Pygmalion
George Bernard Shaw
Reading Questions

Act I
1. Why does the author have the play begin in the pouring rain?
2. How do Freddy’s sister and mother treat him? Give an example that supports your answer.
3. What do we learn about Clara from her reaction to her mother’s wanting to pay for the girl’s flowers?
4. Who does everyone think the note taker is when he is first noticed by the bystander?
5. Why is the flower girl upset when she learns about the note taker?
6. How do the bystanders react when the flower girl is upset by the note taker? Why would they have that reaction?
7. What does the note taker seem to have the strange ability to do?
8. What does the note taker mean when he says “A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has not right to be anywhere—no right to live.”?
9. What does the note taker say that he could do with the flower girl in three months?
10. What do the gentleman (Pickering) and the note taker (Higgins) have in common?
11. What happens when Freddy returns with the cab? Why is the cab driver suspicious?
12. Why does Eliza tell the cab driver to take her to Buckingham Palace?
13. Briefly describe Eliza’s room.
14. What do we learn about Eliza from the way she goes to bed?
**Pygmalion**  
George Bernard Shaw  
Reading Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Money referred to in <em>Pygmalion</em> (1900)</th>
<th>Today’s Value ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 pound (£) = 20 shillings</td>
<td>$150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 shilling = 12 pennies (pence)</td>
<td>$7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 penny (pence) = 2 halfpennies = 4 farthings</td>
<td>$0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 halfpenny</td>
<td>$0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 farthing</td>
<td>$0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 crown = 5 shillings</td>
<td>$37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 guinea = 21 shillings</td>
<td>$157.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Act II**

Characters: Higgins, Pickering, Liza, Mrs. Pearce, Alfred Doolittle

1. From reading the description of Higgins, how is he characterized? What assumptions can we make about him from how he is described?
2. What have Higgins and Pickering been doing as the Act begins?
3. How does Liza appear when she shows up at Higgins’s? What is Mrs. Pearce’s reaction to her?
4. Why has Liza come to Higgins’s?
5. What seems to be the difference between the way that Pickering and Higgins treat Eliza?
6. When Liza tells Higgins how much she is willing to pay for lessons, what point does Higgins make about the amount she offers?
7. What offer does Pickering make to Higgins about Liza?
8. Why is Liza offended when Higgins begins to tell Mrs. Pearce what to do with her? How does he make the situation worse with what he says?
9. Why does Pickering ask Higgins, “Does it occur to you, Higgins, that the girl has some feelings?” What is interesting about Higgins’s response?
10. After Higgins explains the “orders” to Eliza, why does Mrs. Higgins take over and offer to talk to Liza?
11. What concern does Pickering have about Higgins and Liza?
12. What things does Mrs. Pearce tell Higgins not to do around Liza? Why does she tell him this?
13. Why does Higgins think that (Alfred) Doolittle has shown up at his house?
14. What does Doolittle eventually ask Higgins to do?
16. Why is Liza not surprised so much by her change?
17. What type of father is Doolittle? How do you know?
18. What does Liza want to do while wearing her new clothes? Why? Why is she not worried about her friends?
19. What is Liza’s comment about her soon-to-be new nightclothes? What does that tell us about her life up until now?
Act III

Characters: Mrs. Higgins, Higgins, Mrs. Eynsford Hill, Miss (Clara) Eynsford Hill, Pickering, Freddy, Eliza

1. What do we learn about Mrs. Higgins from the description of her house that begins the Act?
2. Why is Mrs. Higgins not very welcoming to Henry?
3. Give two reasons Higgins gives for not being “bothered” with young women.
4. What is Higgins convinced of about Clara and Freddy Eynsford Hill? Is he right?
5. What is Clara’s opinion of Higgins?
6. Why does Higgins say that it would be bad for people to say what they really think?
7. How does everyone react to Eliza’s entrance? Who is especially interested in her?
8. What is interesting about Eliza’s conversation at Mrs. Higgins’s? What is Mrs. Eynsford Hill’s reaction? What is Clara’s reaction?
9. Is Eliza successful with her first public conversation? Why or why not?
10. What is Mrs. Higgins’s feelings about Pickering and Higgins’s work with Eliza? Why does she call them a “pretty pair of babies”?
11. How do Pickering and Higgins view their work with Eliza?
12. What is the “problem” with Eliza, according to Mrs. Higgins?
Act IV

Characters: Higgins, Pickering, Eliza

1. How does Eliza look as she is first seen in the Act?
2. Where have the three of them been? Was it successful?
3. How do Pickering and Higgins talk about their evening? Do they include her in their conversation?
4. What seems to be the effect on Eliza of their conversation?
5. Why does Eliza get angry?
6. What is Higgins’s response to Eliza’s anger?
7. What has Eliza realized about her life, now that Higgins can “Thank God it’s over”?
8. What is Higgins’s solution to Eliza’s concern about her future? What does he suggest she do?
9. What does Eliza do/say to Higgins that makes him angry (more than one thing)?
10. Give more than one possible reason for Higgins’s anger.
Act V

Characters: Mrs. Higgins, Higgins, Pickering, Alfred Doolittle, Eliza [other characters in the non-dialogue part of the Act]

1. Why is Higgins upset when he arrives at his mother’s house?
2. What is Pickering doing that Mrs. Higgins thinks is foolish? What is her reason for thinking so?
3. What is the change in Doolittle from the last time we have seen him? What has happened to him to make the change?
4. What does Higgins think will be the relationship between Doolittle and Eliza going forward from this point?
5. When Eliza first comes in the room at Mrs. Higgins, how does she speak to Higgins?
6. Why does Eliza say, “…it was always so difficult for me with the example of Professor Higgins always before me. I was brought up to be just like him, unable to control myself, and using bad language on the slightest provocation. And I should never have known that ladies and gentlemen didn’t behave like that if [Pickering] hadn’t been there.” (63)?
7. Why does Eliza say, “Well, I am a child in your country. I have forgotten my own language, and can speak nothing but yours. That’s the real break-off with the corner of Tottenham Court Road.” (64)?
8. What is surprising about Eliza’s reaction to seeing her father? Why is Higgins excited by her reaction?
9. In his last words to Eliza before he leaves to get married, what is Doolittle’s opinion of Higgins’s and Pickering’s treatment of Eliza? Why do you think so?
10. What is Higgin’s argument to Eliza (“The question is not… “)? What is Eliza’s point in her response to him? (67)
11. Why does Higgins react the way he does when Eliza mentions Freddy? (69)
12. What does Eliza tell Higgins that she really wanted all along? (bottom of 69). Do you think she is being honest? Why or why not?
13. What does Eliza tell Higgins she will do for money? Why does she say she will end up being more successful than him?
14. Why does Mrs. Higgins say that Higgins won’t go to Doolittle’s wedding? ****
15. What does the author mean by “Eliza’s instinct tells her not to marry Higgins. It does not tell her to give him up.” (73)?
16. Give more than one reason that is given for why “Eliza’s instinct had good grounds for warning her not to marry her Pygmalion” (74).
17. Why does Eliza choose Freddy over Higgins? (75)
18. What do we learn about Freddy’s financial situation?
19. How does Col. Pickering help Eliza and Freddy with their honeymoon (76) and starting their life together (77)?
20. How does Eliza’s business go initially? What problems do she and Freddy have with running a business (80-81)?
21. How do Higgins and Pickering continue to help Freddy and Eliza? (81)
22. Make sense of the last few sentences of the play: “The very scrupulousness with which he told her that day . . . too godlike to be altogether agreeable” (82).
23. Is this a happy ending?
24. What do you think will happen to Eliza, Freddy, and Higgins (based on what we see in the play)? Why do you think so?