppose), who then conveniently transformed the statue into a real woman for Pygmalion to marry. Each of these stories have the main theme of the responsibility of the creator to the created. *Paradise Lost* observes the relationship between God and his creations in Satan, Adam and Eve;

*Frankenstein* observes the relationship between Victor Frankenstein and his creature; and the mythology of Pygmalion hints at the idea that it was Pygmalion's duty to look after Galatea (the statue) as a wife.

George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion* could be seen as a subtle subversion of the Pygmalion myth (view spoiler). It further suggests that there is a moral obligation for a creator to care for the thing he has created, in Henry Higgins' case he had a duty to Liza (view spoiler).

## Conclusion

*Pygmalion* is a deep literary play which has fascinating themes about language and moral obligation. It is also a social critique (as the best plays, poems and novels are) challenging the way we live our lives. Though it is humorous and witty the most powerful aspect of this play is in how it reflects on our true reality, leading the audience to ultimately question 'who in the end is at fault?'

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## Dave Hill says

This is fun to read out loud in crazy English accents while stomping around your apartment. The neighbors might not like it but screw 'em.

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## Kenny says

#9 of my 2018 Shaw Project

Many people consider this to be Shaw's best play. I'm not among them (nor is Major Barbara for that matter). With that being said, I adore this script. I do feel it is among Shaw's most accessible works.

The basis for the much beloved, happily-ever-after Lerner & Lowe musical, George Bernard Shaw's 1913 play Pygmalion takes a much firmer tack on questions of class distinctions and female independence. Those themes, so dear to Shaw's progressive heart, end up rather heartwarmingly watered down in My Fair Lady. But Pygmalion ~~ it is all charmingly amusing and remarkably undated. It is nearly flawless.

Shaw's insistence on language as the vital instrument of power and oppression goes beyond his customary explorations of class, nationalism and feminism.

With story and dialogue by Shaw, there is little to complain about here. Pygmalion is Shaw at his best.

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## Lisa says

A lot of my reading at the moment seems to revolve around the relationship between art and artist, creator and creation.

Reading other reviews on "Pygmalion", I realise how strange my approach to it was, and how disappointed I was at first because my expectations were not met. I chose it as part of a reading challenge I set myself a couple of years ago - to read all Nobel Laureates in literature. The title appealed to me, and I was thrilled to

explore a modernist's take on the ancient myth of Pygmalion. Believe it or not, I had never realised that "My Fair Lady", which I love, is based on this play, and I waited for GREEK characters to show up, as I had been immersing myself in Enlightenment art concerned with the artistic questions raised in the Pygmalion story.

Falconet's sculpture of the misogynistic sculptor falling in love with his own creation, kneeling in front of the carefully chiselled woman, praying to Aphrodite to make her come alive, - that was what I was waiting for!

I kept wondering about the charming cockney and 19th century scientific approach to social class distinctions. I enjoyed the reading experience, but could not make sense of it at all. Don't judge a book by its title, I was inclined to say, until it dawned on me all of a sudden that:

- a) Shaw's "Pygmalion" was linked to the musical "My Fair Lady", and
- b) Higgins had more than a trace of Pygmalion, in fact was his modern alter ego.

Just like the ancient artist, he did not quite expect the outcome of his experiment, and Eliza Doolittle, like so many other literary creatures, does a beautiful job of emancipating herself from her creator. Art is quite amazing that way: as soon as it enters the world, it has a life of its own, and the artist is forced to watch its development together with other spectators.

I like that idea, as it symbolises the relationship between older and younger generations as well: we are nurtured and shaped by our parents' choices, but when we grow up, the freedom and responsibility is ours.

In a way, Frankenstein and Moreau's monsters in The Island of Doctor Moreau demonstrate the same emancipation process, and I don't think it is a coincidence that artists and writers of the 19th century were obsessed with that theme, as the world went through major political, social, economic and scientific changes.

Shaw showed wonderful creativity when transforming the ancient myth into modern life while keeping the essential questions alive. And his creation lives its own, independent life as well!

Must-read for anyone interested in the eternal human questions, as well as 19th/20th century social history.

Along with O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra", this is my favourite merging of myth and modern drama!

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### **Praveen says**

*Pygmalion was an ancient Greek legend, who was a sculptor and a king. He fell in love with his own ivory statue of his own ideal woman. He prayed. In response to his prayer, the Goddess gave life to the statue and then the king married it.*

This much of information was sufficient for me to know why the title of this book was chosen by G.B. Shaw, Pygmalion. I very much liked the character of Mr. Higgins in the play. He is a professor and scientist of phonetics and very confident about his knowledge and acumen.

While reading the book I realized that everyone is like Pygmalion. Everyone likes and adores whatever is created by him or her. Three years old daughter of my neighbor first makes a bridge from the cards and then claps and laughs seeing it, and during this spree when someone breaks it or it is shattered by the wind, she weeps. She perhaps loves her creation. Though momentary, she expresses the feelings of love and pain with

a unique sort of fervor to those childish maneuvers and efforts.

I too was probably like Pygmalion when I was a kid, but unlike this small daughter of my neighbor, I did not feel pain when one day my creation was destroyed!

My creation was a cat made up of snow. When one day there occurred, an event of a very heavy snow fall, all houses and trees were covered with the white sheet of snow and remained covered for a few days. I made a sculpture of cat of the snow, just outside the window of my room. It was not an exact replica of a cat, In fact it looked like a small cow, a bit bulky in size and a bit distorted but still it was a cat for me and I had placed a few whiskers of string on its front bulging shape, which according to me was the mouth of my cat, and I inserted two small round glass shooters, a few inches above those whiskers to make them look like eyes of my cat.

My this awkward looking cat remained there just outside the window of my room for two days possibly. There was not at all sunshine for two days. Temperature was below zero and snow did not melt. I kept watching my cat again and again and adored its ludicrous shape during those two days.

Then third day Sun shone with all its brilliance and in the very morning time itself, my cat melted away and disappeared. But I did not feel bad as I knew by that time if snow would be there again, I would recreate my cat again.

However in that season there was no snowfall again. And in the next season, I was one year older and the Pygmalion within me was now matured enough to make other kind of creations !

Actually I am talking all this rubbish because these two events just flashed over my mind when I was reading this play. The character of Prof Higgins was very much like me, when I was a kid .... Overconfident and heartless !

I read this book for the first time and this was a wonderful experience. Then I watched the 1938 movie of Leslie Howard as Professor Henry Higgins and Wendy Hiller as Eliza Doolittle and this movie extraordinarily complemented my experience of reading the book.

What a fine movie and wonderful acting by its cast!

The only difference between the play and the movie was its ending. Shaw kept his play realistic but there is a different ending in the movie, there might have been commercial reasons behind this change!

There are 5 acts in this play. The beginning of this play is so sweet. Thunders and then rain. People rushing into the shelters.... closing a dripping umbrella... in the street.

A street flower girl calling the name of a young man and then a mother and daughter asking the street flower girl....

***“Now tell me how you know that young gentleman’s name?”***

Prof. Higgins, a scientist of phonetics, takes a challenge that he will be able to transform the cockney speaking Covent Garden flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, into a woman as poised and well-spoken as a duchess. He meets his challenge wonderfully.

***“There are such fools that they think style comes by nature to people in their position; and so they never***

*learn. There is always something professional about doing a thing superlatively well.”*

Higgins is so obsessed with his work and knowledge that he hardly appreciates anything else, whether they are emotions or other trivial felicities of our surroundings .When Liza feels something for him and he denies her. She feels letdown.

*Liza : what did you do it for if you didn’t care for me ?*

*Higgins : Why , because it was my job.*

*Liza : you never thought of the trouble it would make for me.*

*Higgins : Would the world ever have been made if its maker had been afraid of making trouble. There is only one way of escaping trouble; and that’s killing things. Cowards, you notice, are always shrieking to have trouble some people killed.*

Probably many people are already familiar with story and they have seen many movies based on the play, but for me this was first time. Even in my school days I missed this book, so a highly satisfying five star read for me.

This enriched me on many levels. I am quenched!

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### **Fabian says**

SPOILER!!

A fountainhead of inspiration for countless projects, Pygmalion is actually not about love, and, this being a Shaw play, is all about social classes, manners and, what? phonetics. Also about humanity—about the power-play inherent in all types of relationships. Higgins, undeniably a gay man completely up to give the Betty a total overhaul, is not loveable, not even likeable. He’s a tyrant—but he is written o-so-well, with British wit to spare. He is the prototypical academic—a sociopath, even. Eliza Doolittle, however, well, her character has made it into the popular consciousness: at once naïve and downtrodden, she is eager to learn, she is motivated to become better than who she is. Her lines drip with syrup—but I like her a lot, too.

Alas, this is something quite unexpected. The plot itself is pretty dull. We get no lessons from Higgins, we only see the transformation complete. The metamorphosis and the theme of taking on human projects has been recycled, as I’ve said, to no end. But the ending is quite extraordinary: instead of the usual romantic finale, the ending we are given stops only on the stage, but Shaw continues an epilogue for his most famous play, telling the reader why Eliza chooses Freddy over (he’s gay!) Higgins. Incredibly realistic, this unromantic end. Shaw is definitely a realist—yet it’s difficult not to find most of his works instantaneously endearing.

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