

Pygmalion

Summer Reading Questions and Essay's

1. Define the term “didactic” and point out the way in which Pygmalion is a didactic play.
2. Define the term “allusion” and give four examples of allusion from literature or life.
3. Point out and discuss those features in this play that make it an example of “the drama of ideas”
4. Identify and discuss at least two incidents that could be said to be an example of Shavin wit, in which Shaw takes conventional wisdom and shows that thinking to be false.
5. Comment on the way Shaw presents the economically poor people in this play.
6. Describe Shaw’s idea of the ideal woman, drawing inferences from this play.
7. Discuss the extent to which Professor Higgins is an” alter ego”, or mouthpiece, for Shaw.
8. Point out at least two targets of Shaw’s satiric attacks.
9. Summarize the Pygmalion myth and indicate to what extent Shaw’s play corresponds to the myth and where it departs from the myth.
10. Infer from the comments and stage actions on the last page of this play what the future holds for Eliza and Doolittle
11. Comment on the importance and value of social class distinctions based on speech and dress in the play.
12. Comment on the value to a society of an elite social class that gets its money and power from inherited wealth and tradition.
Compare and contrast the play to the movie “My Fair Lady.”
13. How does the Shaw describe Higgins at the opening of Act II?
14. What is the purpose of Doolittle’s visit to Higgins’ house and for what reason does he fail?

15. In Pygmalion Shaw's brand of humor is described as Shavin wit. Explain how this wit operates in regard to Doolittle, one of the undeserving poor.
16. Shaw was known to be a committed socialist. Does Shaw make Doolittle to be a socialist?
17. When Higgins proposes giving Doolittle a fiver, Pickering says that he is afraid Doolittle will make a bad use of it. What does Pickering mean by this?
18. Does Doolittle's refusal to take only five pounds, not ten, strike you as not believable?
19. What observation about social class and cleanliness does Liza make about bathing?
20. Why do you suppose that given her life in the slums, bathing could not have been a treat for her?

Essays (Choose any two.)

1. Relate the classical myth of Pygmalion and indicate how this play follows the myth and where it departs from it.
2. Indicate what you infer is Shaw's opinion of the British upper-class as represented by Mrs. Eynsford Hill. Support your assertions by citing comments or incidents from the play to prove your point.
3. In the preface to the play, Shaw delights in the fact that Pygmalion is a didactic play that is very successful. Point out what Shaw is teaching about in this play.