



LERNER & LOEWE'S

my
fair
lady

SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

Teacher's Notes

ENGLAND
English KS3 & 4

ACTIVITY 1

EN3 Writing

- 1n** organise their ideas and information, distinguishing between analysis and opinion
- 4d** evaluate critically performances of dramas that they have watched

ACTIVITY 2

EN2 Reading

- 1k** to compare texts, looking at style, theme and language, and identifying connections and contrasts
- 2a** how and why texts have been influential and significant
- 2c** the appeal and importance of these texts over time
- 4a** select, compare and synthesise information from different texts

EN3 Writing

- 1a** draw on their experience of ... reading, watching and performing in plays
- 1g** consider what the reader needs to know and include relevant detail

ACTIVITY 3

EN3 Writing

- 1a** draw on their experience of ... reading, watching and performing in plays
- 1f** use ... concise expression

ACTIVITY 4

EN1 Speaking and listening

- 4a** use a variety of dramatic techniques to explore ideas, issues, text and meanings
- 4c** appreciate how the structure and organisation of scenes and plays contribute to dramatic effect
- 5** Students should be taught to use the vocabulary, structures and grammar of spoken standard English fluently and accurately in informal and formal situations
- 6** Pupils should be taught about how language varies, including:
- c** attitudes to language use
 - e** the vocabulary and grammar of standard English and dialectal variations

ACTIVITY 5

EN2 Reading

- 1a** to extract meaning beyond the literal, explaining how choice of language and style affects implied and explicit meanings
- 1g** how language is used in imaginative, original and diverse ways

EN3 Writing

- 1a** draw on their experience of ... reading, watching and performing in plays
- 1c** exploit choice of language and structure to achieve particular effects and appeal to the reader

ACTIVITY 6

EN3 Writing

- 1a** draw on their experience of ... reading, watching and performing in plays
- 1d** use a range of techniques and different ways of organising and structuring material to convey ideas, themes and characters

ACTIVITY 7

EN3 Writing

- 1a** draw on their experience of ... reading, watching and performing in plays
- 1b** use imaginative vocabulary and varied linguistic and literary techniques

ACTIVITY 8

EN1 Speaking and listening

- 1a** structure their talk clearly, using markers so that their listeners can follow the line of thought
- 2b** identify the main elements of what is being said both explicitly and implicitly
- 2c** distinguish features of presentation where a speaker aims to explain, persuade, amuse or argue a case

- 10a** Group discussion and interaction: debating

EN3 Writing

- 1j** develop logical arguments and cite evidence
- 9c** persuade, argue and advise, focusing on presenting a case and influencing the reader

WALES

English KS3 & 4

ACTIVITY 1

Writing

Write for a range of purposes including writing to: ... analyse, review and comment

Write for a range of familiar and unknown audiences

Develop thinking through review, analysis

ACTIVITY 2

Reading

Read a wide range of texts in a variety of forms including: plays

Develop and sustain interpretations of texts

Writing

Develop their ability to write narrative

Write for a range of purposes

Communicate clearly ideas, information, opinions, views

ACTIVITY 3

Writing

Develop their ability to write narrative

Write for a range of purposes

Communicate clearly ideas, information, opinions, views

ACTIVITY 4

Oracy

Participate in a wide range of drama activities

Writing

Develop their ability to write scripts and dialogue

ACTIVITY 5

Reading

Read a wide range of texts in a variety of forms

Respond intellectually and imaginatively to the substance, style and quality of different texts

Comment on ways in which language varies and changes

Writing

Develop their ability to write scripts and dialogue

Write for aesthetic and imaginative purposes

Write for a range of purposes

Consider apt and imaginative choices of vocabulary

ACTIVITY 6

Writing

Write for aesthetic and imaginative purposes

Develop their ability to write narrative

Write for a range of purposes

Consider apt and imaginative choices of vocabulary

ACTIVITY 7

Writing

Write for aesthetic and imaginative purposes

Develop their ability to write scripts and dialogue

Write for a range of purposes

Consider apt and imaginative choices of vocabulary

ACTIVITY 8

Oracy

Talk for a range of purposes

Take different roles in group discussions

Make different types of contributions in discussion

Writing

Write to inform, instruct, explain, argue, narrate, report, describe and persuade

SCOTLAND

English Language 5 – 14 Levels D & E
Expressive Arts 5 – 14 Levels D & E

ACTIVITY 1

English Language

Writing: Personal writing

Expressive Arts

Drama: Observing, listening, reflecting, describing and responding

ACTIVITY 2

English Language

Reading: Reading to reflect on the writer's ideas and craft

Writing: Functional writing

ACTIVITY 3

English Language

Writing: Imaginative writing

ACTIVITY 4

English Language

Talking: Talking in groups/Talking about experiences, feelings and opinions

Expressive Arts

Drama: Using movement and mime/Using language

ACTIVITY 5

English Language

Reading: Reading to reflect on the writer's ideas and craft

Writing: Imaginative writing

ACTIVITY 6

English Language

Writing: Imaginative writing

ACTIVITY 7

English Language

Writing: Imaginative writing

ACTIVITY 8

English Language

Talking: Talking in groups/Audience awareness

Writing: Functional writing

my fair lady



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Why can't the English
teach their children
how to speak?



“THE GREATEST MUSICAL OF ALL TIME”

CHARLES SPENCER, DAILY TELEGRAPH

My Fair Lady is an unforgettable theatre experience, transporting audiences back in time to an astonishingly real Edwardian London populated by a host of colourful characters. The themes of this spectacular musical are enduring and quintessentially English, and are as relevant today as they have always been. *My Fair Lady* is also a celebration of the power of music to tell stories, illuminate characters and beguile the audience.

Musical theatre provides a wonderful opportunity to study the interplay of lyrics, music and narrative in creating in-depth characters in a dramatic piece of work. And what better musical to turn to than *My Fair Lady*, rooted as it is in both a dramatic masterpiece and a great musical theatre tradition. Lerner and Loewe's creation, based on Bernard Shaw's 1912 play *Pygmalion*, is as much a classic play as a classic musical. A profusion of musical styles, characters, drama and comedy, *My Fair Lady* connects with audiences in the 21st century just as powerfully as it did in the mid-20th century.

The enduring character of Eliza Doolittle, Cockney flower girl turned high society debutante, serves as the pivotal role in a musical which seeks to examine class distinctions, society's prejudices, the gender divide, identity and transformation. Classic musical numbers 'Wouldn't It Be Lovely?', 'The Rain In Spain', and 'A Hymn To Him' evoke and bring to life these essential themes and the musical's diverse and absorbing characters.

This wonderful show teamed with this exciting new resource will bring *My Fair Lady* alive for your students, guiding them towards an understanding of the power of song and music and its ability to highlight and contribute towards the drama of a play. Opportunities for imaginative and empathetic writing, character analysis, criticism and debate, and drama, ensure that you can meet teaching requirements in the English curriculum at Key Stage 4 while providing your students with inspiring and creative materials.

THE MUSICAL THEATRE TRADITION

The beginning of the 20th century saw the beginning of musical theatre. Long accepted models of European opera and operetta were shaken by the advent of vibrant popular song filling the theatres. At this stage no attempt was made to blend the songs with the story. But in 1927, an organic work of art was created in the form of the musical *Showboat*, based on Edna Ferber's 1926 novel about life in America after the Civil War. Here, for the first time, song, music and words all combined to tell the story – and the musical was born.

Songs in musicals are part of the storytelling. A song in a musical moves the story forwards, revealing something about the character's inner life in ways that the spoken word cannot. *My Fair Lady* does this in an exemplary fashion, seamlessly blending dialogue and song to create a perfectly balanced storytelling experience.

THE HISTORY OF MY FAIR LADY

The current production of *My Fair Lady* at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, London falls in a long tradition of revivals and reworkings of Bernard Shaw's great play *Pygmalion*. It was first dramatised for the screen in 1938, in a film with the same name starring Leslie Howard and Wendy Hiller, produced by Gabriel Pascal. After a number of eminent writing-composing teams had rejected musicalising *Pygmalion* ('It's perfect,' said one, 'don't touch it') Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner took up the mantle. The script and music they created in *My Fair Lady* would go on to become the greatest commercial triumph the American theatre had ever known.

My Fair Lady was first performed in 1956, and brought to the British stage two years later, to the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Three Broadway revivals later – not to mention numerous other stagings across the world and the classic Hollywood movie starring Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison – *My Fair Lady* has returned to its original British home at Drury Lane, almost 50 years on.

my fair lady

PLOT SYNOPSIS

Henry Higgins, a Professor of Phonetics, encounters Eliza Doolittle, a cockney flower girl, one cold March night at Covent Garden market. He declares to his friend Colonel Pickering that in three months he could transform Eliza into a duchess.

Over the course of several months Eliza, who moves into the Higgins household, is put through a gruelling course of phonetics and elocution lessons by Higgins. Eliza's moment of triumph comes at the Embassy Ball. She is beautiful, elegant and well-spoken and proves to be an enormous success particularly with the young gentleman Freddy Eynsford-Hill who falls desperately in love with her.

After the ball Eliza falls into despondency as she sees Higgins celebrating his triumph in passing Eliza off as a duchess, showing little consideration for her feelings. Unnoticed, she slips out of Higgins' house and seeks consolation with Higgins' mother. Higgins comes in search of her but Eliza refuses to return with him.

Back at home, Higgins realises that he has become accustomed to Eliza. But suddenly Eliza reappears. She has forgiven Higgins and has decided to return.



my fair lady

LIST OF CHARACTERS

Eliza Doolittle
Freddy Eynsford-Hill
Mrs Eynsford-Hill
Clara Eynsford-Hill
Colonel Hugh Pickering
A Bystander
A Hoxton Man
A Selsey Man
Professor Henry Higgins
First Costermonger
Second Costermonger
Third Costermonger
Fourth Costermonger
George
Alfred P Doolittle
Jamie
Harry
Mrs Pearce
Mrs Hopkins
Butler
Servants
Mrs Higgins
Lady Boxington
Lord Boxington
Sir Reginald Torrington
Flower Girl
Footman
Zoltan Karpathy
Queen of Transylvania
Prince of Transylvania
Mrs Higgins' maid

LIST OF SONGS

Prologue
Why Can't The English?
Wouldn't It Be Lovely?
With A Little Bit Of Luck
I'm An Ordinary Man
Just You Wait
Poor Professor Higgins
The Rain In Spain
I Could Have Danced All Night
Ascot Gavotte
On The Street Where You Live
Eliza's Entrance
The Embassy Waltz
You Did It
Show Me
Get Me To The Church On Time
Get Me To The Church On Time (Reprise)
A Hymn To Him
Without You
I've Grown Accustomed To Her Face





HOW TO USE THE PROJECT

The project consists of eight photocopiable activity sheets and these comprehensive teacher's notes. Initial preparation is suggested prior to seeing *My Fair Lady*, and the rest of the activity sheets are to be used subsequently, allowing students to respond to and build on their experience of the play. The pack focuses on English, but also contains opportunities for work in drama, dance and music.

These teacher's notes contain guidance as to activity sheet usage, as well as full curriculum mapping for England, Wales and Scotland for each activity.

Also contained in the pack is a teacher response card. Your feedback is essential to the development of future study packs, so please do take the time to fill in the card and return to us at the freepost address.

BEFORE THE SHOW

It's worth bearing in mind that too much preparation before seeing *My Fair Lady* may spoil the enjoyment students receive from seeing the play. However, some initial preparation would be useful, to get students thinking about the issues in the play and the tradition in which it falls.

- It might be worthwhile covering some research (Activity sheet - The Origins of *My Fair Lady*) on Pygmalion (the Greek myth and Bernard Shaw's play) so that similarities/differences may be spotted during the show.
- It may also be worth showing students the classic 1964 film version of the story, starring Audrey Hepburn and Rex Harrison (who was also in the original Broadway version, but with Julie Andrews as his Eliza), to enable them to draw comparisons between stage and screen.

Let the show begin!



I could
pass her
off as...

a duchess!

ACTIVITY 1

A CRITIC FOR A DAY

This first activity allows students to give an immediate but informed response to their recent viewing of *My Fair Lady*.

It would be worth having ready a collection of reviews, from newspapers, of other musicals, to give examples. Particularly useful would be to have several different reviews of the same musical to demonstrate that a review is only the opinion of one critic, and that these opinions can differ dramatically.

Ensure that students are familiar with the structure of a review and what a review should entail (the activity sheet provides pointers for students). A review needs to be well-structured and interesting if it is to draw in the newspaper or magazine reader who is likely to turn the page very quickly if the writing is unclear or dull. Remind them that a review should not give everything away about a play's plot, or it will deter potential audiences. Explain that while a review represents the opinion of just one person, it must nonetheless be analytical. It must be clear in the review why the reviewer has come to his or her conclusions.

Once students have written their reviews, ask a few to read theirs out in class, accept feedback from the rest of the class on the review, and discuss the different opinions expressed. Students need to justify their opinions, eg why did Eliza stand out most to them? Why did they think that the choreography was so successful? etc.

Finally, the official *My Fair Lady* website, www.myfairladythemusical.com, contains snippets of reviews of the play, and once students have completed their review, they can compare theirs with the comments made by real critics.



with a little bit with a little bit



with a little bit of bloomin' luck



ACTIVITY 2

THE ORIGINS OF MY FAIR LADY

This activity shows students how most modern texts have been influenced by previous writings. It also provides them with an opportunity to practise their research skills. As suggested, some of this *could* be prepared for before the theatre trip.

1. Start students off with the activity by introducing them to the Greek myth of Pygmalion, on which *My Fair Lady* is based. Pygmalion was a sculptor who created a beautiful ivory statue he called Galatea, with whom he fell in love. The goddess Aphrodite brought Galatea to life, and Pygmalion married her.

For a homework assignment ask students to research the story of Pygmalion more thoroughly, using the internet, libraries and reference books at home and school. Back in class ask students to read out their versions and discuss any differences between the versions.

2. Students can then be introduced to Bernard Shaw's version of the Greek myth, his 1912 play *Pygmalion*. In Bernard Shaw's play, Henry Higgins is the new Pygmalion figure, who, like a sculptor, 'moulds' Cockney flower girl Eliza Doolittle into his 'Galatea', turning her into a desirable, well-spoken young lady. But Bernard Shaw changed the ending – Freddy Eynsford-Hill, not Higgins, wins Eliza's hand in marriage.

Ask students to research Bernard Shaw's play and write a synopsis. Explain that a synopsis does not contain excessive detail but merely provides the basic outline of a plot.

3. Once students are familiar with *Pygmalion* you can ask them to draw comparisons between that play and *My Fair Lady*. The play and the musical are in fact very similar in form and structure, and, much of the time, the dialogue is identical too. The most obvious difference lies in the endings.

Why do students think that the ending was changed by Lerner and Loewe?

Do musical theatregoers expect a happy ending?

Why/why not?

Discuss the fact that the endings of both *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* have a certain amount of ambiguity. *Pygmalion* ends with Higgins' line 'Nonsense – she's going to marry Freddy. Ha ha ha!' Bernard Shaw then added a prose epilogue to remove any ambiguity, in which he explains how Eliza does indeed marry Freddy, goes on to open a flower shop, but is not helped by her husband's complete lack of business sense.

My Fair Lady ends with Higgins' line 'Liza! Where the devil are my slippers!' Eliza has returned to Higgins, but it's not clear if they will marry.

Are these satisfactory endings, or do they think audiences would prefer a more conclusive ending? (This activity can also tie in with the Activity sheet - Imaginative writing.) Whatever the case, a play should prepare the audience for the outcome of events, if that ending is to be credible. Does *My Fair Lady* do this?

Can they think of examples of other musicals which do/do not end happily?

4. Ask students to compare *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* more closely.
 - How are they alike?
 - How are they different?
 - Why did Lerner and Loewe change what they did?
 - Do students think they were right to do so?



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Other suggested research topics:

- Musical partnerships:

Lerner & Loewe
Boublil & Schönberg
Gilbert & Sullivan
Lloyd Webber & Rice
Rodgers & Hammerstein

- Other musicals currently running: differences between these and *My Fair Lady*.

- Can students trace the origins and development of other musicals eg *The Phantom of the Opera* (*Le Fantôme de l'Opéra* by Gaston Leroux); *Miss Saigon* (*Madame Butterfly* by Puccini); *Les Misérables* (*Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo); *Oliver!* (*Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens), *West Side Story* (*Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare), *Cats* (T. S. Eliot's poems)?





by George,
she's got it!



ACTIVITY 3

CHARACTER STUDIES

This should be an exercise in concise, succinct writing, expressing the essence of a character in a quick verbal sketch. Students also consider the theme of transformation with regard to the main characters in the musical.

Eliza is the principal character in the play, as everything revolves around the relationships of others to her. In this activity students need to write brief summaries of each character's *relationship* with Eliza.

Ensure that it is the character's relationship with Eliza that is described and not the character themselves.

Add as many minor characters as desired. What role do minor characters play? Students should think about the musical numbers in *My Fair Lady* and the importance of having a wide range of extras/smaller roles who will bring life and energy to the production. Musicals usually have large casts, many of whom do not have speaking roles, just dancing and singing ones.

Character transformation

The theme of transformation in the musical is strong. Embedded in our consciousness from the very start of the musical, when Higgins declares that he could succeed in passing Eliza off as a duchess, the theme ties in closely with the strata of society that are depicted. From the working class in Covent Garden market, through Higgins' servants and housekeeper, the Eynsford-Hills, Higgins and Pickering, Higgins' mother, the upper classes and aristocracy at Ascot and the Embassy Ball, we are presented with a rounded picture of society and all its many levels. The possibilities of moving between these levels, as we see, are not impossible.

Eliza is not the only character who undergoes a metamorphosis. Doolittle and Higgins are also greatly changed by the end of the musical. Ask students to consider and chart the ways in which these characters change.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Write a full character profile of a character of your choice from the musical.
- Draw a diagram to represent each main character's relationship with the other characters.

ACTIVITY 4

'BY GEORGE, SHE'S GOT IT!'

Phonetics, the study of speech processes, was one of Bernard Shaw's great passions. The character of Professor Higgins is based to a large extent on Bernard Shaw's friend Henry Sweet, the great linguist and phonetics expert. Sweet believed that phonetics was vital in helping people to have correct pronunciation.

In *My Fair Lady* the theme is introduced in the very first scene, with Higgins' song 'Why Can't The English (teach their children how to speak)?' Phonetics involves studying the way in which we physically shape sounds with our lips and tongue. In the scenes that follow we see Eliza battling with the intricacies of phonetics and how to pronounce her aitches and vowels correctly.

As a professor of phonetics, Higgins could place the people he heard speak just by their accents, and he changed Eliza's accent before she could be accepted by the upper class.

1. As a whole class discuss the importance of accents today.
Are they less important than they were in the 19th/early 20th century?
On what occasions are they still important?

Which accents are particularly strong?

In what situations might someone wish to change his/her accent?
Eg to get a new job, to fit into a new school.

2. In pairs students then work on creating a new piece of dialogue. They have to write a scene which reverses the scene in which Higgins teaches Eliza how to speak properly. One character should coach another with a 'posh' accent how to speak like Eliza, dropping aitches and mis-using grammar – in order to fit in. Instead of "The rain in Spain..." choose a more appropriate sentence. End the scene with an alternative to "By George, s/he's got it!".
3. Ask students to rehearse their pieces to show to the rest of the class. As a follow up they could be asked to write a short review of one of the dialogues they have seen and discuss its strong and weak points.

OTHER SUGGESTED DRAMA EXERCISES

Gender reversal: A female character instructing a male – would it be different?

Improvisations: Meetings – eg Mr Doolittle and Mrs Higgins.
How would they react to each other?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Discuss the following:

'One could argue that British society has reversed its aspirations over time given the reluctance of today's so-called "yoof generation" – for reasons of "street cred" – to sound posh' (Matt Wolf, London Theatre Critic, *Variety*).

morals?
can't afford
'em, Governor!





Embassy Ball

ACTIVITY 5

PARODIES

For this activity you need to have examples ready of parody, especially poems, eg Harry Graham's parody of *Innisfree*.

The activity aims to get students to write their own parody of one of the songs in *My Fair Lady*. The lyrics can easily be found through one of the internet search engines (eg Google).

It might be 'Wouldn't It Be Lovely' beginning "All I want is a job somewhere" or "All I want is a meal somewhere" or perhaps a cry for help from someone who has not done their homework – 'Get me to the school on time' beginning "I'm having English in the morning, Get me to the school on time".

Encourage students to explore ideas and have fun, but try to keep the flow of the original – the rhythm and tempo.

Students could also attempt a similar exercise in imitation or pastiche, perhaps of one of the scenes, or a section of dialogue. Discuss the differences between imitation, pastiche, parody and irony. What literary techniques can students spot in *My Fair Lady*?



Why
can't a
woman
be more
like
a man?



ACTIVITY 6

EMPATHETIC WRITING

We tend to see story lines through the eyes of main characters. But the lives of many others are changed by the action.

The arrival of Eliza Doolittle changes the routine, and life, of Professor Higgins. But what of Colonel Pickering, set in his ways and happy in his relationship with fellow confirmed bachelor and friend, Higgins, a relationship disturbed by Eliza. Or Mrs Pearce, whose duties as housekeeper to Higgins are turned upside by Eliza's arrival.

The activity sheet provides students with the first line of these two characters' stories: Mrs Pearce: 'What a kerfuffle we had when Miss Doolittle first arrived, badly in need of a bath...' and Colonel Pickering: 'I'll never forget the day my visit to Higgins' house was interrupted...'

Ask students to choose one of these two characters and tell their story. Encourage them to try to catch their style and mode of speech.

This activity could lead into a more detailed discussion of the characters. With which character do students most empathise? Discuss the different reasons for this: the way they are presented in the play; and how we are often more likely to empathise with someone if we have had similar experiences.

How do the writers of the play encourage us to empathise with the characters? What about the characters themselves? What role do song and music play in helping us to understand their feelings and appreciate their side of the story?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Eliza is an outsider in Higgins' world both because of her gender and her class. Discuss the following statement: 'We tend to empathise with the underdog in a situation.'

Pull out the stopper!



Let's have a whopper!

ACTIVITY 7

IMAGINATIVE WRITING

This activity could well be paired writing.

In the original Greek myth, Pygmalion married Galatea. In Bernard Shaw's play, Higgins does not marry Eliza. Bernard Shaw explained why:

- Higgins was twenty years older than Eliza.
- Higgins' mother set too high a standard of womanly excellence for him, and Eliza realised that she could never come between Higgins and his mother.
- Eliza could not face the prospect of coming secondary to phonetics and Milton so Eliza married Freddy Eynsford-Hill.

In *My Fair Lady*, Lerner and Loewe revert to the original ending, and Eliza returns to Higgins.

Imagine that they had kept to Bernard Shaw's ending. Ask students to write a different scene to end the musical. Perhaps one where Eliza and Freddy meet, declare their love and leave together; or one where Higgins and Pickering discuss Eliza's marriage to Freddy. What will they say? Will Higgins show remorse at his loss?

Encourage them to think of the elements that are important in a final scene: drama, reconciliation, conclusion. Emphasise that it is important to create a scene that will hold the audience's attention and provide a satisfying ending.

Then ask students to rehearse their scene to act out in front of the rest of the class.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Ask students to write the lyrics for a new final song – Eliza and Freddy's love duet or Higgins' sad song of loss.

*I washed my face and hands
before I come, I did!*



ACTIVITY 8

CLASS DEBATE

Many of the themes in *My Fair Lady* lend themselves to a lively class debate: morality, class divides, snobbery, identity and metamorphosis.

Get the class to organise a formal debate on one of the themes on the activity sheet. You'll need to ensure there's a Chairperson, a Proposer and a Seconder, an Opposer and a Seconder.

Alternatively, you could divide the class into two teams, each of which will argue opposing cases for the topic under debate. Give students some time to prepare their case (some of this could perhaps be done as a homework assignment). Each team should have three speakers and a team leader, who may or may not be one of the speakers. Ensure that every member of the team, even if s/he is not a speaker, plays a role in researching, discussing and constructing the argument to be presented.

The speakers of each team can then take turns to speak. Team One's first speaker will speak for five minutes, followed by Team Two's first speaker. The second speakers for both teams then speak for five minutes each, presenting the counter-argument to the other side. Finally the last two speakers have five minutes each, continuing the arguments and counter-arguments, and summing up the cases.

Topics to be debated:

1. The basis of the play, class distinctions, is not relevant today.
2. Doolittle is right: "Morality is a luxury".
3. Eliza is right: "The difference between a flower girl and a duchess is not how she behaves, but how she is treated".

Other possible topics:

- The humour of the musical
- The realism of the characters
- The impact/effect of the "swearing" –

"not bloody likely" in *Pygmalion*

"move your blooming arse" in *My Fair Lady*

Students can then write up the argument as a persuasive essay, or choose another topic on which to write an essay.



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my fair lady



A CRITIC FOR A DAY

Now that you have seen *My Fair Lady*, write the kind of review that might go into a newspaper. Try looking in a few of the Sunday newspapers to get ideas about how they are written.

Make sure you cover:

1. In which theatre you saw the musical
2. A brief account of the plot (don't give too much away)
3. The cast - who played whom?
4. Staging - the set
- special effects
- costumes etc.

How impressive was the staging?

5. The acting - was it believable?
- who stood out?
6. The singing
Who was the most memorable?
7. The choreography
Which bits made you gasp?
8. How did they keep your interest?
9. How did they keep up the pace?
10. Were there any special bits? For example, comedy, dramatic moments, pathos.
11. And finally, the most important thing - would you recommend the show?

my fair lady



THE ORIGINS OF MY FAIR LADY

1. Pygmalion, in Greek mythology, was a sculptor who created a beautiful ivory statue he called Galatea, with whom he fell in love. The goddess Aphrodite brought Galatea to life, and Pygmalion married her.

Research the story of Pygmalion more thoroughly. Write your own version of it.

2. Bernard Shaw used that Greek myth as the basis for his own play, *Pygmalion*. Henry Higgins is the new Pygmalion figure, who 'moulds', almost like a sculptor, a Cockney flower girl into his 'Galatea', making her most desirable. But Bernard Shaw changed the ending. He did not have Higgins marry Eliza. Instead, she marries Freddy Eynsford-Hill.

Research Bernard Shaw and his play, *Pygmalion* and write a synopsis (brief outline of the plot).

3. *My Fair Lady* is based very closely on Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, but again changes the ending.
Do musical theatregoers need a 'happy ending'?
4. Compare *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* more closely.
How are they alike?
How are they different?
Why did Lerner and Loewe change what they did?
Do you think they were right to do so?

my fair lady



CHARACTER STUDIES

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Henry Higgins:

An eccentric professor of phonetics.
At first he sees Eliza as just a challenge, a way to win a bet.
But, gradually, he learns to see her as a person.

Colonel Pickering:

Alfred Doolittle:

Mrs Higgins:

Freddy Eynsford-Hill:

Mrs Pearce:

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‘BY GEORGE, SHE’S GOT IT!’

Remember how Higgins, as a professor of phonetics, could place people he heard speak just by their accents, and how he had to change Eliza’s accent before she could be accepted by the upper class.

1. Discuss the importance of accents today.
Are they less important than they were?
On what occasions are they still important?

Which accents are particularly strong?

In what situations might someone wish to change his/her accent?

2. In pairs, write a scene – a piece of dialogue – which reverses the scene in which Higgins teaches Eliza.

One character should coach another in posing a ‘posh’ accent – how to drop aitches and mis-use grammar – in order to fit in.

Instead of “The rain in Spain...” choose a more appropriate sentence.

End the scene with an alternative to “By George, s/he’s got it!”.

3. Rehearse your pieces to show to the class.

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PARODIES

A parody is an imitation of an author's work and style, a story, poem, lyric, etc. It is often intended to ridicule, but can be light-hearted, even affectionate.

Take one of the songs from *My Fair Lady* and write a parody of the song.

It might be 'Wouldn't It Be Lovely' beginning "All I want is a job somewhere" or "All I want is a meal somewhere" or perhaps a cry for help from someone who has not done their homework – 'Get me to the School on time' beginning "I'm having English in the morning, Get me to the School on time".

Explore ideas, have fun, but try to keep the flow of the original – the rhythm and tempo. If you get it right, you should be able to sing your version to the tune of the original.

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EMPATHETIC WRITING

We tend to see story lines through the eyes of main characters. But the lives of many others are changed by the action.

The arrival of Eliza Doolittle changes the routine, and life, of Professor Higgins. But what of Colonel Pickering, set in his ways and happy in his relationship with fellow confirmed bachelor and friend, Higgins, a relationship disturbed by Eliza. Or Mrs Pearce, whose duties as housekeeper to Higgins are turned upside down by Eliza's arrival.

Choose one of these two characters and tell their story.
Try to catch their style and mode of speech.

Begin:



COLONEL PICKERING

'I'll never forget the day my visit to Higgins' house was interrupted...'



MRS PEARCE

'What a kerfuffle we had when Miss Doolittle first arrived, badly in need of a bath...'

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IMAGINATIVE WRITING

In the original Greek myth, Pygmalion married Galatea.

In Bernard Shaw's play, Higgins does not marry Eliza.

Bernard Shaw explained why:

- Higgins was twenty years older than Eliza.
- Higgins' mother set too high a standard of womanly excellence for him, and Eliza realised that she could never come between Higgins and his mother.
- Eliza could not face the prospect of coming secondary to phonetics and Milton, so Eliza married Freddy Eynsford-Hill.

In *My Fair Lady*, Lerner and Loewe revert to the original ending, and Eliza returns to Higgins.

Imagine that they had kept to Bernard Shaw's ending.

Write a different scene to end the musical.

Perhaps one where Eliza and Freddy meet, declare their love and leave together; or one where Higgins and Pickering discuss Eliza's marriage to Freddy.

What will they say?

Will Higgins show remorse at his loss?

You might even write the lyrics for a new final song – Eliza and Freddy's love duet or Higgins' sad song of loss.

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CLASS DEBATE

My Fair Lady, as well as being a fast-moving and enjoyable experience, contains elements and themes that can form the basis for debate.

As a group, organise a formal debate on a theme raised by the musical.

You will need:

A Chairperson
(to control the debate)

A Proposer
And a Seconder
(to propose the motion)

An Opposer
And a Seconder
(to oppose the motion)

Topics for debate:

1. The basis of the play, class distinctions, is not relevant today.
2. Doolittle is right: "Morality is a luxury".
3. Eliza is right: "The difference between a flower girl and a duchess is not how she behaves, but how she is treated".

And think up some others of your own.