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 **Prestwick House**
Activity Pack
Literature Made Fun!



Pygmalion
BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW


Prestwick House

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading

Characterization

Objective: Predicting character traits and actions

Activity

People say a picture is worth a thousand words. Indeed, we treasure photographs we have of our family, friends, and loved ones—they commemorate fun times and meaningful experiences. Looking back on old photos not only brings back memories of events, but also brings back emotions about the people we call special.

On the cover of *Pygmalion* is a painting of a woman. Study the painting for a few minutes. Take in the visual details—the way the woman looks, how she is dressed, the background, and her facial expression. In the chart on the next page, list traits you believe you can attribute to this woman, based on the painting. Then, try to compare the woman to someone you know.

CHARACTERIZATION CHART

Traits I See Based on the Painting
This woman reminds me of _____.

Name: _____

Date: _____

During Reading**Plot Mapping**

Objective: Recalling key events in the play

Activity

Create a pictorial time line of the plot. After each act of the play, draw five small logographs (combinations of pictures and words) illustrating the main events or characters. When you finish reading the play and drawing your logographs, you should be able to retell the entire play by looking only at your paper. You may set up your own paper in this fashion:

PLOT MAPPING CHART

Act I					
Act II					
Act III					
Act IV					
Act V					

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act II**British Money****Objective:** Understanding the British monetary system**Activity**

During Act II, Eliza and Higgins discuss the idea of her paying him for speech lessons. The conversation contains monetary terms like “eighteenpence,” “shilling,” “guineas,” “pounds,” and “half-a-crown.” Without some background knowledge, a reader would never understand how much money these characters are talking about. However, the monetary system used in Britain in the early 20th century differs from today’s system, which has been in place since 1971.

For this activity, use the Internet or other resources available to you to research Old English money. With the information you find, complete the conversion chart provided. The chart will help you understand the relationships among all the different monetary denominations.

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 V**Rewriting Text****Objective:** Adapting scenes to another format**Activity**

Rewrite a portion of the play as a narrative.

In Act V, Eliza has fled, unbeknownst to Henry, to Mrs. Higgins's house. Henry and Pickering arrive, panicked that they have lost Eliza. When she finally enters the room, the two men are so shocked by her beauty and confident presence that they can barely speak.

A discussion ensues, mostly between Eliza and Pickering, during which the audience is made to feel a great deal of compassion for Eliza and severe contempt for Higgins. However, Higgins is a human being, too, with feelings and insecurities like the rest of us. How might the scene play out if told from his perspective? Would the audience feel more sympathy for him knowing his innermost thoughts and feelings?

Rewrite part of this act as a first-person narrative from Henry's point of view—as if the play was actually a novel and you were writing a chapter. Start where Eliza enters the room and says, “How do you do, Professor Higgins?” and stop when Mr. Doolittle enters the scene. You should preserve the essence of the dialogue among characters, but do not feel as if you have to use the lines from the play as they appear. You might decide to delete some lines and elaborate upon others, especially to establish Henry's true feelings. You will have to invent setting and character details that are missing from the play's stage directions.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wrap-Up

Writing a Review

Objective: Reviewing key plot events and dramatic techniques through writing

Activity

Imagine you are a time-traveling entertainment reporter and you have been sent back to England in the early twentieth century to review a performance of Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Your assignment is to write a column (roughly 500 words) that reviews the performance and the drama itself, rating it for modern viewers. Consider the following aspects in your review:

- The plot itself—is it compelling? Tightly written? Surprising?
- The manner of presentation—consider staging, costuming, and props. Although different from modern presentation, is it worth seeing?
- The actors—who would their modern day equivalents be?
- The physical surroundings—describe.
- The audience's reaction—is the early 1900s audience appreciative and engaged?

Visualize the occasion in detail and dramatize the experience by reporting, for example, on how you arrive at the theater, where you sit, what you see and hear, and how the play is discussed after its conclusion.