



## modern drama

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المسرحية الحديثة

### *Modern Drama Course*

#### *Arms and the Man*

#### **George Bernard Shaw**

George Bernard Shaw (26 July 1856 – 2 November 1950) was an Irish ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Irish_people)) playwright (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Playwright>) and a co-founder of the London School of Economics ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London\\_School\\_of\\_Economics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_School_of_Economics)). Although his first profitable writing was music ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music\\_journalism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_journalism)) and literary criticism ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary\\_criticism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Literary_criticism)), in which capacity he wrote many highly articulate pieces of journalism (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Journalism>), his main talent was for drama (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drama>), and he wrote more than 60 plays. He was also an essayist (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essay>), novelist (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novelist>) and short story ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short\\_story](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Short_story)) writer. Nearly all his writings address

prevailing social problems with a vein of comedy which makes their stark themes more palatable. Issues which engaged Shaw's attention included education, marriage, religion, government, health care, and class privilege.

He was most angered by what he perceived as the exploitation (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exploitation>) of the working class ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working\\_class](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_class)). An ardent socialist (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism>), Shaw wrote many brochures and speeches for the Fabian Society ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabian\\_Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabian_Society)). He became an accomplished orator in the furtherance of its causes, which included gaining equal rights for men and women ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender\\_equality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gender_equality)), alleviating abuses of the working class, rescinding private ownership of productive land, and promoting healthy lifestyles. For a short time he was active in local politics, serving on the London County Council ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London\\_County\\_Council](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_County_Council)).

Shaw was noted for expressing his views in uncompromising language, whether on vegetarianism (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vegetarianism>) (branding his own pre-vegetarian self a "cannibal (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cannibal>)"), the development of the human race (his own brand of eugenics (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugenics>) was driven by encouragement of miscegenation (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miscegenation>) and marrying across class lines), or on political questions (in spite of his own generally liberal views he was not an uncritical supporter of democracy (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy>), and is even recorded as supporting, or at least condoning, the dictators of the 1930s).

In 1898, Shaw married Charlotte Payne-Townshend ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte\\_Payne-Townshend](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlotte_Payne-Townshend)), a fellow Fabian, whom he survived. They settled in Ayot St Lawrence ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayot\\_St\\_Lawrence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayot_St_Lawrence)) in a house now called Shaw's

Corner ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaw%27s\\_Corner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaw%27s_Corner)). Shaw died there, aged 94, from chronic problems exacerbated by injuries he incurred by falling from a ladder.

He is the only person to have been awarded both

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Academy\\_Award\\_records#Miscellaneous\\_records](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Academy_Award_records#Miscellaneous_records)

a Nobel Prize in Literature ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel\\_Prize\\_in\\_Literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature))

(1925) and an Academy Award

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy\\_Award\\_for\\_Best\\_Writing\\_\(Adapted\\_Screenplay](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academy_Award_for_Best_Writing_(Adapted_Screenplay)

(1938), for his contributions to literature and for his work on the film Pygmalion

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion\\_\(1938\\_film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion_(1938_film))) (an adaptation of his play of

the same name ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion\\_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion_(play)))), respectively.[n 1]

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-1)) Shaw turned

down all other awards and honours, including the offer of a knighthood

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orders,\\_decorations,\\_and\\_medals\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orders,_decorations,_and_medals_of_the_United_Kingdo)

## **Contributions**

Shaw's plays were first performed in the 1890s. By the end of the decade he was an established playwright. He wrote sixty-three plays and his output as novelist, critic, pamphleteer, essayist and private correspondent was prodigious. He is known to have written more than 250,000 letters.<sup>[11]</sup>

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-epistolomania-12](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-epistolomania-12))

Along with Fabian Society ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabian\\_Society](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fabian_Society)) members

Sidney ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney\\_Webb,\\_1st\\_Baron\\_Passfield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sidney_Webb,_1st_Baron_Passfield)) and

Beatrice Webb ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatrice\\_Webb](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatrice_Webb)) and Graham Wallas

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graham\\_Wallas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Graham_Wallas)), Shaw founded the London School of

Economics and Political Science

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London\\_School\\_of\\_Economics\\_and\\_Political\\_Science](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_School_of_Economics_and_Political_Science))

in 1895 with funding provided by private philanthropy, including a bequest of

£20,000 from Henry Hunt Hutchinson to the Fabian Society. One of the libraries at

the London School of Economics

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London\\_School\\_of\\_Economics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London_School_of_Economics)) is named in Shaw's honour; it contains collections of his papers and photographs.<sup>[12]</sup>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-shawlib-13](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-shawlib-13)) Shaw helped to found the left-wing magazine *New Statesman*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Statesman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Statesman)) in 1913 with the Webbs and other prominent members of the Fabian Society.<sup>[13]</sup>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-14](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-14))

Shaw became a critic of the arts when, sponsored by [William Archer](#)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Archer\\_\(critic\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Archer_(critic))), he joined the reviewing staff of the *Pall Mall Gazette* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pall\\_Mall\\_Gazette](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pall_Mall_Gazette)) in 1885.<sup>[21]</sup>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-22](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-22)) There he wrote under the pseudonym "*Corno di Bassetto*" ("[basset horn](#)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basset\\_horn](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basset_horn)")—chosen because it sounded European and nobody knew what a *corno di bassetto* was. In a miscellany of other periodicals, including *Dramatic Review* (1885–86), *Our Corner* (1885–86), and the *Pall Mall Gazette* (1885–88) his byline was "GBS".<sup>[22]</sup>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-limerick-23](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-limerick-23)) From 1895 to 1898, Shaw was the drama critic for his friend [Frank Harris](#)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank\\_Harris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Harris))'s *Saturday Review*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturday\\_Review\\_\(London\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saturday_Review_(London))), in which position he campaigned brilliantly to displace the artificialities and hypocrisies of the Victorian stage with a theatre of actuality and thought. His earnings as a critic made him self-supporting as an author and his articles for the *Saturday Review* made his name well-known.

George Bernard Shaw was highly critical of productions of Shakespeare, and specifically denounced the dramatic practice of editing Shakespeare's plays, whose scenes tended to be cut in order to create "acting versions". He singled out 19th-century actor [Sir Henry Irving](#) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir\\_Henry\\_Irving](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_Henry_Irving)) for this practice, in one of his reviews:

## Plays

Shaw began working on his first play destined for production, *Widowers' Houses* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Widowers%27\\_Houses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Widowers%27_Houses)), in 1885 in collaboration with critic William Archer ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Archer\\_\(critic\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Archer_(critic))), who supplied the structure. Archer decided that Shaw could not write a play, so the project was abandoned. Years later, Shaw tried again and, in 1892, completed the play without collaboration. *Widowers' Houses*, a scathing attack on slum landlords, was first performed at London's Royalty Theatre on 9 December 1892. Shaw would later call it one of his worst works, but he had found his medium. His first significant financial success as a playwright came from Richard Mansfield ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard\\_Mansfield](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Mansfield))'s American production of *The Devil's Disciple* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Devil%27s\\_Disciple](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Devil%27s_Disciple)) (1897). He went on to write 63 plays, most of them full-length.

Often his plays succeeded in the United States and Germany before they did in London. Although major London productions of many of his earlier pieces were delayed for years, they are still being performed there. Examples include *Mrs. Warren's Profession* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mrs.\\_Warren%27s\\_Profession](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mrs._Warren%27s_Profession)) (1893), *Arms and the Man* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms\\_and\\_the\\_Man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_and_the_Man)) (1894), *Candida* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candida\\_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candida_(play))) (1894) and *You Never Can Tell* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You\\_Never\\_Can\\_Tell\\_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You_Never_Can_Tell_(play))) (1897).

Shaw's plays, like those of Oscar Wilde ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oscar\\_Wilde](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oscar_Wilde)), contained incisive humour, which was exceptional among playwrights of the Victorian era; both authors are remembered for their comedy.<sup>[36]</sup>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-37](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-37) He played an important role in revolutionizing British drama. In the Victorian Era ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen\\_Victoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Victoria)), the London stage had been regarded as a place for frothy, sentimental entertainment. Shaw made it a forum for considering moral, political and economic issues, possibly his most lasting and important contribution to dramatic art. In this, he considered himself indebted to

Henrik Ibsen ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henrik\\_Ibsen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henrik_Ibsen)), who pioneered modern realistic drama, meaning drama designed to heighten awareness of some important social issue. Significantly, *Widowers' Houses* — an example of the realistic genre — was completed after William Archer, Shaw's friend, had translated some of Ibsen's plays to English and Shaw had written *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quintessence\\_of\\_Ibsenism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quintessence_of_Ibsenism)).<sup>[37]</sup> ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-38](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-38))

As Shaw's experience and popularity increased, his plays and prefaces became more voluble about reforms he advocated, without diminishing their success as entertainments. Such works, including *Caesar and Cleopatra* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesar\\_and\\_Cleopatra\\_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caesar_and_Cleopatra_(play))) (1898), *Man and Superman* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man\\_and\\_Superman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Man_and_Superman)) (1903), *Major Barbara* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major\\_Barbara\\_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_Barbara_(play))) (1905) and *The Doctor's Dilemma* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Doctor%27s\\_Dilemma\\_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Doctor%27s_Dilemma_(play))) (1906), display Shaw's matured views, for he was approaching 50 when he wrote them. From 1904 to 1907, several of his plays had their London premieres in productions at the Royal Court Theatre ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal\\_Court\\_Theatre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Court_Theatre)), managed by Harley Granville-Barker ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harley\\_Granville-Barker](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harley_Granville-Barker)) and J. E. Vedrenne ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J.\\_E.\\_Vedrenne](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/J._E._Vedrenne)). The first of his new plays to be performed at the Court Theatre, *John Bull's Other Island* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John\\_Bull%27s\\_Other\\_Island](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bull%27s_Other_Island)) (1904), while not especially popular today, made his reputation in London when King Edward VII ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward\\_VII\\_of\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_VII_of_the_United_Kingdom)) laughed so hard during a command performance that he broke his chair.<sup>[38]</sup> ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-39](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-39))

By the 1910s, Shaw was a well-established playwright. New works such as *Fanny's First Play* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanny%27s\\_First\\_Play](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanny%27s_First_Play)) (1911) and *Pygmalion* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion\\_\(play\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pygmalion_(play))) (1912), had long runs in front of large London audiences. Shaw had permitted a musical adaptation of *Arms and the Man* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms\\_and\\_the\\_Man](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arms_and_the_Man)) (1894) called

*The Chocolate Soldier* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Chocolate\\_Soldier](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Chocolate_Soldier)) (1908), but he had a low opinion of German operetta. He insisted that none of his dialogue be used, and that all the character names be changed, although the operetta actually follows Shaw's plot quite closely, in particular preserving its anti-war message. The work proved very popular and would have made Shaw rich had he not waived his royalties, but he detested it and for the rest of his life forbade musicalization of his work, including a proposed [Franz Lehár](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Leh%C3%A1r) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz\\_Leh%C3%A1r](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franz_Leh%C3%A1r)) operetta based on *Pygmalion*. Several of his plays formed the basis of musicals after his death—most famously the musical *My Fair Lady* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My\\_Fair\\_Lady](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/My_Fair_Lady))—it is officially adapted from the screenplay of the film version of *Pygmalion* rather than the original stage play (keeping the film's ending), and librettist [Alan Jay Lerner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Jay_Lerner) ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan\\_Jay\\_Lerner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alan_Jay_Lerner)) kept generous chunks of Shaw's dialogue, and the characters' names, unchanged.

Shaw's outlook was changed by World War I, which he uncompromisingly opposed despite incurring outrage from the public as well as from many friends. His first full-length piece, presented after the War, written mostly during it, was *Heartbreak House* ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heartbreak\\_House](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heartbreak_House)) (1919). A new Shaw had emerged—the wit remained, but his faith in humanity had dwindled. In the preface to *Heartbreak House* he said:

### **Political, social, and religious views**

Shaw asserted that each social class strove to serve its own ends, and that the upper and middle classes won in the struggle while the working class lost. He condemned the democratic system of his time, saying that workers, ruthlessly exploited by greedy employers, lived in abject poverty and were too ignorant and apathetic to vote intelligently.<sup>[67]</sup>

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_Bernard\\_Shaw#cite\\_note-68](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Bernard_Shaw#cite_note-68)) He believed this deficiency would ultimately be corrected by the emergence of long-lived supermen with experience and intelligence enough to govern properly. He called





### ***Summary of Arms and the Man***

act 1: The play begins in the bedroom of Raina Petkoff in a Bulgarian town in 1885, during the Serbo-Bulgarian War. As the play opens, Catherine Petkoff and her daughter, Raina, have just heard that the Bulgarians have scored a tremendous victory in a cavalry charge led by Raina's fiancé, Major Sergius Saranoff, who is in the same regiment as Raina's father, Major Paul Petkoff. Raina is so impressed with the noble deeds of her fiancé that she fears that she might never be able to live up to his nobility. At this very moment, the maid, Louka, rushes in with the news that the Serbs are being chased through the streets and that it is necessary to lock up the house and all of the windows. Raina promises to do so later, and Louka leaves. But as Raina is reading in bed, shots are heard, there is a noise at the balcony window, and a bedraggled enemy soldier with a gun appears and threatens to kill her if she makes a sound. After the soldier and Raina exchange some words, Louka calls from outside the door; she says that several soldiers want to search the house and investigate a report that an enemy Serbian soldier was seen climbing her balcony. When Raina hears the news, she turns to the soldier. He says that he is prepared to die, but he certainly plans to kill a few Bulgarian

soldiers in her bedroom before he dies. Thus, Raina impetuously decides to hide him. The soldiers investigate, find no one, and leave. Raina then calls the man out from hiding; she nervously and absentmindedly sits on his gun, but she learns that it is not loaded; the soldier carries no cartridges. He explains that instead of carrying bullets, he always carries chocolates into battle. Furthermore, he is not an enemy; he is a Swiss, a professional soldier hired by Serbia. Raina gives him the last of her chocolate creams, which he devours, maintaining that she has indeed saved his life. Now that the Bulgarian soldiers are gone, Raina wants the "chocolate cream soldier" (as she calls him) to climb back down the drainpipe, but he refuses to; whereas he could climb up, he hasn't the strength to climb down. When Raina goes after her mother to help, the "chocolate cream soldier" crawls into Raina's bed and falls instantly asleep. In fact, when they re-enter, he is sleeping so soundly that they cannot awaken him.

Act II: begins four months later in the garden of Major Petkoff's house. The middle-aged servant Nicola is lecturing Louka on the importance of having proper respect for the upper class, but Louka has too independent a soul to ever be a "proper" servant. She has higher plans for herself than to marry someone like Nicola, who, she insists, has the "soul of a servant." Major Petkoff arrives home from the war, and his wife Catherine greets him with two bits of information: she suggests that Bulgaria should have annexed Serbia, and she tells him that she has had an electric bell installed in the library. Major Sergius Saranoff, Raina's fiancé and leader of the successful cavalry charge, arrives, and in the course of discussing the end of the war, he and Major Petkoff recount the now-famous story of how a Swiss soldier escaped by climbing up a balcony and into the bedroom of a noble Bulgarian woman. The women are shocked that such a crude story would be told in front of them. When the Petkoffs go into the house, Raina and Sergius discuss their love for one another, and Raina romantically declares that the two of them have found a "higher love."

When Raina goes to get her hat so that they can go for a walk, Louka comes in, and Sergius asks if she knows how tiring it is to be involved with a "higher love." Then he immediately tries to embrace the attractive maid. Since he is being so blatantly familiar, Louka declares that Miss Raina is no better than she; Raina, she says, has been having an affair while Sergius was away, but she refuses to tell Sergius who Raina's lover is, even though Sergius accidentally bruises Louka's arm while trying to wrest a confession from her. When he apologizes, Louka insists that he kiss her arm, but Sergius refuses and, at that moment, Raina re-enters. Sergius is then called away, and Catherine enters. The two ladies discuss how incensed they both are that Sergius related the tale about the escaping soldier. Raina, however, doesn't care if Sergius hears about it; she is tired of his stiff propriety. At that moment, Louka announces the presence of a Swiss officer with a carpetbag, calling for the lady of the house. His name is Captain Bluntschli. Instantly, they both know he is the "chocolate cream soldier" who is returning the Major's old coat that they disguised him in. As they make rapid, desperate plans to send him away, Major Petkoff hails Bluntschli and greets him warmly as the person who aided them in the final negotiations of the war; the old Major insists that Bluntschli must be their houseguest until he has to return to Switzerland.

Act III: begins shortly after lunch and takes place in the library. Captain Bluntschli is attending to a large amount of confusing paperwork in a very efficient manner, while Sergius and Major Petkoff merely observe. Major Petkoff complains about a favorite old coat being lost, but at that moment Catherine rings the new library bell, sends Nicola after the coat, and astounds the Major by thus retrieving his lost coat. When Raina and Bluntschli are left alone, she compliments him on his looking so handsome now that he is washed and brushed. Then she assumes a high and noble tone and chides him concerning certain stories which he has told and the fact that she has had to lie for him. Bluntschli laughs at her "noble attitude" and says that he is pleased with her demeanor. Raina is amused; she says that Bluntschli is the first person to ever see through her pretensions, but she is perplexed that he didn't feel into the pockets of the old coat which she lent him;

she had placed a photo of herself there with the inscription "To my Chocolate Cream Soldier." At this moment, a telegram is brought to Bluntschli relating the death of his father and the necessity of his coming home immediately to make arrangements for the six hotels that he has inherited. As Raina and Bluntschli leave the room, Louka comes in wearing her sleeve in a ridiculous fashion so that her bruise will be obvious. Sergius enters and asks if he can cure it now with a kiss. Louka questions his true bravery; she wonders if he has the courage to marry a woman who is socially beneath him, even if he loved the woman. Sergius asserts that he would, but he is now engaged to a girl so noble that all such talk is absurd. Louka then lets him know that Bluntschli is his rival and that Raina will marry the Swiss soldier. Sergius is incensed. He sees Bluntschli and immediately challenges him to a duel; then he retracts when Raina comes in and accuses him of making love to Louka merely to spy on her and Bluntschli. As they are arguing, Bluntschli asks for Louka, who has been eavesdropping at the door. She is brought in, Sergius apologizes to her, kisses her hand, and thus they become engaged. Bluntschli asks permission to become a suitor for Raina's hand, and when he lists all of the possessions which he has (200 horses, 9600 pairs of sheets, ten thousand knives and forks, etc.), permission for the marriage is granted, and Bluntschli says that he will return in two weeks to marry Raina. Succumbing with pleasure, Raina gives a loving smile to her "chocolate cream soldier."

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### Analysis act1

In reading a Shavian play, one should pay attention to Shaw's staging directions at the beginning of the act. The stage directions here call for the scenery to convey the impression of cheap Viennese pretentious aristocracy incongruously combined with good, solid Bulgarian commonplace items. Likewise, since Raina will ultimately be seen as a person who will often assume a pose for dramatic effect, the act opens with her being (in Shaw's words) "intensely conscious of the

romantic beauty of the night and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it." As we find out later, she even listens at doors and waits until the proper moment to make the most effective, dramatic entrance.

As noted in the "Introduction" to these notes, the title of this play is ironic since it comes from the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid* ("Of arms and the man I sing. . ."), an epic which glorifies war and the hero in battle. Shaw will use the idea of the hero (Sergius) in war (the Serbo-Bulgarian war) in order to satirize not merely war itself, but the romantic glorification of war. In addition to this goal, he will also satirize romantic notions of valor and courage, affectation and pretense, and most important, misguided idealism. The dramatic shift that will occur in the play involves two romantic idealists (Raina and Sergius) who, rejecting their original positions instead of marrying each other, will each become engaged to a practical realist — Sergius to the practical and attractive servant, Louka, and Raina to the professional realist, Captain Bluntschli.

Raina is seen, at first, as the romantic idealist, but she is also characterized as being a fleeting realist when she wonders if her idealism and Sergius' idealism might be due simply to the fact that they have read so much poetry by Byron and other romantics. Likewise, Raina wants to glory in the noble idealism of the war, but she is also deeply troubled by its cruelty: "What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?" In this early comment, we have her rationale for her later hiding and, thus, her saving Bluntschli's life.

Before meeting Bluntschli, Raina seems to want to live according to the romantic idealism to which she and Sergius aspire. She knows that he has, in effect, placed her on too high a pedestal, but she does want to make an effort to live "up to his high standards." For example, after hearing of his heroic feats, she holds up his photo and "elevates it, like a priestess," vowing never to be unworthy of him. This vow, however, as we soon see, will not last too long.



*Arms and the Man* is an early Shawian play, and in it, Shaw used certain techniques that he was never to use again. In the first act, for example, the entire act has a farcical note about it and the use of a screen or a curtain for a character to hide behind was a traditional technique used only in comedies. The coat episode in the third act is a contrived bit of farce that amuses the audience, but it cheapens the intellectual aspect of the drama because it contributes nothing other than its own farcical element.

In Act II, the structure of the act is more serious, but it also uses several traditional farcical elements. For example, there is the use of the exaggerated means whereby Sergius can deceive Raina while trying to make love with Raina's maid, the story told in the army camp about the soldier who escapes into a lady's bedroom (while the ladies of the story have to listen in pretended dismay), the sudden appearance of the captain and the hasty decisions which the ladies must undertake, and finally the sudden surprise that occurs when we discover that Captain Petkoff knows Bluntschli — all of these circumstances are elements of melodrama or farce.

In the early part of the act, we see Louka as an ingenious maid who refuses to acknowledge that she has "the soul of a servant," a fault that she accuses Nicola of having. Later, however, when Sergius tells her that she possesses the soul of a servant, his comment stings. We do, however, admire the way that Louka is able to dismiss Nicola and to manipulate the supposedly superior and aristocratic Sergius.

When we meet Sergius and hear of his total disillusionment with war and with "soldiering [which] is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong and keeping out of the way when you are weak," we are then prepared for the fact that Sergius will not be a romantic idealist for long. His new views on war should prepare us for a significant change in his total outlook on life; thus, he will





Likewise, Bluntschli changes. While he will not tolerate posturing, yet, since he is such a plainspoken man, we are surprised to discover that beneath his exterior, he has a romantic soul — that is, he came back with the Major's coat only to have one more glimpse of Raina, with whom he is infatuated. Therefore, as the practical man is seen to change, so also does Sergius, whom we saw very early in the second act confess to being tired of playing this game of the ideal of the "higher love." He is immensely relieved not to have to be the over-idealized, noble object of Raina's love; he found trying to live up to her expectations tiresome. After discovering that there is no nobility or heroics connected with war, he is delighted to discover that Raina's heroics are not for him; as a result, he turns to the more basic but yet attractive Louka.

The resolution of the drama is brought about by the simple technique of having all of the characters recognize their basic nature and yield to it. Consequently, the ending of this comedy is similar to most classic comedies — that is, after a mix-up or confusion between the lovers, everyone is paired with the proper person finally.

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## **Characters analysis**

**Captain Bluntschli** A professional soldier from Switzerland who is serving in the Serbian army. He is thirty-four years old, and he is totally realistic about the stupidity of war. Captain Bluntschli is a thirty-four-year-old realist who sees through the absurd romanticism of war. Furthermore, unlike the aristocratic volunteers who are untrained, amateurish idealists, Captain Bluntschli is a professional soldier, trained in waging a war in a highly efficient, businesslike manner. These methods allow Sergius to refer to his ability to wage a war as

being low-class commercialism, devoid of any honor and nobility. Bluntschli would agree with this appraisal since he sees nothing romantic about the violent and senseless slaughter of human beings, even though it is his profession.

Being a professional soldier, he adopts a practical and wise view (his name is a combination of *Blunt*, plus the ending, which in Swiss means "sweet" or "endearing" or "lovable"). Given the choice of being killed or saving his life by climbing up a balcony and into a lady's bedroom, he chooses unheroically not to be killed. Practically, he knows that a dead professional soldier is of no value to anyone; thus, he saves his life by the most expedient method available — he hides in a lady's bedchamber. Likewise, given the choice of killing someone or of not going hungry, he chooses to eat rather than to kill; thus, he carries chocolates rather than cartridges, a highly unromantic but very practical thing to do.

When Bluntschli first hears of Sergius' cavalry charge and refuses to view Sergius' actions in any way except as a foolhardy display of false heroics, he reveals his complete practicality and subjects himself to Raina's charge that he is "incapable of appreciating honor and courage." Yet, his questioning of Sergius' actions causes Raina to question Sergius' qualities.

Bluntschli does possess some qualities which cause Raina to exchange the "noble and heroic" Sergius in favor of him. Raina's perfect honesty, in fact, allows her to relax and to come down from her pedestal. Bluntschli's fondness for chocolates in the midst of war is appealingly incongruous. His docility, combined with his efficiency, endears him to others, especially the entire Petkoff family, and, finally, he reveals to the established group that he is an incurable romantic. He explains that he could have sent the old coat back, but that he wanted to return it personally so that he could have one more glimpse of the entrancing Raina. Thus, he wins her for his "affianced wife."

**Raina Petkoff** The romantic idealist of twenty-three who views war in terms of noble and heroic deeds. Raina is one of Shaw's most delightful heroines from his early plays. In the opening scenes of the play, she is presented as being a romantically idealistic person in love with the noble ideal of war and love; yet, she is also aware that she is playing a game, that she is a *poseuse* who enjoys making dramatic entrances (her mother is aware that Raina listens at doors in order to know when to make an effective entrance), and she is very quixotic in her views on love and war. Whenever Raina strikes a pose, she is fully aware "of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it." When she accuses Bluntschli of being "incapable of gratitude" and "incapable of any noble sentiments," she is also amused, and she is later delighted that he sees through her "noble attitude" and her pretensions. In fact, her attraction for Bluntschli is partly due to the fact that she can step down off the pedestal which she must be upon, metaphorically, whenever she is in Sergius' presence. She shocks her mother when she says that she would like to shock Sergius' propriety since he is such a "stuffed shirt." Yet, at first, she is filled with undefined ideals. She admires Sergius' victories, but she is also genuinely troubled by the reports of the suffering and slaughter that accompany the war. She does respond immediately to the plight of the Serbian soldier (Captain Bluntschli), even though just a few moments earlier, she was delighting in Sergius' victory over the Serbs. And when there is the possibility of an actual slaughter taking place in her room (the Swiss soldier vowed to kill rather than be killed — even though we later discover that this was a bluff since he had no bullets), she impetuously decides to hide him and help him escape. When Bluntschli ridicules Sergius' quixotic cavalry charge, she pretends to be offended, but she is secretly glad that her intended is not "perfect."

Of Raina, Shaw wrote in an essay entitled "A Dramatic Realist to his Critics":

The heroine [Raina] has been classified by critics as a minx, a liar, and a poseuse; I have nothing to do with that: the only moral question for me is, does she do good or harm? If you admit that she does good, that she generously saves a man's life and wisely extricates herself from a false position with another man, then you

may classify her as you please — brave, generous and affectionate; or artful, dangerous, faithless — it is all one to me. . . . Raina, then, is perhaps a combination of all the above qualities. She is romantic, for example, when she remembers an opera (Verdi's *Ernani*) in which a member of the aristocracy shelters an enemy; thus, she shelters Bluntschli, since it is "chivalrous" to protect him. She does possess exalted ideals, but she is also pleased to step down from her pedestal and enjoy life directly; finally, in spite of her aristocratic background, she marries a person with "the soul of a hotel keeper."

**Sergius Saranoff** The extremely handsome young Bulgarian officer who leads an attack against the Serbs which was an overwhelming success. Sergius is the epitome of what every romantic hero should be: He is dashing, swashbuckling, devastatingly handsome, idealistic, wealthy, aristocratic, brave, and the acclaimed hero of a recent crushing victory in a recent cavalry raid which he led. He is possessed of only the loftiest and most noble ideals concerning war, romance, and chivalry, and he represents the quintessence of what a noble Bulgarian aristocrat should be. Yet Sergius is more than this. He is an aristocrat, but he is a Byronic type who has certain ideals, and he is likely to become thoroughly disillusioned when these ideals fail. For example, Sergius did go to war filled with high ideals, and he did lead a heroic and courageous cavalry attack; later, however, he discovered that wars are not conducted by bravery and courage; they are more often waged and won better by efficient and practical planning than they are won by glorious and chivalric deeds. For Sergius, then, war is only fit for sons of hotel keepers, who have something of the tradesman about them. For that reason, Sergius has resigned from the army in complete disillusionment.

After having become cynical about soldiering, Sergius becomes skeptical about his relationship with Raina. After all, as he tells Louka, it is rather tiresome having to live up to Raina's "ideal of the higher love." It was he, however, who placed Raina on a pedestal so high, in fact, that he was blinded to any possible fault she might

have. When Louka reveals all of Raina's faults — Raina lies, she pretends, and she has entertained another man in her bedroom — Sergius then feels free to cast his affections where they normally lead him — into marriage with the attractive Louka.

**Major Petkoff** The inept, fifty-year-old father of Raina; he is wealthy by Bulgarian standards, but he is also unread, uncouth, and incompetent.

**Catherine Petkoff** Raina's mother; she looks like and acts like a peasant, but she wears fashionable dressing gowns and tea gowns all the time in an effort to appear to be a Viennese lady.

**Louka** The Petkoffs' female servant; she is young and physically attractive, and she uses her appearance for ambitious preferment.

**Nicola** A realistic, middle-aged servant who is very practical.

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## Arms and the Man: Theme Analysis

### The Reality of War

The play opens with a romantic view of war held by the Bulgarians, especially the young Raina and Sergius. They will learn from experience and their lessons from Bluntschli that war is not glorious.

Raina and Sergius have learned their ideas of war from books. They speak of knights and ladies and the combat of honor between equals. Sergius says that war is like a "tournament" (Act II, p. 31). His idea of leading the victorious cavalry charge was a mistake from the point of view of modern warfare, for horses cannot override cannon and guns. Sergius resigns from the regiment, disillusioned that the other soldiers do not take him seriously. He refuses to play the modern game of war; it is for a "tradesman," he complains (Act II, p. 29).

Catherine Petkoff is even more locked into an old-fashioned conception of war and patriotism. She is upset when peace is declared and asks her husband if he couldn't have "annexed Serbia and made Prince Alexander Emperor of the Balkans" (Act II, p. 24). Major Petkoff explains they would have had to subdue Austria first (the allies of the Serbs). Catherine has no idea what war is or what it costs. Her ideas are as flimsy as Raina's. The two women are excited as they hear about the victory at Slivnitza and that Sergius is a hero. Catherine wants to worship Sergius and tries to persuade her husband about his promotion. Major Petkoff remarks that Sergius will not be promoted because everyone knows he is rash and incompetent.

Bluntschli tries to shock Raina into reality by reminding her that if the Bulgarians find him in her room, they will butcher him before her eyes. There will be blood everywhere. He appeals to the mother in her by asking for a place to sleep and food to eat. He admits he is frightened for he has had no sleep in three days. At this point, she heroically makes an effort to save him.

The Bulgarians are shown as naïve about war. Major Petkoff admits that neither the Bulgarians nor Serbs knew anything about war until their officers (the Austrians for the Serbs, and the Russians for the Bulgarians) taught them. Petkoff says, "there'd have been no war without them" (Act II, p. 29). Russia and Austria were considered Great Powers, more advanced and powerful countries that exerted a political influence on lesser powers. They jumped into the border dispute between Serbia and Bulgaria because they were worried about the balance of power. The Serbs and Bulgarians had once been friends. Neither were experienced with modern warfare.

As a professional soldier, the Swiss mercenary, Bluntschli, is the last word to his Bulgarian friends on the sober reality of war. He describes the soldier's point of view of how to stay alive by carrying more food than ammunition, and by avoiding the front lines. He beats Major Petkoff at horsetrading. Bluntschli is scorned at first because of his middle-class notions of war, but his practical knowledge of how to move troops and keep them supplied is soon appreciated by Sergius and Petkoff. Bluntschli as a Swiss Republican has modern democratic ideas that contrast sharply to the older feudal ideas of aristocracy held by the Bulgarians. They are used to a society of privilege and class stratification. They are impressed, however, by Bluntschli's modern power, knowledge and

wealth. Unlike them, he holds no lingering feuds after the war, but is more interested in managing his hotels. Business can be a force of economic stability across national boundaries, more powerful than war. He is ready to sign on Nicola, a former enemy, as one of his managers.

### **The Ideal vs. The Real**

Raina lives in a make-believe world, and she is aware of it, though she believes it is a more noble world than the one other people live in: "the world is really a glorious world for women who can see its glory and men who can act its romance" (Act I, p. 4). She and Sergius declare one another knight and lady, an example of the "higher love" (Act II, p. 31). Raina is always found posing, dreaming, or making a dramatic entrance. Her mother and father note her uncanny ability to come into a room at the right moment: "Yes, she listens for it," Catherine says (Act II, p. 28). Life for Raina is what she picks up at the opera season in Bucharest. Extending sanctuary to an enemy was in the opera she saw, and so she saves Bluntschli's life.

Bluntschli believes Raina is underage because of her romantic pretense. He is surprised to learn she is twenty-three. He admits he admires her thrilling voice, but he cannot believe a single word she says, he declares to her. He points out in his direct way in Act III that her life is a lie. Raina is relieved to be accepted as she is, a real person with faults. She is surprised to find she has more affection for her "chocolate cream soldier" who admits to hunger, cold, fear, and cowardice than for Sergius, who is full of noble bombast. She tells her mother to marry Sergius, because he is more to her taste.

Both Raina and Sergius find it fatiguing to keep up their higher love. Each of them is a secret realist at heart. Shaw makes the case for love being simple and real. Louka and Bluntschli are the antidote both romantic characters need. Bluntschli's ability to do away with romantic nonsense with common sense is good comedy and underscores Shaw's animosity towards Victorian melodrama, which gave audiences a distorted view of life.

### **Class Prejudice**

The tension of class rivalry is present throughout the play. Shaw treats it playfully, though it is a serious topic for him as a socialist dedicated to doing away with class injustice.

The Bulgarian society is pictured as a primitive holdover of the feudal class structure that Europe was slowly doing away with. England, for instance, was dealing at the turn of the century when Shaw was writing, with melting class distinctions. The working classes had gained the vote and the right to education. Improvement of slums, improvement of factory conditions, and greater representation of the lower classes in government signaled the democratic reform going on in advanced countries. In addition, it was a time of the rising power of the middle class, with the entrepreneurial spirit reigning as the force of the future. Bluntschli represents the middle-class business spirit of Europe; the Petkoffs are the aristocratic great landowners of the past; Nicola and Louka represent the old peasantry, bound to the land and landowners.

In the Bulgaria Shaw portrays, the higher classes hold the lower classes in subjugation through power, fear, and custom. Nicola warns Louka that the Petkoffs could destroy her if she defies them: "you don't know the power such high people have over the like of you and me when we try to rise out of our poverty against them" (Act II, p. 22). Nicola is cunning, but he accepts being the scapegoat of the family because they pay him off. He has dreams of rising out of his position as Louka does. He will buy a shop in Sofia to be independent, but even then "I shall always be dependent on the good will of the family" (Act II, p. 22). She accuses him of "selling his manhood for 30 levas" (Act III, p. 55) and swears that "You'll never put the soul of a servant into me" (Act II, p. 23).

Louka's ambition is higher than Nicola's: she wants to marry into the aristocracy. She plays on Sergius's sense of rebellious individualism to get him to defy social convention. She shows him that underneath his noble rhetoric, they are both human and made of the same "clay" (Act II, p. 35).

Nicola gives Louka lessons on how to change classes through her thinking and actions. He teaches her to stop wearing false hair and make-up, to trim her nails and keep her hands clean. He tells her a lady must act as if she will get her own way. He lies to Sergius and says that Louka has been reading in the library, trying to get education above her station.

Sergius himself points out that class discrimination spills over into military life. Both the upper and lower classes fight the enemy with equal courage. The poor soldiers, however, fear their own upper class officers who can keep them in their place: "they put up with insults and blows" (Act III, p. 58).



The Petkoffs are initially contemptuous of Bluntschli's middle-class or bourgeois background. He is no gentleman. Sergius calls him a "commercial traveler in uniform" (Act II, p. 30). Raina accuses him of having a "low shopkeeping mind" (Act III, p. 53). They change their minds when he turns out to be a problem solver (getting the troops home), and rich (inherits hotels). Petkoff says he must be the Emperor of Switzerland, but Bluntschli points out that "my rank is the highest known in Switzerland: I am a free citizen" (Act III, p. 72). If Louka is the rebellion of the lower classes demanding equal treatment, Bluntschli is the force of democracy. He congratulates Louka on her engagement with "the best wishes of a good Republican" (Act III, p. 69).

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## **Analysis of the Social Context of Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw**

George Bernard Shaw wrote Arms and the Man (<http://www.articlemyriad.com/51.htm>) in 1893 during the Victorian era when most plays were lighter dramas or comedies in the vein of The Importance of Being Earnest, (<http://www.articlemyriad.com/80.htm>) which was a play about manners and other Victorian conventions. Still, in many ways, *Arms and the Man*, despite some of its themes, is a perfect example of Victorian literature ([http://www.articlemyriad.com/victorian\\_poetry.htm](http://www.articlemyriad.com/victorian_poetry.htm)). The play opened to the British public in 1894 to mixed reviews and was one of the plays included in the Plays Pleasant Volume which included a few of Shaw's other, less popular works including "You Never Can Tell." What is most interesting about *Arms and the Man* is that, although it is a comedy, it deals with several political and social themes covertly. Ideas such as the idealism behind war and the romanticism (<http://www.articlemyriad.com/212.htm>) of love are attacked through satire and even more importantly, issues of class are brought to the forefront. Shaw was an avid socialist ([http://www.articlemyriad.com/economics\\_of\\_socialism.htm](http://www.articlemyriad.com/economics_of_socialism.htm)) and had a number of beliefs about class that are appropriate to the historical situation in Europe. At the time the play was performed, Britain was experiencing a number of significant social and political changes as issues of class were coming to the forefront of national debates.

The idea of class struggle is at the heart of "Arms and the Man" by George Bernard Shaw but instead of making the reader or viewer keenly aware of them, he slips in a number of thought-provoking lines and makes one think about these issues after the laughter has faded. Unlike other plays of the time, *Arms and the Man* did not seek to merely entertain an audience with polite humor. Instead, it

sought to expose some of the most pressing issues of the day in a palatable format—the comedy. This is a trademark feature of Shaw's plays and he once wrote, "What is the use of writing plays, what is the use of writing anything, if there is not a will which finally moulds chaos itself into a race of gods" (Peters 109). In other words, George Bernard Shaw thought that there was no sense in writing something for mere entertainment, what he wrote had to serve a higher purpose and encourage people to think rather than sit and be content to be entertained.

At the time George Bernard Shaw wrote the Arms and the Man (<http://www.articlemyriad.com/51.htm>) there were a number of class struggles taking place in Britain as a new wave of socialist ideology ([http://www.articlemyriad.com/economics\\_of\\_socialism.htm](http://www.articlemyriad.com/economics_of_socialism.htm)) was taking hold. Up until this point, workers in Britain were often paid low wages and offered little security as their country became even further industrialized (<http://www.articlemyriad.com/127.htm>). In response there were several workers movements that rose up across the nation and this drew the attention of artists and writers such as Shaw. Issues of class struggle were coming to the forefront of both political and debates in Europe and Shaw began working with the socialist cause. His feelings that the British workers were not advocating their interests enough and that the political structure in England was making it impossible for them to have any success led him to speak out publicly, often at the risk of some of his personal friendships. In addition to writing plays, Shaw became a full-time advocate of socialism ([http://www.articlemyriad.com/economics\\_of\\_socialism.htm](http://www.articlemyriad.com/economics_of_socialism.htm)) and joined the Fabian Society where he wrote a number of socialist documents. He also traveled to Russia, met with Stalin, and came home to declare how wonderfully he believed socialism was going in that country.

In "Arms and the Man" George Bernard Shaw chose to set his place in the midst of a foreign war, in part so that he could offer some commentary about war. The lead female in the play, much like English audiences of the time, is sucked into the

idea of the war hero and finds it difficult to think that war is anything except not glamorous. Notions of love and war as well as class are turned upside down and the reader is forced to confront them just as British playgoers of the time would eventually have to face these issues when the First World War finally came around over a decade later. At this time though, war was still a vague enough notion that it could be romanticized and this is part of the criticism George Bernard Shaw offers in the play Arms and the Man (<http://www.articlemyriad.com/51.htm>). In addition to this is his commentary about class which is the most important in terms of the social context of this play. “Arms and the Man” by George Bernard Shaw occurs during the Serbo-Bulgarian War in 1885. She is supposed to marry one of the heroes of the war who she thinks of in terms of the idealized version of soldiers many British held during this pre-World War I era. The peace of the beginning scenes is interrupted with the arrival of a Swiss soldier in Raina’s bedroom asking for a safe place to hide. Raina offers him refuge and laughs because he does not carry guns or ammunition but chocolate instead. As the play progresses, Raina eventually begins to understand that her betrothed does not fit into the same heroic image she has always had and instead begins to fall in love with the Swiss soldier. By the end of the play “Arms and the Man” by George Bernard Shaw she finally declares her love for the soldier and the story ends happily for nearly everyone. What is missing from this short synopsis is the way that George Bernard Shaw addresses the important social issue of class during this time. Throughout “Arms and the Man” George Bernard Shaw he constantly but with subtlety makes a number of important statements about his political and social beliefs about society and class that make reference to the social context of this play—Victorian England.

Throughout “Arms and the Man” by George Bernard Shaw, slight variances are used in the speech of the characters to indicate class distinctions. It is clear that Shaw, a noted socialist ([http://www.articlemyriad.com/economics\\_of\\_socialism.htm](http://www.articlemyriad.com/economics_of_socialism.htm)), has a great deal of concern about class issues and instead of making the reader keenly aware of

these notions through any direct mention, he uses their dialogue as well as cues within the setting to reveal these elements. "Despite the prominence of debate and speechmaking in his plays, one sometimes forgets that before Shaw-the-playwright came Shaw-the-debater and public speaker. All were platform spellbinders" (Dukore 385). Part of the reason it is so easy to forget that there a number of encoded social messages within the text is because is remarkably deft at conveying injustices and problems through characterization and language. His writing style is thus very critical of the Victorian-era society yet instead of doing this overtly, he relies on gestures, dialogue, and setting to set the stage for the debate. His "public speaking" would, in this sense be limited to the voices of his characters who come from variable class backgrounds and have a system of language that is suitable for their class. Only through this mode can Shaw open a platform for class debates.

At the very beginning of "Arms and the Man" by George Bernard Shaw, the reader is already cued into the class differences that will plague the text until the end. For instance, the introduction of Raina in "Arms and the Man" by George Bernard Shaw is not one that values her inner life, but those of outer appearances, something that is of great importance to her and her family. Without dialogue, she is introduced in one of the important quotes from Arms and the Man by George Bernard Shaw, "On the balcony, a young lady, intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night, and of the fact that her own youth and beauty is a part of it, is on the balcony, gazing at the snowy Balkans. She is covered by a long mantle of furs, worth, on a moderate estimate, about three times the furniture of the room" (Shaw 4). Here, it is not important who she is or what she thinks about her class position, but rather it is made clear that she is within an upper class and strives to maintain the outward appearances through her luxurious clothing while the representative items of her "inner life" (in this case her bedroom) are shoddy and unremarkable. Without being told the first thing about this character's thoughts, it is clear that reader should be immediately attentive to class distinctions through outward appearances. It should also be noted that this

setting is beautiful, but we are not expected to focus on the beauty in a traditional way, but rather to pay attention to the social statement—that there is a woman who obviously pays more for her clothes than the upkeep of her living quarters. In the mind of one critic, “The world, as he [Shaw] looks out upon it, is a painful spectacle to his eyes. Pity and indignation move him. He is not sentimental, as some writers are, but the facts grind his soul... in a word, art has an end beyond itself; and the object of Shaw’s art in particular is to make men think, to make them uncomfortable, to convict them of sin” (Salter 446). This is an especially succinct observation in this scene since there is opportunity for sentimentality and romanticism (since she is framed by a lovely setting) but this is not enough for Shaw; he must shift the object of the reader’s gaze away from physical beauty to the darker world of class and character.

Descriptions go beyond setting as well in “Arms and the Man” by George Bernard Shaw. The class of characters is not only revealed and critiqued by the setting itself, but by the narrated actions and stage directions for particular characters. For instance, consider the graceful language and the almost fairy-tale nature of the “dance” of Raina and her fiancée as they simply sit down for dinner. The narrator states in one of the important quotes from “Arms and the Man” by George Bernard Shaw, “Sergius leads Raina forward with splendid gallantry, as if she were a queen. When they come to the table, she turns to him with a bend of the head; he bows; and thus they separate, he coming to his place, and she going behind her father’s chair” (25). This is a very detailed and complex routine these characters act out and is representative of the codified ideals of chivalric behavior typically associated with the elite. This stands in sharp contrast to the plodding nature of the exchanges between Nicola and Louka, whose settings and stage directions are not filled with the same dreamy interludes. While Sergius and Raina literally appear to dance in the aforementioned scene, the lower class scenes of the two servants are much less stunning, the narrator only stating where they are

in physical space and their language being stunted and free from the dramatic connotations and Byron (<http://www.articlemyriad.com/byron.htm>)-like feel of the upper class characters.

This same shift in possibilities, from the potential sentimentality to the social critique, is apparent in terms of language as well as setting descriptions.

According to one scholar, "Characters whose impulses are conventional or traditional will use language reflecting their mechanical responses and will be satirized accordingly, while characters who possess a Shavian vitality will express that spontaneity through a freedom not only from moral and ethical formulas but from verbal convention as well" (Weintraub 215). This is apparent when contrasting two particular classes represented in the play. First of all, it should be noted that those of the lower class, especially the soldier who enters Raina's room and the servant girl Nicola are all exciting and interesting characters. They possess the "Shavian vitality" and their language is free from the ornament and needless over-romanticized talk of the upper classes. Consider, as a comparison, the meaning that is compressed, while remaining vital when Louka scolds her servant friend, saying with "searching scorn" no less, "You have the soul of a servant, Nicola" (31). Some of the most powerful emotion in the text is present in these short but potent thesis statements. Another example of this would be when the soldier tells Raina, "I've no ammunition. What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead; and I finished the last cake of that yesterday" (14). In many ways, it seems as though these characters with clipped but highly powerful statements are much like Shaw. They are making massive overarching statements about their world without seeming to do it, as if any implied social critique might have been incidental. These short bursts of meaning go much farther to reveal genuine sentiment than Raina's long-winded proclamations of love when she confesses, breathlessly and dramatically, "Well, it came into my head just as he was holding me in his arms and looking into my eyes, that perhaps we only had our heroic idea because we are so fond of reading Byron (<http://www.articlemyriad.com/byron.htm>) and Pushkin, and because we were so

delighted with the opera that season at Bucharest. Real life is so seldom like that —indeed never, as far as I knew it then” (Shaw 10). While at the end she makes a powerful statement, she is too caught up in the class-driven notions of how a lady should speak to be able to make a direct and succinct statement that has the gravity of the aforementioned quotes from the lower class characters.

In sum, Shaw is not overt in his social critiques in this play. His style requires that the reader interpret not only the varied language of his characters, but of the deeper meanings behind the settings and speech. While a particular scene’s description might seem, on first glance, to offer a beautiful setting or something simple, underneath these images are deeper layers of meaning that are geared towards society. In terms of dialogue and *Arms and the Man*, Shaw writes his characters as complete individuals whose class and deep thoughts lay masked behind relatively simple-sounding speeches. The ultimate effect of this writing style is that the reader becomes implicated in class debates (as well as other equally prominent debates about the nature of war as well) and is left with a moving story as well as something more to consider. In more broad terms, the play, *Arms and the Man* by George Bernard Shaw reflects some of the intense class conflicts of the day and addresses several of Shaw’s ideas about society and politics as well.