

TEXT	<i>Pygmalion</i>
AUTHOR	George Bernard Shaw
THEMES	Making a point (Unit 2), Digital planet (Unit 7), Changing times (Unit 12), I'm working on it (Unit 14), A new chapter (Unit 16)
VOCABULARY	Various expressions and non-standard usage.
WRITING	Students write a dialogue.
SPEAKING	Students perform their dialogue.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950), was an Irish playwright, critic and political activist. He had a significant influence on Western theatre, especially by making the theatre a place where important social and cultural issues could be debated and analysed. He wrote more than sixty plays, including major works such as *Man and Superman* (1902), *Pygmalion* (1912) and *Saint Joan* (1923). In 1925 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.

WARMER

Focus on the picture. Ask students to describe the scene. Then ask them to imagine they are in the place (it might help if they close their eyes). They should concentrate on what they think you would hear, smell and touch if you were in a busy flower market. Then ask them to specify the voices you would probably hear (people selling their products, shouting maybe, customers asking questions, conversations, etc.).

ABOUT YOU

The questions get students thinking about the importance of accents. You might want to point out that English accents often don't tell you where someone is from geographically, but can say a lot about someone's education and social upbringing. Is this true in the students' own language? What else can we learn from accents? Are accents different depending on age – do adults and children or teens have different accents?

- 1 The main thing to notice is how rudely Higgins and Mrs Pearce behave towards Eliza, the flower girl. She is described as 'common', they say things to her like 'Nonsense girl!' and 'Be off with you'. Point out that this expression (which appears in the glossary) is impolite. Ask why they talk to Eliza in this way – do they consider her inferior? Is it ever acceptable to be rude to someone who you think is less important or poorer than you?

2

Suggested answers

- 1 There are probably two ways of interpreting this – one is that he wants to share his knowledge with another person, the other is that he is showing off – after all, Pickering recognises that he can't 'take half of it in', and it's a 'terrible strain'. The way Higgins speaks to Eliza (see Exercise 1) might support the latter interpretation – that he is proud and a bit of a bully.
- 2 Because he thinks she could be interesting for his research
- 3 The glossary explains that she uses the non-standard 'ain't', she also says 'I come' instead of 'I came'. Her way of talking is direct, and honest – informal – but she isn't rude or impolite. Even saying 'you're cheeky' is a mild response to Higgins' rudeness.
- 4 Not to sell something, as she says she has money and mentions lessons, so students can infer that she wants him to teach her.
- 5 Ask for ideas and suggestions (which will serve as useful input for the writing exercise).

VOCABULARY

3

Answers

- 1 the whole show
- 2 compliment
- 3 isn't above
- 4 transcript

4

Answers

- 1 a
- 2 d
- 3 b
- 4 c

WRITING

5

The group size is important as the students will perform their dialogue later and the number allows for actors and non-actors, according to the interests, strengths and weakness of the group members (see mixed-ability box). Another option with this activity is to ask students to invent their own ideas about what happens next and write the dialogue with their ideas. The number of lines should be fairly flexible as students might need more than twenty to develop their storyline.

SPEAKING

6

An engaging feedback session would be to look at how different groups developed the characters in the scene and their relationships. What determined their choices? Which characters were portrayed more or less sympathetically? Why?

MIXED ABILITY

As there are four actors in the scene, make groups of about six. Some weaker students are happy to read from a script, in which case they can take parts while the stronger students direct the scene. If some weaker – or stronger – students are shy about performing, they can be involved in directing, prompting or even creating props.