

SUMMER READING FOR SENIORS OF THE CLASS OF 2019: George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*

Background and Summary of *Pygmalion*

The play's title and story line come from a Greek story about a sculptor named Pygmalion who falls in love with a statue he has made of a beautiful young woman; he asks the gods to have this statue come alive, and the request is granted. In Shaw's play he has a renowned British language expert and teacher (named Henry Higgins) making a bet with an expert in Indian dialects (named Colonel Pickering) that he can teach a poor, uneducated, low-class flower girl whom they encounter (named Eliza Doolittle) how to speak and act as well as the upper class; to win the bet, Higgins must pass Eliza off as a duchess at an ambassador's ball where only the elite, upper-class socialites are invited. Not only does Higgins win the bet, but in the process he falls in love with his "creation" as Pygmalion did. Hollywood captured this charming story in an academy award-winning musical called *My Fair Lady*.

Shaw wrote the play to satirize and expose the shallowness of the rigid boundaries of social class. Perhaps more applicable to Trinity seniors and their English teachers, the play does provide a model of what a master teacher (Higgins) looks like as well as what a successful student (Doolittle) looks like; the transformation of the low-class flower girl into a charming upper-class lady, however, could not have occurred without both the teacher and student demonstrating special attributes.

COMP 2 Annotation Assignment due the first day of class: 50 points. (English 12 on back)

Students need to bracket and number (in red ink) various passages that describe the positive **teacher attributes** of Higgins and (in blue ink) positive **student attributes** of Eliza (need 12-14 numbers for each character). Afterwards, type out each of the numbers you have for Higgins and supply which one of the following attributes fits the bracketed section—and add a brief explanation of why the bracketed section fits, along with the page number of this bracketed section. Do the same for Eliza.

*Concerning Higgins as a successful teacher, he

- (1) incorporated innovative learning **strategies**/technologies,
- (2) provided immediate, helpful **feedback**,
- (3) required adequate, focused **practice**,
- (4) gave **rewards** and **consequences** for learning performance,
- (5) provided opportunities to **apply** acquired learning in every day settings, and
- (6) garnered later **successes** from the application of these strategies.

*Concerning Liza as a successful student, she

- (1) took personal **initiative** to allow herself to be accepted as a student of Higgins , (2) showed consistency and **diligence** in practicing the concepts exposed to her,
- (3) demonstrated **persistence** in learning despite times of difficulties and seeming failures,
- 4) displayed a **giftedness** in learning/applying information to which she was exposed,
- (5) demonstrated an **appreciation** for others' efforts to improve her life, and
- (6) ultimately garnered various benefits and **successes** from her student experiences and investments. (The word "**other**" will work for an attribute that doesn't fit the categories provided above.)

Annotation example for teacher attributes: (from the Hollywood musical):

To illustrate from the Hollywood musical, Higgins recognizes that the low-class people like Eliza have a habit of dropping the "h" sound on words (so "hat" was pronounced "at"). He designs a tube that Eliza breathes into when saying a phrase that has several "h" sounds in it; if she pronounces the "h" sound correctly, a flame that is connected to the other end of the tube flickers so that she can visually recognize when she successfully pronounces the "h" sound.

For students' numbered annotation entry here, they could write: "**technology**" —flame flickering with correct sounding of h's. (For the book, just add the page number where this is seen.)

Annotation example for student attributes:

To illustrate that Eliza showed initiative in obtaining lessons from Higgins, she investigated how much an acquaintance paid for being taught to speak French—and she used this information for offering Higgins a fair compensation (in her own mind) for teaching her to speak English properly. For students' annotation here, they could write **"initiative"—researched speech-lesson costs** (and add the page number where this is seen).

Students will use these annotations to discuss the play's themes and literary concepts as well as to develop an essay over the play as they now have topic areas and specific supports needed to write this essay.

As a reminder, students need to **turn in their marked plays/typed analyses on the first day of class in order to obtain a grade for this 50-point assignment**. Note: To help seniors taking the ACT in September and October improve their scores, I may interrupt or postpone a comprehensive study of the play until students review the Irby Rules through various assignments. Approximately 70% of the ACT English section involves punctuation and grammar rules.

ENGLISH 12 ASSIGNMENT

1) As you read, **underline or highlight ten quotes** you find important, memorable, or meaningful in the play. Next to each quote write a **phrase in the margin** of your book summarizing or responding to the quote. For example, Eliza says to Higgins:

"I sold flowers. I didn't sell myself. Now you've made a lady of me I'm not fit to sell anything else" (IV, i, 63-66). An annotation could be *Eliza lost her independence*.

2) After you finish the play, copy your ten quotes into a **composition notebook** (not spiral). Include the page number where you found each quote.

3) Choose five quotes to respond to. **Write these five responses in your composition notebook. Title the entry** with the date, the quote, and the page number.

Write a response to the quote which includes:

- the quote's speaker,
- the situation or context of the quote,
- your understanding of its meaning,
- your response. Your response can be your reaction to what is happening, your observation about a character, issues the quote surfaces, and even personal connections or memories. Your response **CANNOT BE A PLOT SUMMARY**. Simply retelling the story will earn a zero.

Each response should **fill at least one page single-spaced** in your comp book. Be ready to hand in your comp book with ten quotes and responses **on the first day of school**. (70 points)

Happy summer reading!

Richard Irby and Brian Drevets for the Trinity Academy English Department

If you lose this handout, look for it on the Trinity website under "Seniors Summer Reading" If you lose your book, purchase a new one with this ISBN #978-1-4165-0040-7.