



Pygmalion (Wisehouse Classics Edition)

George Bernard Shaw

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PYGMALION is a play by George Bernard Shaw, named after a Greek mythological character. It was first presented on stage to the public in 1913. Professor of phonetics Henry Higgins makes a bet that he can train a bedraggled Cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, to pass for a duchess at an ambassador's garden party by teaching her to assume a veneer of gentility, the most important element of which, he believes, is impeccable speech. The play is a sharp lampoon of the rigid British class system of the day and a commentary on women's independence.

In ancient Greek mythology, Pygmalion fell in love with one of his sculptures, which then came to life. The general idea of that myth was a popular subject for Victorian era English playwrights, including one of Shaw's influences, W. S. Gilbert, who wrote a successful play based on the story called *Pygmalion and Galatea* first presented in 1871. Shaw would also have been familiar with the burlesque version, *Galatea, or Pygmalion Reversed*. Shaw's play has been adapted numerous times, most notably as the musical *My Fair Lady* and the film of that name. (more o: www.wisehouse-classics.com)

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