



 Prestwick House

# Activity Pack

## PYGMALION

BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Preface

### Examination of Language

**Objective:** Generating examples of inconsistencies in the English language

#### Activity

Shaw writes in the Preface that the English “spell [their language] so abominably that no man can teach himself what it sounds like...German and Spanish are accessible to foreigners; English is not accessible even to Englishmen.” As a student, you may have noticed that there are many exceptions to the rules of the English language. These exceptions can be extremely frustrating, even for native speakers of English. For this activity, you will focus on spelling and pronunciation rules.

Think of at least ten words that are pronounced in a way different from what their spelling would suggest. For example, the words *though* and *cough* are spelled using the same rule, but are pronounced differently. How confusing that would be to someone learning English. Use the chart provided to organize your examples. We have completed one for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Entire Play****Inference**

**Objectives:** Making inferences about theme  
Finding examples in the text of the play's themes

**Activity**

George Bernard Shaw was a man of strong convictions and opinions. Many of his beliefs are explored in his plays. *Pygmalion* is not exception, and Shaw used this play to bring light to his beliefs.

As you read the play, collect examples from the text of the themes listed in the following chart. The last column of the chart is where you explain what statement Shaw is making about each of the themes—what you believe Shaw's stance to be.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act I****Using Humor**

**Objective:** Using humorous events in the play to create a comic strip

**Activity**

Shaw's play is rich in emotional elements and quite humorous when performed. The audience experiences highs and lows throughout the play, from hilariously funny encounters to bouts of loneliness and despair. The first act contains great humor, interesting dialogue, and contagious energy.

Act I could easily be translated into a comic strip. For this activity, you will create a comic strip of at least eight frames depicting the humor of Act I.

1. Make a list of the main events of Act I. Your comic may include all of Act I or just a portion of it.
2. Your comic must
  - include all the characters in the act or in the part of the act you choose
  - have dialogue between some of the characters
  - be neatly colored in

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act II****Recognizing Figurative Language**

**Objective:** Recognizing similes, metaphors, and hyperbole

**Activity**

In Act II, there are a number of examples of figurative language used to describe things, actions, and people. On the chart provided, list at least ten you find in this section. Then explain, as best as you can, why Shaw chose to make each comparison. We have found one for you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act II****Designing a Play Poster**

**Objectives:** Responding to the play  
Creating a visual representation of theme

**Activity**

Design a poster to promote the play.

1. Use a large sheet of white paper or poster board to create a poster advertising the play. Use the Internet or magazines to find images to affix to your poster, or draw the images yourself. The images should relate to the plot, theme, and characters in the play.
2. Include information about where and when the play will be performed.
3. Imagine that several critics had attended and reviewed the play. What would they say about it? Include several pretend excerpts of critics' reviews of the play. You would only include those praising the play, not those criticizing it. For example, an excerpt might read, "The must-see play of the year!"
4. Use color to make your poster visually interesting.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Act III

### Create a Scene

**Objectives:** Predicting characters' actions  
Adopting the author's style

#### Activity

During Act III, Henry Higgins shows up unexpectedly at his mother's house, much to her dismay. She is expecting visitors and does not want to deal with his unpredictable behavior. However, Henry comes with a purpose: to test the skills he's been teaching Eliza. Henry explains the bet he has with Pickering and says, "I started on her some months ago; and she's getting on like a house on fire."

At this point the reader knows a good deal of time has passed between Act II and Act III. For this activity, you will work in a small group to brainstorm a list of possible events that took place during this lost time. Then you'll write a new scene for the play of one of those events, taking care to emulate Shaw's style the best you can.

The following questions are meant to promote discussion within your group and facilitate your brainstorming session.

- What problems might arise during Eliza's lessons with Higgins?
- What funny misunderstandings might occur during Eliza's lessons with Higgins?
- What other characters might interact with Eliza during this time? Consider Mrs. Pearce, Freddy, Mr. Doolittle, and others.
- Consider the relationships among characters. What changes in these relationships might occur?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act III****Create a Glossary of Slang****Objective:** Creating a glossary of common slang terminology**Activity**

The Eynsford Hills visit Mrs. Higgins during her at-home day in Act III. Eliza manages to maintain proper and distinguished small talk for some time, but before long she lapses back into her old way of speaking, telling Mrs. Eynsford Hill that someone had “pinched” her aunt’s straw hat and then “done her in.” Mrs. Eynsford Hill does not understand this slang, telling her daughter later that she “really can’t get use to the new ways.” Clara, a generation younger, tells her mother she finds the language “delightful and quite innocent.”

You may have experienced this difference between your generation and your parents’ or grandparents’—you come home from school with a new expression, and no one knows what you’re talking about. Perhaps they need a dictionary to help them! In this activity, you will list at least ten examples of slang language representative of your generation and peer group. Then, write a definition of each term to help others understand those words or phrases. Make sure to avoid vulgarity and profanity. Be prepared to share your ideas with your classmates.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act IV****Rewriting Text****Objective:** Using Shaw's style to rewrite a scene**Activity**

Act IV follows Eliza's debut at Mrs. Higgins's home, an outing to a dinner party, and the opera. Considering the short amount of time she's been under Henry's direction, she does quite well at maintaining proper etiquette and speech. Higgins should be delighted with her progress so far; it appears he has won the bet.

However, back at Wimpole Street, Higgins and Pickering are far from complimentary toward Eliza. Rather, they are dismissive and cruel to her. This is a critical point in the story, when Eliza craves praise from the men she has obliged all this time. Their reaction to her will determine whether she respects them enough to continue with them. Unfortunately, they do not provide any encouragement.

Rewrite Act IV from the beginning until Higgins's line, "However, it's all over and done with; and now I can go to bed at last without dreading tomorrow." Instead of Pickering and Higgins ignoring Eliza, have them compliment her in your new version. This simple act of kindness could have resulted in greater success for all involved.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Act V****Famous Quotations**

**Objective:** Relating famous quotations to the ideas in the play

**Activity**

*Pygmalion* is a social commentary on class, wealth, and status. As these are prominent ideas in the world and in many works of art, they can be considered universal themes: ideas all people care about on some level. Indeed, many scholars, artists, and teachers have explored these ideas for centuries.

The following chart contains seven quotations from famous people. Read each one and, in the second column, explain how each might relate to the play. Maybe the quotation reminds you of a character's actions or feelings. Maybe the quotation sums up an idea presented in the play. Be prepared to discuss your thoughts and defend your answers with your classmates.