



Arms and the Man

Study Guide by Course Hero



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Book Basics

AUTHOR

George Bernard Shaw

FIRST PERFORMED

1894

GENRE

Romance, Satire

ABOUT THE TITLE

The title, *Arms and the Man*, comes from a line in Roman poet Virgil's (70–19 BCE) epic poem *Aeneid* (c. 30 BCE) about the founding of Rome: "I sing of arms and the man who first from the shores of Troy came destined an exile to Italy and the Lavinian beaches." As *Arms and the Man* satirizes or ridicules the sort of nationalistic military heroism portrayed in the

Aeneid, the title is meant ironically or contrastingly.

In Context

Social Satire in Victorian Comedy

Arms and the Man is an example of a seemingly lighthearted romantic comedy that is actually biting social satire with a number of hidden messages. This genre of social satire comedy that was popular in the time of Queen Victoria (1819–1901) is rooted in street dramas performed by traveling troupes of players during the English Middle Ages (c. 1066–1450). The English playwright William Shakespeare (1564–1616) refers to the immunity from direct censorship such players had in his 1603 play, *Hamlet*, when a troupe performs a court mime enacting the ignoble murder of Prince Hamlet's father by his uncle. Puppet (notably "Punch and Judy") shows arrived in England from Italy around 1660. These street dramas were entertaining, but they also invariably included a dig or two at some local official, cleric, or unpopular public figure. The hump-backed puppet character Punch became especially joined to political satire in England in the early 1800s, and the British periodical *Punch* (1841–1992 and 1996–2000) was immensely popular worldwide for its biting satire. Other notable dramatists who wrote plays in this genre include Irish author Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and the British musical team playwrights William S. Gilbert (1836–1911) and composer Arthur S. Sullivan (1842–1900).

Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest, A Trivial Comedy for Serious People* (1895) has become one of the most enduring plays of this genre and remains popular in educational and community theater venues both in England and the United States to the present day. The characters

engage in witty banter, and the plot tightly twists around mistaken identities, romantic entanglements, and secrets "in the family closet," all of which are resolved through love at the end. Above all, Wilde's drama satirizes British society and its class hypocrisy as well as the institution of marriage.

Wilde's play includes a number of parallels to *Arms and the Man* true to the genre of a Victorian romantic comedy. For example, one of Wilde's characters lies about his own name. In *Arms and the Man*, a young lady lies to her love about an encounter with another man while he lies to her about his feelings for her maid. While Shaw portrays various young characters falling in love and living happily ever after, he also portrays the older characters, [Catherine](#) and Paul [Petkoff](#), as the logical end result of love and courtship. Catherine worries about whether Paul yells at the servants, and Paul dismisses Catherine's silly prattle about how the war should have been handled. Both Petkoffs lie to one another just as Wilde's characters lie to the objects of their affections. Wilde's elderly pair Miss Prism and the Rev. Canon Chasuble conclude *The Importance of Being Earnest* by declaring their love for one another.

Gilbert and Sullivan wrote a number of very popular operettas, beginning with *Thespis* in 1871 and ending with *The Grand Duke* in 1896. All their works have some level of social commentary on subjects, including the legal system in *Trial by Jury* (1875), the royal navy in *H.M.S. Pinafore* (1878), and copyright laws in *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879).

Two operettas that are particularly notable as satire on the British peerage, the various ranks of nobility in England at the time, and the government were *Iolanthe* (1882) and *The Mikado* (1885). *Iolanthe* lampoons the British peerage, a system of government in which men who are fortunate enough to be born into families of high rank are allowed a position in government similar to that of a member of Congress in the present-day United States. Gilbert, the lyricist, does this with subtle digs in his lyrics, such as lines stating "The House of Peers made no pretense / To intellectual eminence / Or scholarship sublime." In other words, those with inherited positions don't really understand the matters upon which they are voting. Instead Gilbert portrays the peers as buffoons who spend their days mooning over pretty girls. *The Mikado*, one of the duo's most popular and enduring works, satirizes the British legal system and the use of capital punishment in unfair ways. Setting the comedy in Japan allows them to do so in a veiled way, although much of what the operetta portrays and protests is clearly

British.

Another such play in the satiric comedy mode is Englishman Brandon Thomas's (1848–1914) *Charley's Aunt* (1893). Such plays poke fun at the idea that marriage to someone within one's class was the be-all and end-all of social success and, indeed, happiness. They do so by emphasizing the shallowness of the players in the game of love. Often, a lie told between lovers is at the center of the plot. In Thomas's play, a male character masquerades as an elderly woman to help in a friend's courtship.

Shaw sets *Arms and the Man* in Bulgaria during the Serbo-Bulgarian War. This setting is at a remove from Britain, and Britain had no involvement in the Serbo-Bulgarian War. Going into little detail about the war itself, Shaw uses the war to satirize the romantic ideas of heroism in battle. He also gently inserts references to his own socialist ideals through the romances between upper-class [Sergius](#) and the maid [Louka](#) and upper-class [Raina](#) and the soldier-for-hire [Bluntschli](#). Shaw's later and best-known play, *Pygmalion* (1913), satirizes both the class system in Britain and the inequality of the sexes through the portrayal of protagonist Eliza Doolittle. In the play Eliza is plucked off the streets of London where she was selling flowers, taken into Henry Higgins's home to be taught upper-class diction in the English language, and trained to behave as a member of the upper class. However, she could never be accepted as such due to her low birth.

Serbo-Bulgarian War

The Serbo-Bulgarian War took place from November 1885 to March 1886 between Serbia and Bulgaria. The conflict arose because both sides felt that the Treaty of Berlin, entered in 1878, should have given them more extensive territory. Under this treaty, one territory, Eastern Rumelia, had been separated from Bulgaria and given to the Ottoman Empire instead. In September 1885, Bulgarian nationalists mounted a coup (a sudden action designed to take over the government by force) and attempted to reunify this territory with Bulgaria. Serbia did not wish to see their rival strengthened in this way. So, on November 14, 1885, after failing to get Bulgaria to give some of their territory to Serbia, the Serbian king, Milan Obrenović IV (1854–1901; ruled 1882–89) declared war. The Serbs expected a quick victory. However, the Bulgarians won a battle at Slivnitza that began on November 17 and lasted three days. It is this battle to which Catherine refers when speaking to Raina at

the beginning of Act 1.

Prince Alexander I of Bulgaria (1857–93) was not quick to accept an armistice (a truce between warring parties). He accepted it only after Austria-Hungary threatened to enter the war in Serbia's defense. Because it is exactly what Prince Alexander also wanted, Catherine's statement in Act 2 is humorous. She says the Bulgarians "could have annexed Servia and made Prince Alexander emperor of the Balkans. That's what I would have done."

The Treaty of Bucharest (1886) was entered on March 3, 1886. This is the treaty about which the characters are speaking at the beginning of Act 2.

Shaw's Fabian Socialist Views

[George Bernard Shaw](#) was an early and very active member of the Fabian Society. It was named for a Roman general, Fabius Cunctator (c. 280–03 BCE), who avoided pitched battles but instead wore down his opponents. The Fabians were a middle-class intellectual socialist group who aimed to transform British society without revolution. Rather, they hoped to permeate the country's intellectual and political life. They attempted to infiltrate the Liberal and Conservative political parties, the two main political parties in England at that time, with their socialist ideas. However, they eventually ended up helping to organize the Labor Representation Committee, which in 1906 became the British Labor Party, one of the main political parties in Britain today.

The Fabian Society had other notable members, including:

- H.G. Wells (1866–1946), a novelist whose best-known works were *The Time Machine* (1895) and *War of the Worlds* (1898),
- Sidney (1859–1947) and Beatrice (1858–1943) Webb, cofounders of the London School of Economics and Political Science,
- Graham Wallas (1858–1932), a noted educator,
- Annie Besant (1847–1933), a British social reformer and Indian independence leader,
- Thomas Davidson (1840–1900), a Scottish naturalist and philosopher, who founded the Fellowship of the New Life that later became the Fabian Society.

The writing of plays such as *Arms and the Man* may have been

one of the ways in which Shaw, as a Fabian, tried to influence his fellow Britons. Throughout the play, there are subtle messages as to Shaw's feelings about class. For example, in *Arms and the Man*, the members of the Petkoff family and Sergius are portrayed as being upper-class society people. In contrast, the servants Louka and [Nicola](#) and the soldier Bluntschli are of a lower class. Though Bluntschli comes from a moneyed family, as a Swiss citizen he has no rank or title. Raina and Sergius speak to each other in high-minded ways and prance about acting as if they are special. However, both Raina and Sergius find that they can only have real conversations with the lower-class people: Raina with Bluntschli and Sergius with Louka. It is as if their upper-class happiness is no more than a façade they have to put on to preserve appearances.

Shaw also makes light of the idea that being a member of the upper class conveys or is evidence of merit. For example, Sergius and even the older, more competent Major Petkoff are at a loss as to how to write the necessary orders in Act 3. They have to enlist the lower-class (and, indeed, lower-ranking) Bluntschli to help them. Sergius says of this, "He finds out what to do; draws up the orders; and I sign 'em. Division of labor." Later in the same act, Louka asks Sergius, "Did you find ... that the men whose fathers are poor ... were any less brave than the men who are rich like you?" Sergius responds in the negative. In the end, both Raina and Sergius realize they are happier with someone who is not a member of their class. Class is irrelevant. Shaw encodes such messages in a light, romantic comedy, giving the audience food for thought long after the curtain has gone down.

Author Biography

George Bernard Shaw, born on July 26, 1856, was a leading Irish dramatist of his time. In addition to his contributions as a playwright, he was a music and theater critic, a novelist, and an outspoken social reformer.

Early Life

Shaw was born in Dublin as the third and last child of George Carr and Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly Shaw. He suffered what he described as "a devil of a childhood." His father was a civil servant turned unsuccessful corn merchant, as well as an

alcoholic—all of which reduced the family to living in genteel poverty. His mother—the daughter of a well-to-do family—found escape from the family difficulties in music. A professional singer and student of the conductor George Vandeleur Lee, she eventually followed him to London to pursue her own career and improve her situation. These life events encouraged Shaw to be a lifelong teetotaler (person who does not drink alcohol). They also imbued him with a strong interest in music and kindled his sensitivity to the plight of women in Victorian society (1837–1901).

In 1876 Shaw joined his mother and Vandeleur Lee in London. He expanded his knowledge of music to include literature. He read voraciously, attended socialist lectures and debates, and pursued a career in journalism and writing. His first attempts to write prose—a string of five novels—were rejected by publishers. However, he did land a job as a freelance critic for an influential daily paper, the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The liberal political leanings of the paper were in line with Shaw's growing interest in socialism (social and economic practice where the government owns and controls property and resources). His articles and critiques of art, music, and theater written for this and other publications brought him at last to the attention of London literary society.

Socialism

Shaw's interest in socialism had a profound effect on his writing. In 1884 he joined the recently established Fabian Society, a British socialist organization intent on advancing the principles of non-Marxist evolutionary socialism (peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism in contrast to the ideas of German philosopher Karl Marx [1818–83]). He became one of its leading members and regularly wrote and lectured on socialist topics. Often he focused on themes of marriage, education, politics, class struggle, and religion. As a self-professed socialist, Shaw was a vigorous proponent of gender equality. He believed that all people have a purpose in life and that women were being denied chances to play their critical roles in society. He actively supported efforts to alter the marriage laws, eliminate patriarchy, establish female suffrage (right to vote), and recast gender roles. Shaw felt that "unless woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, and to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself." As a playwright, his portrayal of remarkable, clever, and powerful women departed

from the 19th-century stereotype of the male-dominated, sweetly fragile, self-sacrificing female.

Career as a Playwright

Shaw's career as a playwright began in 1891 when he met J.T. Grein (1862–1935), the director of The Independent Theatre—a new, progressive venue for "the theatre of ideas" inspired by the realistic "problem plays" of Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906). Grein offered to read Shaw's play *Widowers' Houses*. He accepted it almost immediately, and it was first publicly performed in 1892. Over the next six years, Shaw completed a collection of dramas called *Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant*. Each attacked with varied ferocity the social evils of the day. *Arms and the Man* was part of this collection and satirized romantic ideas of war and heroism. It was first produced in 1894 and published in 1898. It was made into a musical, *The Chocolate Soldier* (1908), which was successful but in which Shaw did not cooperate.

Shaw's writing successes continued to the eve of World War I (1914–18), when *Pygmalion* opened in Vienna in 1913 and in London in 1914. It was a hit. However, with the outbreak of war, Shaw's plain-spoken antiwar views and pamphlets created uproar. He was shunned by friends and ostracized by the public. Nevertheless, he continued writing plays, and by 1923, with the production of *Saint Joan*, he succeeded in reviving his career. In 1925, Shaw was the recipient of the Nobel Prize in Literature. He also won an Academy Award for screenwriting for the 1938 film adaptation of *Pygmalion*. A musical adaptation, *My Fair Lady*, opened on Broadway in 1956.

Shaw continued writing until his death on November 2, 1950, at age 94. At the time, he was working on yet another play.

Characters

Raina

Raina doesn't know exactly what she wants. She has been raised to marry a man like Sergius and to hope for him to be a hero. She has also been raised to be sweet and kind and never to lie. It's difficult for her to admit that these things are impossible for her. When she meets Bluntschli, it is her first

experience with the idea that gray areas exist. Not all soldiers are brave, not all cowards are bad, and not all lies are unforgivable.

Bluntschli

Bluntschli is a very practical sort of fellow. He wants to make money by being in the war, but he doesn't particularly want to die. However, he isn't as cowardly as he would have Raina believe, and he also isn't as mercenary. He doesn't want to hurt anyone. Rather, he wants adventure and to live his life.

Sergius

Sergius is a very conflicted character. He has always believed that he has to be a certain way—a brave soldier and a worshipful admirer to Raina. The war and the servant Louka challenge these beliefs. He comes across as sort of a cardboard cutout of a man, but he wants to be more than that.

Catherine

Catherine is presented as a very typical woman of her era. She can be bribed by her husband with pretty things, as with the bet over a piece of jewelry. She sets a standard for Raina to be a perfect woman who never lies or does anything wrong. In fact, she does lie to her husband, as she is never really herself around him. She is also very concerned about what people think. She worries people will think the Petkoffs are low-class for yelling for the servants or because Raina made a poor marriage.

Petkoff

Petkoff is smarter than his family would believe. He sees what is going on most of the time. He realizes Sergius is something of a buffoon and also that Raina put a photograph in the coat for someone to find. He also realizes the coat was missing in the first place. He is not an expert on military tactics, but he knows he isn't and is willing to delegate.

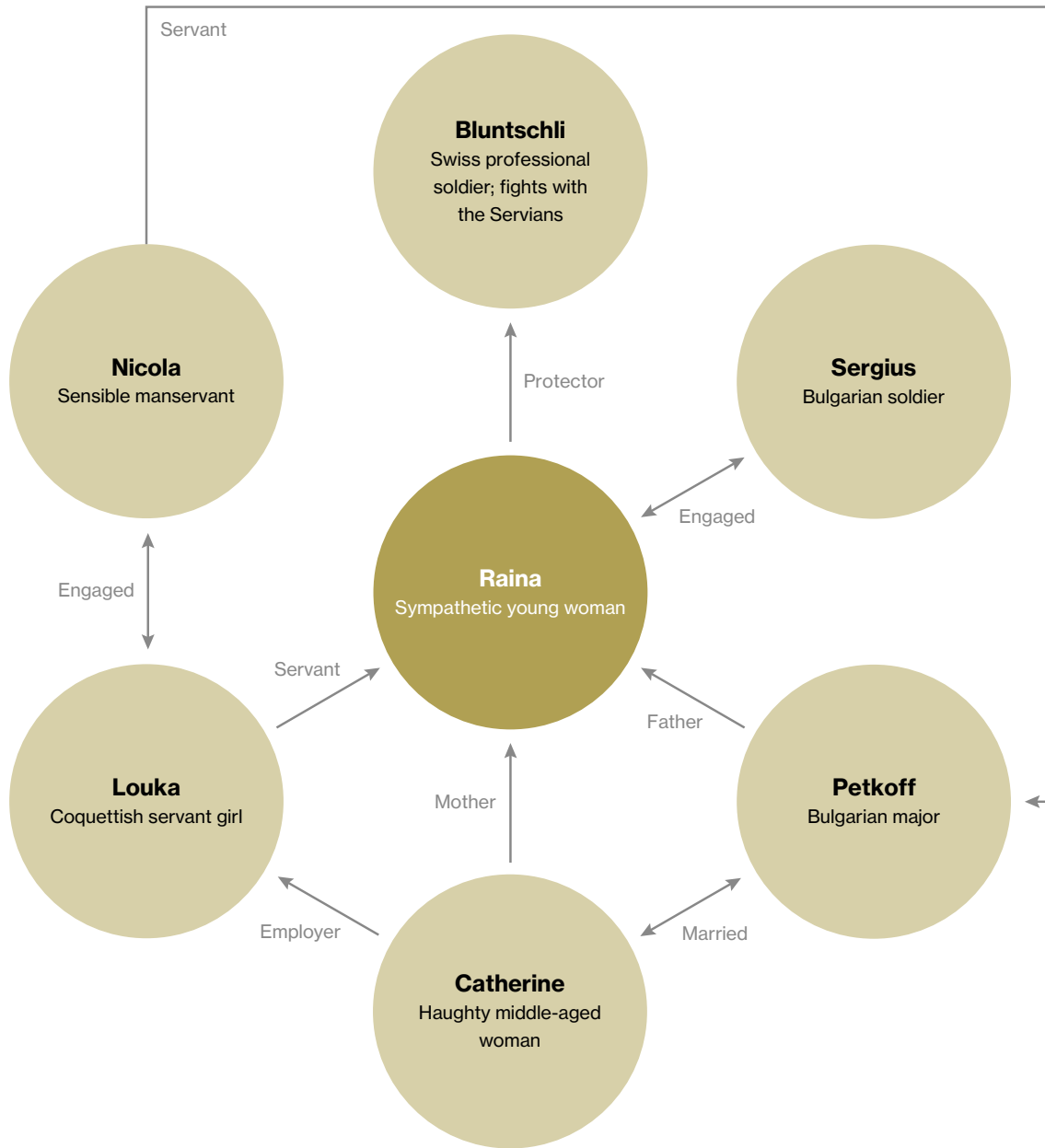
Louka

Louka is very clever, and she sees everything. She is the one who tells Raina that the shutters can be opened, and she knows that someone can come in. Although she isn't Sergius's equal in class, she is more than his equal in intelligence. She feels she shouldn't be kept down by her low station. Moreover, she is not willing to degrade herself.

Nicola

Nicola is a man who knows his place and wants to be safe. He doesn't want to defy the Petkoffs, and he warns Louka against doing so. However, in the end, he is willing to give up his claim on her to see her rise in class. He is a capable servant and hopes to be rewarded for that in the end.

Character Map



- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

Full Character List

Character	Description
Raina	Raina is a romantic young lady. She is engaged to Sergius.
Bluntschli	Bluntschli is a Swedish professional soldier who fights with the Servians. He climbs through Raina's window looking for a place to hide.
Sergius	Sergius is Raina's fiancée. He is a soldier.
Catherine	Catherine is Raina's mother. She is concerned about appearances but also practical.
Petkoff	Paul Petkoff is a major in the Bulgarian army. He is Catherine's husband and Raina's father.
Louka	Louka is a young servant in Catherine and Raina's home. However, she is described as "so defiant that her servility to Raina is almost insolent."
Nicola	Nicola is a middle-aged servant who values himself on his rank in servitude. He is engaged to Louka.
Officer	The officer is a Bulgarian soldier. He stops by the Petkoffs' house while on patrol, looking for fugitive soldiers.

Plot Summary

Preface

The preface was written at a later date for the publication of several of [Shaw's](#) plays in book form. In it Shaw mentions that it is difficult to decide what to write. Although he wants to write something meaningful, it must also be something common people will want to see, so it can make a profit. In addition to *Arms and the Man*, Shaw mentions other plays, including *Candida* (1894) and *Widowers' Houses* (1892).

Act 1, Section 1

The play begins in [Raina's](#) bedroom, 1895. Raina's mother, [Catherine](#), tells Raina that her fiancée, [Sergius](#) (whose photograph is on ostentatious display in the room), was very heroic in a battle of the Serbo-Bulgarian War that day. He led the cavalry in a charge. Raina is happy because she had doubts about Sergius's bravery. Then, the servant [Louka](#) comes in and says they must close the shutters because there is gunfire in the streets. Raina says she feels sorry for the Serbian soldiers, who are poor refugees, and she doesn't really want to close her shutters. Louka tells her in secret that the shutters don't close properly because the latch is broken. Raina closes them and goes to bed.

A moment later, a man breaks into the room. He is a Serbian soldier trying to avoid capture and death. Raina chides him for being fearful, and he says all soldiers are. A Bulgarian officer comes in, looking for the soldier, whom someone saw climbing up Raina's balcony. Raina hides the man and lies about him being there. The officer chalks it up to people's imaginations running away with them.

Act 1, Section 2

After the officer leaves, Raina notices that the man's gun was on the ottoman the whole time. He tells her it doesn't matter, as it wasn't loaded. He has no ammo because he's been carrying chocolate instead, to have something to eat. Raina is shocked but offers him some chocolate she has, as he is hungry.

They get to talking about that day's battle. The man says he was certainly fearful, as every soldier is once he's been in battle for three days. He also comments the Bulgarian army wasn't very professional, sending in soldiers they knew would be killed. The only reason they weren't killed was that the Serbians had the wrong kind of cartridges for their guns. He describes the man who led the cavalry charge in a way that makes him sound not very heroic and somewhat buffoonish. Raina shows him Sergius's picture and asks if he was the cavalry leader. The man says it was and apologizes. Raina tells him to leave. He says he can't climb the drainpipe again. He'd just as soon die. In fact, dying would just be a long sleep, and he's very tired. Raina takes pity on him and says he can take refuge in their home. After all, he is a guest and the duties of a

host are paramount. He falls asleep in Raina's bed, and she tells her mother to let him sleep there.

Act 2, Section 1

Several months later, Sergius and Major [Petkoff](#) are coming home from war. Petkoff is pleased at having won, while Sergius announces he is going to resign from the military. They tell a story they heard from a Swiss soldier, who said he had escaped harm by hiding in a young lady's bedroom and then snuck off, wearing the master of the house's coat. Catherine and Raina appear offended by this story. Meanwhile, Louka and her fellow servant, [Nicola](#), to whom she is engaged, have figured out that something is up.

Sergius and Raina dramatically declare their love for one another and plan an outing.

Act 2, Section 2

After Raina leaves to get ready, Louka talks to Sergius. Sergius declares how tiring "higher love" is, meaning the type of love he has with Raina. They always have to make dramatic declarations of the other's perfection, and he is unable to be himself. Louka says there was a man in Raina's bedroom. She heard enough of their conversation to know that if the man returned, Raina would marry him. They had a real conversation, unlike Raina and Sergius. This upsets Sergius, and he grabs Louka's arm, bruising her. At the same time, though, they are also flirting. Louka asks Sergius to cure the bruise. He apologizes and offers her money, but she wants a kiss, which he will not give.

Raina and Catherine enter. After Sergius leaves the room to talk with Petkoff, they discuss how much trouble they'd be in if the men knew about the man in Raina's room. Raina, however, still seems enamored with the man and says she'd stuff him with chocolates if he came back. Just then, [Bluntschli](#), the very same soldier, arrives to return Petkoff's jacket. Catherine begs him to sneak out and plans to send back his duffel bag after she extracts Petkoff's coat from it. But before he can go, Petkoff and Sergius come into the room. Recognizing Bluntschli, whom they know, they invite him to stay at the house.

Act 3, Section 1

A bit later, in the library, Bluntschli is fixing Major Petkoff's military matter when Petkoff says he wants his coat, which he cannot find. Catherine says it's in the closet and sends Nicola to get it. While she is gone, Petkoff takes bets on whether or not the coat will be found. Nicola returns with the coat, which he found in the closet where it belongs. Bluntschli completes his work and Sergius, Petkoff, and Catherine go off to deliver the orders.

Left alone with Bluntschli, Raina tells him that Petkoff and Sergius heard about him hiding in a lady's room but don't know that she is the lady. She says Sergius would challenge him to a duel and kill him if he knew. What's more, she says it is hard for her to lie to Sergius because she never lies. Bluntschli says he thinks she lies all the time, as does he. He also says he admires her. Raina tells Bluntschli that he is the first man not to take her seriously, and he says he is the first man who *has*. She says she puts on a noble attitude in front of everyone, implying it is an act. They all believe her. Raina tells Bluntschli she left a portrait of herself in the coat, for him to find. However, he didn't see it and thinks it might still be in the coat. It might not be, though, since he also pawned the coat for a while. Raina is horrified because she wrote something on the portrait.

Louka comes in with mail for Sergius, saying that his father is dead. She and Nicola discuss that she has ideas above her station.

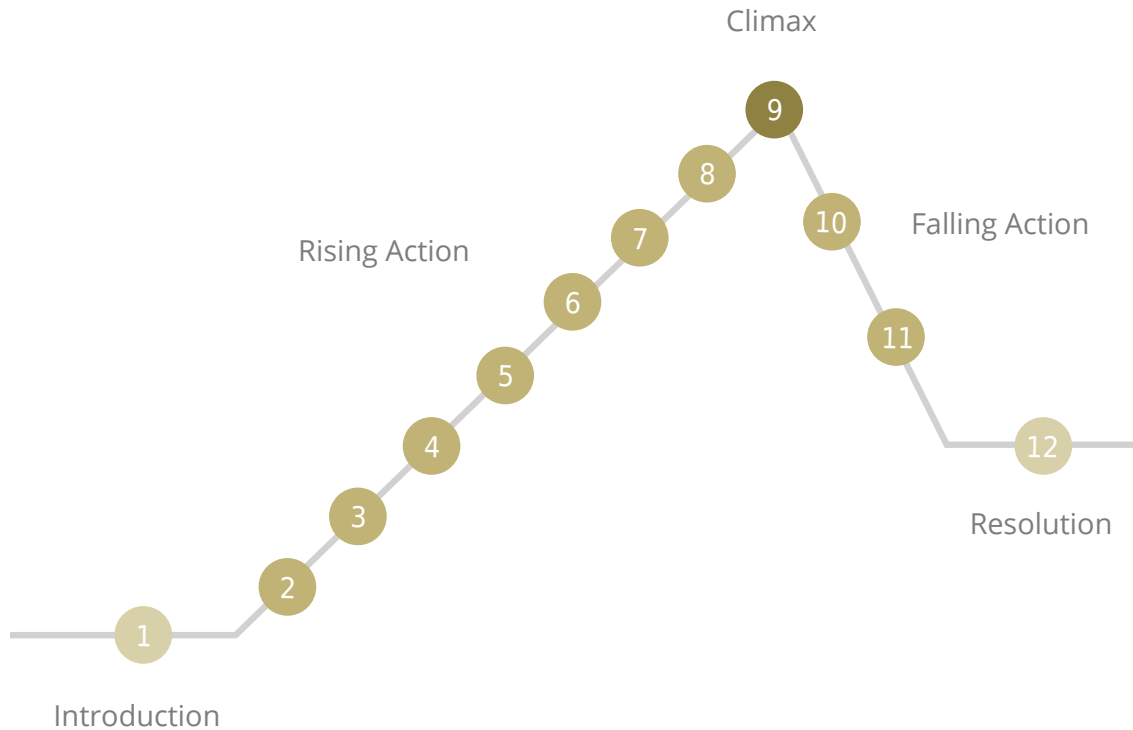
Act 3, Section 2

Sergius and Louka argue about Sergius caring too much what others think. She says if she were the empress of Russia, she would marry the man she loved even if he was beneath her. But Sergius doesn't have that kind of courage. Sergius says she is just jealous of Raina. Louka says she knows Raina really loves Bluntschli, not him. Sergius says that if he were to love Louka, he would marry her in spite of what Bulgaria thinks. If he touches her again, it will be as his fiancée.

Sergius challenges Bluntschli to a duel. Bluntschli protests Raina only allowed him in her room because he held a pistol to her head. Raina realizes that it was Louka who told Sergius the truth. She knows Sergius has been making love to Louka.

Petkoff enters. He has found the photograph in his coat pocket, which Raina inscribed, "Raina, to her [Chocolate](#) Cream Solider: a souvenir." Finally, Bluntschli tells Petkoff what happened. Petkoff asks which of the gentlemen she is engaged to. Raina says that Sergius loves Louka, not her. Petkoff says that's impossible because Louka is engaged to Nicola. Nicola says she isn't. He gives her up, and Sergius becomes engaged to Louka. After realizing that Raina wants to marry him and is 23, which is older than he thought, Bluntschli becomes a suitor for Raina's hand. He reveals he has a lot of family money from his hotel business. Raina protests that she didn't give her hand to kiss, her bed to sleep in, or her roof to shelter to the emperor of Switzerland. She gave them to her chocolate cream soldier.

Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. There is shooting outside, so Raina closes her shutters.

Rising Action

2. A man (Bluntschli) breaks into Raina's room.
3. Raina protects the man from an officer looking for him.
4. Raina allows the man to stay for the night.
5. Months later, Petkoff and Sergius return home from the war.
6. Bluntschli returns Petkoff's coat, which Raina gave him.
7. Bluntschli and Raina flirt; they are clearly in love.
8. Louka tells Sergius about Raina and Bluntschli.

Climax

9. Sergius challenges Bluntschli to a duel.

Falling Action

10. Bluntschli learns his father died and left him everything.
11. Sergius bravely becomes engaged to Louka.

Resolution

12. Bluntschli is deemed an acceptable match for Raina.

Timeline of Events

Little later

Louka says there is shooting in the street, and a man breaks into Raina's bedroom.

Afterward

Raina offers the man chocolates.

Minutes later

Raina enters with Catherine to find the man asleep in her bed.

Minutes later

Sergius returns and says he is resigning from the army.

Then

Sergius flirts with Louka, who tells Sergius that Raina flirted with another man.

Night in November 1885

Catherine tells Raina of Sergius's heroism; Raina admires Sergius's portrait.

Soon after

A Bulgarian officer comes looking for the escapee, and Raina hides him.

Next

The man describes the cavalry charge and says Sergius wasn't heroic.

March 1886

Major Petkoff returns from the war.

Moments later

Raina and Sergius declare their love.

Next

Later that afternoon

Petkoff asks for his coat, which he says isn't in the closet.

Moment later

Raina asks Bluntschli about the portrait she left in the coat pocket, but he didn't see it.

Then

Louka tells Sergius that Raina is in love with Bluntschli; Sergius challenges him to a duel.

Next

Sergius asks Louka to marry him; Bluntschli would like to marry Raina.

In the end

Bluntschli reveals he has both rank and wealth and is deemed a good match.

Bluntschli (the man) shows up to return Petkoff's coat, and Catherine tries to hide him.

Little later

Left alone together, Bluntschli tells Raina he admires her.

Next

News arrives of Bluntschli's father's death; Bluntschli will have to take over the family business.

Moment later

Petkoff reveals he found the photo in his coat pocket and asks who is engaged to whom.

Then

Catherine is concerned Bluntschli isn't of their social class.

Section Summaries

The text of *Arms and the Man* has three acts and a preface. Each act has been broken into two sections for the purposes of summary and analysis.

Preface

Summary

Shaw writes of having only written "unpleasant" plays before writing *Arms and the Man*, a more pleasant play. *Arms and the Man* made £1,777 in its first two-week run. Shaw states a book making this much would be profitable. However, he adds, "experts in theatrical management will contemplate that figure with a grim smile," meaning it was less successful. Still, this was not altogether discouraging.

After *Arms and the Man*, Shaw went to Italy to write and contemplate. He thought about conflict since "every drama must be the artistic presentation of conflict." Conflict, he says, is indispensable. For example, he wrote *Widowers' Houses* (1892), which is about the conflict between a slumlord and an (unseen) clergyman. But he doesn't deal with the cheap conflicts of heroes and villains. He wants every view to be expressed, whether or not the audience will like every character.

He experimented with the idea of Christian socialism in his play *Candida* (1894). He says he would have been more successful getting it performed if there had been someone young enough to play the poet.

Next, he started *A Man of Destiny* (1897) and also wrote *You Never Can Tell* (1896). Shaw characterizes these as attempts to write something like *Arms and the Man* while keeping in mind the needs of West End theater managers searching for fashionable comedies.

Shaw says authors can't expect theater managers to invest money in plays that "commonplace people"—as he calls them—will not see. Playwriting and running theaters are businesses. He speaks of unscrupulous managers who try to make the maximum profit with the minimum risk. Shaw believes theater managers should try to produce plays of the highest

level of prestige possible while still turning a profit. Plays should not be "over the heads of the public." He realizes that he is sometimes guilty of this. However, he has been kinder to actors. He writes good roles for actors.

He knows he can't entirely ignore audiences but says if playgoers can't handle serious drama, they shouldn't come to his plays. Shaw challenges anyone who thinks one of his plays would make a good comic opera to "try his hand" at it.

However, Shaw realizes that sometimes the disagreements he has with audiences and critics arise from the fact that he doesn't portray the archetypes they're used to seeing. For example, the Swiss officer in *Arms and the Man* isn't "a conventional stage soldier." However, Shaw claims his depiction is in line with contemporary military experts. He also defended himself against those who took offense at his mention of a Bulgarian who didn't wash his hand every day.

However, Shaw makes clear he doesn't write plays to please everyone. And he certainly doesn't write plays to please people who would rather believe a fantasy. He finds tragedy and comedy in the results of people's insisting on basing their institutions on imaginary ideals rather than reality. He stops at this point to let the play speak for itself.

Analysis

In his preface Shaw discusses writing several of his plays. He explains how he struggles to find something that will satisfy his literary and artistic ideals and yet please enough people to turn a profit. This is something with which writers always struggle. If a play is simply standard fare, it will please no one. However, if a play is too controversial, it won't make a profit. Thus, writers must walk a fine line.

It's interesting Shaw mentions comic opera because *Arms and the Man* was indeed turned into a successful comic opera called *The Chocolate Soldier*. When an Austrian composer approached Shaw about writing it, Shaw insisted that he was not to use the play's original wording. Perhaps for that reason, the comic opera is very unlike *Arms and the Man*. When he saw it, Shaw didn't like it at all. In fact, he said he would never allow another comic opera to be based on one of his plays. Still, *The Chocolate Soldier* was so popular with audiences in London and New York that MGM wanted to turn it into a movie with the same title (1941). Shaw refused to allow them to use the plot of

Arms and the Man, so the movie is actually based on another comic opera entirely.

The amount Shaw states that *Arms and the Man* made in its first run is equivalent to £229,053.67 today (at this writing, 2019)—almost \$300,000.00 U.S. dollars.

In retrospect, the plays Shaw would have termed too controversial or unpleasant to attract a wide audience are probably Shaw's most successful and well-remembered plays. They include *Arms and the Man*, *Pygmalion*, and *Saint Joan*. Critical acclaim was given to his 1901 play *Caesar and Cleopatra*, specifically for the human rather than heroic portrayal of Caesar.

Readers might wonder how Shaw would have responded to *My Fair Lady*, the 1956 U.S. musical based on *Pygmalion*. Shaw had died in 1950, so librettist Alan Jay Lerner (1918–86) and composer Frederick Loewe (1901–88) did not have to worry about getting his permission. When *My Fair Lady* was first produced, it ran longer than any previous musical in both New York and London. It was translated into several other languages and performed around the world. Since then it has undergone a number of revivals. *My Fair Lady* was also made into an Academy Award–winning movie (1964) starring Rex Harrison as Henry Higgins and Audrey Hepburn as Eliza.

Act 1, Section 1

Summary

The play takes place during the Serbo-Bulgarian War. Act 1 takes place in November 1885 in a lady's bedchamber in Bulgaria, the décor of which is described as "half rich Bulgarian and half cheap Viennese." A large portrait of a very handsome Bulgarian officer dominates the décor. Raina, a young woman, stands on the balcony in her nightgown and expensive furs. The stage directions note that the furniture is shabby and worth much less than the furs. Raina is drinking in the romantic evening when her mother, Catherine, comes in. Catherine tells Raina that Raina's fiancée, Sergius, has been involved in a great battle in Slivnitsa and Sergius was the hero of it. He led the cavalry charge. Raina is overjoyed to hear this and expresses relief because she had doubts about Sergius's heroism. She makes her mother promise not to tell him that she thought he might look bad beside the Russian officers. She

worried she only thought he looked good because she had romantic ideas from reading poetry and going to the opera.

Raina's servant, Louka, enters and tells them they must close the windows because there has been shooting in the streets. The Serbians are being chased back through the pass and may run into town. The Bulgarian cavalry is chasing them. Raina and Catherine are alarmed, and Raina says she wishes their people weren't so cruel. "What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?" Catherine goes downstairs, cautioning Raina to close the shutters. Louka tells Raina she can open the shutters. One of the bolts at the bottom is broken, so it doesn't close properly. Raina says they have to do as they're told.

After Louka leaves, Raina ostentatiously admires the portrait of Sergius, exclaiming about how he is her hero. Gunfire is heard outside, and Raina blows out the candles. Immediately afterward, the shutters open, and a man sneaks in.

The person who entered is a soldier, about 35 years old, of average appearance, in the tattered uniform of a Serbian officer. The script identifies him as "man." He has climbed up the balcony. He threatens Raina if she sounds the alarm, saying he doesn't intend to get killed. She remarks haughtily that *some* soldiers are afraid of death. He says they all are. He says if she calls for help and he doesn't shoot her, they'll all see her in her nightgown. She goes to get her cloak, and he takes it, saying it is a better weapon than a revolver. She says it's not the weapon a gentleman would choose. He hears someone approaching and gives her back her cloak. Impulsively, Raina hides him behind the curtains then takes off the cloak, the better to feign sleep.

Louka and Catherine come in, followed by a Bulgarian officer who says someone saw a man sneak up and hide on Raina's balcony. (He doesn't know the broken latch on the shutters allowed the man to get inside.) She tells him to check the balcony. He finds nothing and chalks it up to imagination.

Analysis

The tenuous nature of Raina's love for Sergius is apparent in the first conversation she has with her mother. She is in love with the *idea* of her handsome fiancée, whose portrait she displays. However, she is not really sure if he is brave or heroic. Meanwhile, she feels he must be these things in order for him to be worthy of her love. Thus, she is relieved when Catherine

tells her of his heroism. However, she also feels guilty for having doubted it. It is possible she also suspects Sergius isn't the brightest of bulbs, but she would rather not know it.

Her feelings are also complicated by her feelings about war in general. While her mother is more than ready to take a side, Raina isn't as sure. In truth, she is something of a pacifist—a person who is opposed to war or violence. She says that there is no glory "in killing wretched fugitives." This is at odds with wanting her fiancée to be a war hero. However, this explains why she helps the man when she could just as well sound the alarm when the Bulgarian officer shows up.

Shaw is interested in pointing out the difference between fanciful ideals and real life. Raina's love for Sergius and her concern for his conduct in war are based on unrealistic concepts of romance and heroism. When faced with the idea of real people being chased down and killed, she has a completely different response. This ethical conflict is apparent from the very first scene in the play. The absolute idealism of the romantic couple in a satirical comedy is a common trope of the genre. In this particular play, the overpowering idea of love runs into the reality that people are far from ideal in either love or war. The collision of idealism and reality in battle serves as a reflection of the title *Arms and the Man*, which is a phrase taken from the Roman poet Virgil's (70–19 BCE) epic, the *Aeneid* (c. 30 BCE). Virgil had been requested (or coerced) into writing it as a work praising the noble origins of the Romans by the Emperor Augustus (63 BCE–14 CE), but Virgil embedded the work with any number of subtle digs at this view. For example, Aeneas and his followers have escaped the fall of Troy (during which he somehow manages to save his son and father but loses his wife) and landed, exhausted, in Queen Dido's realm, where he begs her for help. It is clear from his description of his flight that Aeneas isn't much of a fighter, and he relies on Dido very much as the Serbian soldier must rely on Raina's compassion.

It seems that this meeting with the Serbian soldier is the first time Raina has had anyone validate her secret feelings about war. It remains to be seen whether this is because she hasn't met anyone who agrees or because no one has considered her an adult with valid opinions. However, it is likely a combination of these reasons.

Raina is very surprised when the man says all soldiers fear death. This is probably because no one has admitted that to her before. It may also be because she hasn't had enough

exposure to young men to see them as real, flesh-and-blood human beings. (After all, she has no brothers.) Instead, Raina sees men, such as Sergius, as larger-than-life idols to be worshiped. Thus, she venerates Sergius's photograph, hoping against hope that he will live up to the faith she has placed in him.

The soldier, unlike her revered Sergius, is obviously bright and quick on his feet. She is impressed with him, and this is part of what motivates her to help him. Helping him hide may well be the bravest and most self-motivated thing Raina has ever done. It is likely that up until now she has acted based on her understanding of what her parents and society expect from her.

Shaw's lengthy description of the scenery both here and later, in the library, are worth noting. Playwrights do not always describe every detail of the set, but Shaw does so here for a reason. The characters who live in this house are upper class, as Raina will take pains to tell the man later in the act. They—especially Catherine—care very much about appearances. However, the décor in Raina's bedroom, a room few outsiders will enter, is both cheap and shabby. The shutter is broken. Meanwhile, she wears expensive furs, as that is an outer garment that will be seen by many. The family is, perhaps, not as wealthy as they would like people to believe they are. It is possible they are looking to Raina's marriage to Sergius to improve their situation or, at least, hers.

Act 1, Section 2

Summary

After they all leave, Raina is again alone with the man. He tells her he is not Serbian but a Swiss mercenary, or a soldier for hire. He asks if he can wait a bit to leave, and Raina says she wishes he weren't in danger. She's shocked to notice his gun has been left on the ottoman. He says not to worry, as it isn't loaded. He carries not cartridges but chocolate with him; he says many soldiers do so. Raina is "outraged in her most cherished ideals of manhood" that he should stuff his pockets with chocolate "like a schoolboy." Still, she offers him some of her chocolate.

He eats it, saying he's not very brave, that no one is after they've been under fire for three days. But he didn't think the

Bulgarian soldiers were very professional. They sent in a cavalry, knowing that none of them would survive. They only survived because the Serbian soldiers had the wrong cartridges and couldn't fire on them. He describes the cavalry charge as "slinging a handful of peas against a window pane." First one comes, then a few more, then a clump. The first man is always trying to pull his spooked horse back. No one actually wants to be first. Raina says she doesn't think the first man is a coward. The man describes the first man in line today (which the audience knows was Sergius) as being like an operatic tenor or Don Quixote. Don Quixote was the main character in a novel by the Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616); the character is delusional and battles with windmills. Raina shows the man the portrait of Sergius, saying he is her betrothed. She asks if he was the first man.

The man says he was. He apologizes, saying that perhaps Sergius knew they wouldn't fire on him. Raina says this is just as bad, as it would make him a pretender and a coward. She says he can't stay after what he has said about Sergius. However, she will check and see if the coast is clear. The man says he is too cowardly to climb down the drainpipe now that he isn't in fear of dying as he was while climbing up. He tells her to give the alarm.

Pitying him now, Raina calls him a poor "chocolate cream soldier." She says it is better to go down the drainpipe than to be captured. But the man says "capture only means death; and death is sleep—oh, sleep, sleep, sleep, undisturbed sleep!" When she asks him if he's really that tired, he says he must get down the drainpipe.

Now, Raina is concerned and decides to protect him. She says he can take advantage of their hospitality because the Petkoffs are the wealthiest family in town. Her father is a major in the Bulgarian army, and their house is very elegant, boasting the only library in the city. She says he could throw himself as a fugitive on their hospitality, which she will offer though her father is out of town. The man says his own father owns several hotels, implying they also understand hospitality.

Raina offers her hand to make a pledge. The man says he daren't take it, as it has been a while since he last washed. Raina says her family washes every day. However, she insists he take her hand, so he kisses it. She leaves him to tell her mother what she's doing. He says he'll remain standing, but as soon as Raina leaves, he climbs into her bed and falls asleep. Catherine comes in and is scandalized, but Raina says, "Don't,

mamma: the poor dear is worn out. Let him sleep."

Analysis

Heroism in battle, or the want of heroism, is a major theme of *Arms and the Man*. Soldiers are supposed to be brave and, indeed, signing up to be a soldier, if one has other options, is a brave act. However, it is one thing to be brave when signing up and another when actually going into battle. It is much the same with climbing the drainpipe. The man says he could climb it when someone was chasing him, but now, when there is no immediate threat, he can't do it.

The reader may well wonder if the man actually means it when he says he'd rather die than go down the drainpipe. Perhaps he is toying with Raina, having recognized she has a kind heart and will allow him to stay.

As a hired soldier, the man would likely be less concerned about the outcome of the war or the nobility of the cause. (The validity of the cause is not discussed in the play. It would likely not be a huge concern for the British audience for whom the play was originally written.) Someone with real ties to the country for which he was fighting might be more invested. Logically, the man would want to do a good enough job at soldiering to continue to make a living at one. But he is unlikely to want to lay down his life. The reader will learn, however, that this man had other choices when it came to a career. Indeed, he mentions in this scene that his family owns several hotels. This does not seem like the family background of someone who became a soldier for want of other options. The audience may wonder why he became a mercenary, since he has stated he is not brave.

Shaw doesn't mention many specifics about the war itself, not even the name of the war. Perhaps he wished to tell a universal story and so set it in a country whose politics would be a mystery to his British audiences.

Raina is deeply confused by the man's admission that he carries chocolates in his pocket, rather than replacement cartridges for his pistol. Indeed, the stage directions state that Raina is "outraged in her most cherished ideas of manhood" at hearing this. Yet she wants to give the soldier more chocolate. What he has said makes him into a human being rather than an unapproachable hero, as she views Sergius.

The term *chocolate soldier* came to mean a soldier who didn't

fight but was assigned to noncombat tasks. This might imply cowardice. However, the man is not so much a coward as a pragmatist. Moreover, the reader will see in the second and third acts that he is highly intelligent. He simply doesn't believe in wasting his intelligence on a cause he doesn't really care about.

Raina is upset to hear Sergius isn't really brave, yet she is more forgiving of the man. Perhaps this is because he, unlike Sergius, has never lied to her about his heroism. Alternatively, perhaps it is because she is able to converse freely with this man. After all, theirs is a relationship in which she has little or no investment. In contrast, she places a high value on her relationship with Sergius. This would explain why she is appalled to realize he has lied to her if, as the man said, no soldiers are truly heroic. In the case of the man, however, she feels he is finally telling her the truth. She recognizes that he is a fallible human being like herself.

In Shaw's time, unlike today, men were expected to be brave, rather than sensitive. Thus, this is Raina's first encounter with the idea that men can have feelings and fears. She is offended when the man reveals Sergius's weakness. Yet she is so charmed by the idea that he is genuinely afraid to go down the ladder that she puts herself at risk so that he may stay the night.

Shaw mentions in the preface that his saying the soldier didn't wash his hands every day was controversial. It may seem obvious today that someone in the heat of battle might not wash regularly, might be afraid, or might suffer from PTSD. However, in Shaw's time, soldiers were often portrayed as brave, heroic, and magnificent. Thus Shaw's portrayal was unusual and thought-provoking, possibly even disturbing.

Here, Raina refers to the family's fancy house and their library—outward symbols of their success. She also mentions how often they wash, a repeated topic in the play. The idea is that as affluent people, they can afford to be cleaner. This type of thing is very important to Raina because it affects how she is perceived by others. This is an important aspect of how she views class. But by now the audience has seen the shabbiness of her bedroom and knows that her wealth and class are nothing more than appearance.

It is not only the audience who has seen Raina's shabby bedroom. The man has also seen it. Therefore, he has seen past the outward trappings of class to the real Raina. Perhaps this is what has allowed him to be so honest with her.

Act 2, Section 1

Summary

It is now March 1886. In Major Petkoff's garden, Louka and her fiancée, an older male servant named Nicola, discuss the respect due to the Petkoffs. Nicola wants to marry Louka and start a shop someday, so he must have the Petkoffs' good opinion, as they and their friends will be his customers. Louka scoffs at this, saying she knows many secrets about the Petkoffs, so they have to be nice to her. Nicola says all they would have to do is fire her for dishonesty, and then no one would believe her stories. He knows secrets too.

Major Petkoff comes home, as the war is over. Catherine comes to greet him, sorry that the Austrians have forced him to make peace rather allowing Bulgaria to win the war with Servia. He says they had to enter a treaty, but they don't have to be friendly. She says she's been having sore throats, and Petkoff says it's because of too much washing. Catherine tells him they've had an electric bell installed, so they don't have to shout for the servants in a low-class way. Sergius is heard arriving, and Petkoff shouts for the servant, Nicola. Petkoff says he finds Sergius annoying and that he would never promote him unless he was certain they would be long at peace.

Sergius enters. A handsome man, he greets the Petkoffs with affection. They discuss the cavalry charge, and Sergius reveals that he "won the battle the wrong way when our worthy Russian generals were losing it the right way." Catherine says he should be promoted, but Sergius says he is resigning from the military.

Raina enters, and Sergius continues talking about his resignation. "Soldiering," he explains, "is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak." He mentions that he heard the story of a man who escaped danger by being hidden by two women, a patriotic young lady and her mother. The women then snuck him out dressed in a coat belonging to the master of the house. Raina and Catherine act offended at being told such a story.

After Raina's parents leave, Raina and Sergius declare their love for each other in very lofty terms. Sergius says she

inspired him in war, and Raina bemoans that she had no such way to prove her worthiness of him. They hear Louka approaching, and Raina excuses herself to dress to go out.

Analysis

Catherine's statement that the Bulgarians should have been allowed to force the other side to submit to their rule shows her lack of knowledge about what is actually going on in the war. The fact that her husband doesn't even attempt to discuss it with her may indicate that he doesn't take her seriously. He may well see her as a silly woman who can't know the truth. It also reflects common Victorian notions that women needed to be protected from brutal truths and were not intellectually capable of dealing with political intricacies. This is in contrast to the way the man in Act 1 spoke to Raina, as if she were an intelligent human being who could understand complex ideas.

Meanwhile, Catherine also lies to her husband, not telling him what happened with the prisoner even when it is directly brought up. Despite years of marriage, Catherine and Paul Petkoff do not—and perhaps cannot—speak candidly with one another.

In their first scene together, Raina and Sergius talk to each other in elaborate terms. He calls her "my queen" while she talks about how unworthy she is of him. It is difficult to believe that they believe these things. Moreover, they seem to hold each other to an impossibly high standard. Because of this, were Sergius to want to express some of the misgivings expressed by the man in the first act, he wouldn't be able to. He would risk disappointing his worshipful fiancée.

Meanwhile, Sergius's statement that soldiering is "the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak" sounds more likely to have come from Shaw's mind than his character's. Shaw, the playwright, was a pacifist—a person opposed to war and violence. However, Sergius's statement may actually arise from post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, a psychological condition that occurs when someone suffers extreme stress, such as a near-death experience. An attack such as the cavalry charge described by the man in Act 1 (in which Sergius was the lead man) might well cause such symptoms. However, Sergius does not express any of this to Raina, wanting instead to keep up his perfect façade.

There is a marked contrast in the dialogue between Sergius and Raina and the one between Nicola and Louka, the servants. The servants talk about practical things in a practical way. This is Shaw's way of pointing out the difference between the different classes of people in the play. It also explains why the man, like Louka, speaks candidly. He does not come from old money as the Petkoffs do.

Act 2, Section 2

Summary

Sergius asks Louka if she is familiar with "higher love," saying it is a very tiring thing to practice. He says he is many different people, depending who he is with. There are about a half-dozen Sergiuses. He flirts with Louka, who warns Raina will be spying on him but that Raina has also flirted with someone else. Louka says she's heard the man and Raina talking and knows that, if the man returns, Raina will marry him. She says, "I know the difference between the sort of manner you and she put on before one another and the real manner."

Sergius gets angry and grasps Louka's arm. He scolds her for betraying her mistress and having the soul of a servant. She says he can hurt her with his tongue as well as his hands. She says that Raina is a liar, and she is worth six of Raina. Sergius apologizes for hurting her. She says that won't do, and he offers her money. She says no, she wants her hurt made well. He asks how, and she shows him her bruised arm, which she wants him to kiss. He refuses, and she walks away, injured. Raina returns, joking about whether Sergius has been flirting with Louka.

Catherine enters and tells Sergius that Petkoff won't listen to her ideas about his three regiments, and Sergius should speak to him. Raina makes him promise to hurry. After Sergius leaves, Catherine says she's upset that the man told the story of their keeping him there. Petkoff asked for his coat as soon as he came home. Raina expresses anger but in affectionate terms, saying if he was here, she'd cram him with chocolates so he couldn't speak. She asks Raina how long the man was there before Raina summoned Catherine. Raina says she doesn't remember, and Catherine warns if Sergius finds out, he will break off his engagement with Raina. Raina says she wishes her mother could marry Sergius, instead of her. She, Raina,

always wants to shock Sergius because he is so proper and stuffy. She wishes he would find out.

Raina leaves, and Louka comes in, saying there is a Serbian soldier, Captain Bluntschli, there to see the lady of the house. Catherine realizes this is the same soldier they harbored, there to return the coat. Catherine tells Louka to let him in, be sure to close the library door, and bring his bag (which contains the coat) to her.

Bluntschli—the script identifies him thus, whereas previously he was identified only as the man—enters. Catherine warns there will be horrible consequences if her husband finds out he was there since he still has a terrible animosity toward the enemy. He should leave the coat and sneak out the back. She'll have his bag sent to him. As Bluntschli is writing his address so she can send the bag, Petkoff and Sergius come in. They immediately recognize Bluntschli and greet him warmly, belying Catherine's words. They say he should have been brought to the library and ask his advice on the military matter they were considering. As they are taking him to another room to discuss it, Raina enters. Seeing Bluntschli, who is not nearly the imposing figure that Sergius is, she exclaims, "Oh, the chocolate cream soldier!"

Raina tries to cover up this error by saying that she made a chocolate cream soldier ornament for a pudding she was making, but Nicola destroyed it. She didn't mean that Bluntschli was a chocolate cream soldier. Flirtatiously, he says that he did think she meant that. Petkoff remarks that it is strange that Raina was cooking at all and wonders whether Nicola has become clumsy because he is drinking. This suspicion seems to be confirmed a moment later, when Nicola brings out Bluntschli's bag. Catherine covers up having requested the bag by making it seem like it was Nicola's mistake. The servant takes the bag away again, obedient but obviously annoyed.

Petkoff says that Bluntschli should stay with them while he's in town. Raina and Sergius agree he should. Bluntschli, knowing Catherine wouldn't want him to, refuses, but Petkoff urges her to tell her it's okay. She does, and Bluntschli agrees to stay. As the curtain goes down, Catherine makes a "gesture of despair."

Analysis

When Louka tells Sergius she knows the difference between his manner with Raina and "the real manner," she is talking about

love. She could tell that the man and Raina are really talking to one another and in love. In contrast, Raina and Sergius just act the way they think they're supposed to when they're in love. This is what Sergius is referring to when he talks about "higher love" and how tiring it is. He means it's tiring never to be allowed to be a real person with normal emotions and normal failings. Rather, he has to live his life as the valiant soldier in Raina's portrait and subscribe to only an ideal of love rather than genuine feelings. Were Sergius and Raina to have gotten married, it is entirely likely they would end up like Raina's parents.

The bruise on Louka's arm is the result of a show of honest emotion. When Louka asks Sergius to kiss it away, his response is also passionate. His desire is clear, but he is also committed to fidelity. Flirtation is acceptable, but to go further would break the code of behavior he has chosen to live by. Clearly, Sergius is a gentleman through and through—at least with Raina. He would never dream of harming her and is shocked that his feelings for Louka have resulted in his harming her. Shaw contrasts the fake love of Raina and Sergius with the real, more passionate love between Louka and Sergius. However, the raising of bruises goes too far. Somewhere between the blatantly artificial conduct between Raina and Sergius and that sort of conduct is the ideal. This may be the respectful discussion between Raina and Bluntschli.

The honesty between Louka and Sergius (and between Raina and Bluntschli) reflect Shaw's socialist views. Shaw was deeply involved in the Fabian socialist movement, a group that aimed to transform British society by infiltrating socialist ideals into the country's intellectual and political life. By writing a play showing love that transcends class boundaries, Shaw was attempting to do that. He did not believe that class should be a barrier to marriage or an argument for it.

Catherine is distressed when Bluntschli shows up in part because she worries that her husband is likely to find out about their escapade in November. However, she may also suspect Raina's passionate feelings for Bluntschli—feelings that are stronger than those she has for her heroic Sergius. Catherine wants Raina to marry Sergius to maintain the status quo. Marrying Sergius can help Raina maintain or even better her social position, which is very important to Catherine. If Raina falls in love with Bluntschli and if Sergius finds out about it, that will be the end of an advantageous match. This is more important, in Catherine's eyes, than real love. Based on her

relationship with her husband, it is likely that Catherine made and has remained in a similar match herself. In this respect, the shabbiness of their home at the expense of their clothes reflects their attitude on marriage relations.

One may wonder why Bluntschli returned at all. It has been four months since he was in the Petkoffs' house, and he's been at war. Returning the coat seems of low importance. What's more, returning it is more likely to expose the Petkoff women's hiding him than if the coat had simply gone missing. Therefore, the audience can presume Bluntschli was willing to risk coming back because he wanted to see Raina again.

Act 3, Section 1

Summary

Act 3 takes place the same day in the Petkoffs' library. This is the library Raina bragged about in Act 1. The stage directions describe the library as a single shelf of books in poor condition. At curtain, Bluntschli is writing very competently about the military matter at hand while Sergius gazes on enviously. Petkoff says he wants his coat, which he cannot find. Catherine says it's in the closet where it belongs, and Petkoff says it isn't. Catherine sends Nicola to get the coat. Petkoff bets her a piece of jewelry that it isn't there and enlists the other men to bet also. Bluntschli, knowing the whereabouts of the coat, refuses. Sergius bets his best charger, a horse ridden into battle, against an Arabian mare, a fancier horse, that Nicola will find the coat where it belongs. Nicola returns with the coat, which he says was hanging in the closet. Petkoff thinks he's hallucinating and reminds Sergius he didn't take his bet.

Bluntschli completes his work. He sends Sergius and Petkoff off to deliver the orders. Petkoff says Catherine should come with them, so Bluntschli and Raina are left alone.

Raina approaches Bluntschli, asking whether he told anyone about hiding in their house. He says he only told one person. Raina says that person told her father and Sergius. Fortunately, they don't know she and Catherine were the ladies involved. She says if Sergius knew, he would challenge Bluntschli to a duel and kill him. Bluntschli says, "Bless me! then don't tell him." She's angry he's being flippant and says he doesn't understand how hard it is for her to deceive Sergius.

She wants to be perfect with him because their relationship is beautiful and noble. Also, she has only lied twice in her life. The first, which she should remember, was when she lied on Bluntschli's behalf about his not being there when the officer came looking for him.

Bluntschli says as a soldier, he is used to hearing people lie—and to having his life saved. Raina says this makes him incapable of gratitude. He asks if she likes gratitude. He says, "If pity is akin to love, gratitude is akin to the other thing." She says he doesn't respect women. He says he thinks two lies in an entire lifetime is too few. Two lies wouldn't last him a morning. He says, "When you get into that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say."

Raina is overcome that he understands that she sometimes lies. She says he is the first man not to take her seriously, and he says he is the first man who *has*. She says she takes the noble attitude in front of everyone, implying it is an act. They all believe her. She says he must be disgusted, now that he's found her out. He says he isn't. He's another infatuated admirer.

Raina asks him about the picture of herself she left for him in the coat pocket. Bluntschli says he didn't know anything about it. It must still be there. Raina is appalled, since her father will find it, but Bluntschli says she can simply tell him he must have put it there herself. However, she wrote a note on it. He tells that, to keep it safe while he was at war, he pawned the coat. He suggests the pawnbroker may have cleaned out the pockets. Raina is appalled that he pawned the coat and says he isn't a gentleman. She wishes she'd never met him.

Louka, wearing a bracelet to cover the bruise on her arm, arrives with mail for Bluntschli. In it is news that his father has died. Bluntschli must leave immediately to take over the family business. Louka remarks that Bluntschli has no heart because he wasn't upset about his father's death. Raina says that's because he has been a soldier, but Louka counters that Sergius still has a heart. Raina leaves.

Nicola comes in. He and Louka discuss their upcoming marriage and differing philosophies about staying within their stations.

Analysis

The library in which this act takes place is the one about which Raina bragged in Act 1. The audience now finds out it is nothing but a few books with coffee stains and broken spines. Raina bragged about the library to make her family sound rich and intellectual. However, she assumed the soldier would never see it. As with Raina's furs, the Petkoffs spend money on things that will make them look good and skimp on things people won't see, such as bedroom furniture or the library. They value style over substance. That's why Catherine is so eager to have Raina marry the handsome and seemingly heroic Sergius. However, in the play Raina is getting a lesson in substance.

Shaw takes great pains to show Bluntschli's competence at drafting the military orders, an endeavor at which both Sergius and Petkoff have failed. This is in part due to Shaw's socialist views. As a member of the Fabian Society, Shaw did not believe that being a member of the upper class is a guarantee of intellect or merit. In fact, being a member of the upper class is likely to prevent people from fulfilling their potential. This is clear from the portrayal of Raina. While Bluntschli doesn't come from such a noble or (to the viewer's/reader's knowledge) learned family, he is actually more capable than these upper-class men. Sergius says of him, "He finds out what to do; draws up the orders; and I sign 'em. Division of labor." Sergius is well aware Bluntschli is more competent than he is.

Raina finds she can converse more freely with Bluntschli and be herself around him—something she cannot do with Sergius. With Sergius, she must put on a façade of being the perfect woman. She tells Bluntschli she's only lied twice in her entire life, but he is correct in saying that her entire personality is a lie. She lies by omission. She does not let the man she supposedly loves see who she really is. Nor does Sergius allow her to see his real self as evidenced by his comment to Louka about there being half a dozen Sergiuses.

Raina's mother, Catherine, offers an example of the type of life Raina can expect if she marries Sergius. Catherine is a pet who can be bought off with a piece of jewelry. Her husband doles out housekeeping money as if he is doing her a favor. She lies to her husband constantly—several times just in the course of the play. Yet Catherine, like Raina, would probably say she never lies.

Louka and Nicola, on the other hand, speak to each other in simple terms about practical matters. He tells her he has

shown her how to act like a classy lady, a potential customer for his eventual business. But what he hasn't taught her is how to hide her feelings like a proper lady. Yet it is precisely her straight talking that makes her appealing to Sergius, who is tired of putting on an act all the time. If both Sergius and Raina dropped the act, they might be happy together. However, class expectations make this impossible.

Act 3, Section 2

Summary

Left alone with Louka, Sergius asks if he can still cure her bruise. She says no and that an officer shouldn't trifle with a servant girl. He says he wasn't. She asks if he is a brave man, and he says he is. When he was in battle, he started at the first shot, but when he charged in, he realized he was actually brave. Louka asks if the sons of poor men were less likely to be brave than the sons of rich men. He says no. Poor men are only afraid of their officers, who are rich men. He says that a brave man is one "who will defy to the death any power on earth or in heaven that sets itself up against his own will and conscience."

Louka says he has no idea what true courage is. She isn't allowed to have her will in anything, but it doesn't degrade her to be a servant if it doesn't degrade him. But if she were empress of Russia, she would show true courage. She "would marry the man I loved, which no other queen in Europe has the courage to do." She says if she loved him, she would marry him even if he was as far beneath her as she is beneath him now. She accuses Sergius of lacking that kind of courage. That is why he would deny the feelings he has for her and marry a rich man's daughter instead.

Sergius says she is just jealous of Raina because he loves Raina and Raina is so far above her. Louka says she has no reason to be jealous of Raina because Raina will marry the Swiss, meaning Bluntschli. Sergius is horrified but takes Louka in his arms and says he will kill Bluntschli and then do whatever he wants with Louka. Louka retorts maybe Bluntschli will kill Sergius, just as he has beaten him in love. Sergius says it's impossible to believe that Raina, who is so sweet and perfect, would cheat on him. Louka counters by wondering if anyone would believe she, a servant, is in Sergius's arms right now. Sergius says if he chooses to love Louka, he will marry her, in

spite of what Bulgaria thinks. If he touches her again, it will be as his fiancée.

Sergius goes to Bluntschli and challenges him to a duel in the morning with sabres, a type of sword. Raina comes in and asks what they're fighting about. Bluntschli promises that he has often acted as a sword instructor, so Sergius won't be able to hurt him, and he won't hurt Sergius. Rather, he will leave, and she and Sergius can live happily ever after. Sergius realizes by her reaction that she is in love with Bluntschli and accuses her. Bluntschli says Raina only allowed him in her room because he held a pistol to her head. He orders Sergius to apologize.

Raina says it is Bluntschli's friend who told the story. He is to blame. Bluntschli says he is dead, senselessly burned alive. Sergius declares that it is ridiculous. "Oh, war! war! The dream of patriots and heroes! A fraud, Bluntschli, a hollow sham, like love." Raina is offended, but Sergius doesn't believe there is nothing between her and Bluntschli. Raina realizes Louka was his real informant and says she knows that he has been making love to Louka.

Sergius calls off his duel with Bluntschli. Raina, angry that Sergius has had Louka spy on her, reminds Sergius that Louka is engaged to Nicola. They discover Louka listening at the door. Louka says she isn't ashamed of her behavior. Her love for Sergius is stronger than anything Raina can feel for her chocolate cream soldier.

Just then, Petkoff enters, complaining that his coat was big on him, as if it were stretched by someone with broader shoulders. Catherine is altering it. He sends Louka to get the coat when, just then, Nicola enters with the coat. Raina offers to help him put it on, using the opportunity to sneak the photograph out of the pocket and to Bluntschli. Petkoff, however, has already seen the photograph and remarks that it is missing. He assumes that Sergius is the intended recipient of the photograph, which was inscribed from Raina "to her Chocolate Cream Soldier, a souvenir."

Finally, Bluntschli tells Petkoff what happened. Petkoff asks which of the gentlemen she is engaged to. Raina says that Louka is the object of Sergius's affections. Petkoff says that's impossible because Louka is engaged to Nicola. Nicola says she isn't. He was only covering for her because he knew she wanted to marry above her station. Louka demands an apology from Sergius. He apologizes and kisses her hand. She declares they are engaged.

Catherine enters, angry at Louka, but Louka says she knew Raina was in love with Bluntschli. Bluntschli says he knows Raina would never want to marry someone like him. He has spoiled all his chances in life through an incurably romantic disposition. That's why he ran away to become a soldier instead of taking over his father's hotel business. He also believes she is too young for him, thinking she is only 17 when he is 34. When he finds out she is 23, he says he will become a suitor for her hand.

Catherine protests that Raina needs a man like Sergius, who is upper class and keeps 20 horses. Bluntschli says he has 200 horses and 70 carriages. He also has (in his hotel business) thousands of tablecloths, sheets, and quilts. He also is also an officer and a gentleman and speaks three languages. Finally, he has the highest rank known in Switzerland; he is a free citizen. Petkoff and Catherine are convinced. Raina, however, protests that she is not "to be sold to the highest bidder." She didn't give her hand to kiss, her bed to sleep in, or her roof to shelter to the emperor of Switzerland. She gave them to her chocolate cream soldier. Bluntschli tells Petkoff to send the infantry home and Sergius not to get married until Bluntschli returns in two weeks.

Analysis

In his conversation with Louka, Sergius says that he found he was brave in battle. However, he says that a brave man is one "who will defy to the death any power on earth or in heaven that sets itself up against his own will and conscience." Although Bluntschli says soldiers are never brave, Sergius seems sincere in his belief that he was. Perhaps he didn't have time to think about being otherwise, just as Bluntschli was able to shimmy up a drainpipe on an adrenaline rush. But by this statement, he means that bravery in battle isn't true bravery, merely adrenaline. It is harder to defy societal norms (by, for example, marrying a maid) than it is to fight in the adrenaline rush of battle.

It is clear, here, that he is struggling with this point. Raina is a pleasant girl and pretty. But marrying her will mean a lifetime of having to lie about who he really is and be half a dozen different Sergiuses. This may be more difficult than doing what he wants and being himself. The idea that Raina has cheated on him actually gives him an out. If Raina doesn't want to be with him either, he is off the hook. Thus, he challenges Bluntschli to a duel, possibly hoping to bring the whole matter

to a head. He has already said, of course, that he possesses the type of bravery necessary to fight a duel. The other kind, however, is more difficult for him.

Shaw's socialist sensibilities are again revealed in Louka's question: "Did you find ... that the men whose fathers are poor ... were any less brave than the men who are rich?" Sergius responds in the negative to this because, of course, social class and money have little to do with bravery, a point Shaw wanted to make.

Catherine is appalled at the idea that Raina would marry someone who is merely a soldier for hire. She is only concerned with what people will think. Of course, this is all cured when she realizes that Bluntschli is rich—very likely richer than Sergius—now that his father is dead. However, Raina wished to marry him before she found this out.

In the end, both Raina and Sergius realize that they are happier not putting on the false personality necessary to marry each other. Each is happier with someone else. Sergius is happier with an intelligent and witty servant. Raina is happier with a capable and straightforward businessman. Thus, class is irrelevant. These messages are encoded into a light, romantic comedy, giving the audience something to think about long after the curtain has gone down.

“” Quotes

"What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?"

— Raina, Act 1, Section 1

Raina's question is in marked contrast to her previous concern that her fiancée, Sergius, will find glory in battle. Indeed, it seems as if she would not find his victory glorious in any case. This shows that her feelings are conflicted, between what she knows she should want and what she actually wants.

"Some soldiers, I know, are afraid of death."

— Raina, Act 1, Section 1

Here, Raina tries to make a comparison between Sergius, whom she believes to be perfect and fearless, and other, more mortal men. That she does not see Sergius as a person capable of human fear seems complimentary to him but, in fact, it shows that she doesn't really know him at all.

"All of them, dear lady, all of them, believe me. It is our duty to live as long as we can."

— Bluntschli, Act 1, Section 1

Here, the man assures Raina that all soldiers fear death. This is deeply relatable to Raina because, of course, she is a normal human being with normal fears. But all the military people she has met have refused to acknowledge fear, so she is shocked by it. Shaw didn't mean this acknowledgment of fear to be an admission of weakness on the part of the soldier, but rather, an admission of humanity.

"It's like slinging a handful of peas against a window pane. First one comes ... and then all the rest in a lump."

— Bluntschli, Act 1, Section 1

The man describes the cavalry charge, which the audience first heard described by Catherine in very gallant terms. The terms in which the man describes it are definitely not gallant. Rather, they convey the very real fear the man at the head of the charge might feel, wishing his horse had not gotten in front.

"Death is sleep—oh, sleep, sleep, sleep, undisturbed sleep!"

— Bluntschli, Act 1, Section 2

The man tells Raina that he might as well die if he has to leave. Dying, in his estimation, is easy or, at least, quick. Living, climbing down a drainpipe and sneaking around, would be far more difficult. After three days in combat, he simply isn't up to it. It is eye-opening for Raina to learn that soldiers suffer for lack of everyday needs, such as sleep and food.

"Don't, mamma: the poor dear is worn out. Let him sleep."

— Raina, Act 1, Section 2

When Catherine sees the man asleep in Raina's bed, she is appalled. What if anyone found out? But Raina takes a more realistic tack. There are hints of her sympathy early in the act, when she says that there is no glory in killing wretched fugitives. Even if Raina believes in the cause of the war, she doesn't believe in killing for its own sake. In the man, she doesn't see a dangerous fugitive, but a human being in need.

"I won the battle the wrong way when our worthy Russian generals were losing it the right way."

— Sergius, Act 2, Section 1

Sergius bemoans that, as a soldier, he has to fight unfairly in order to win. He is a man of honor, or considers himself one. Being in an actual battle has disillusioned him. He has learned he can be brave. However, he no longer wants to watch other brave soldiers kowtow to less capable men whose social standing has won them a higher rank.

"Soldiering ... is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak."

— Sergius, Act 2, Section 1

Here, again, Sergius talks about the reasons he is quitting the army. He wants to be strong and noble and good, but he found that for a soldier this was not the route to success. He wanted a fair fight, like the duel to which he will later challenge Bluntschli. But war isn't fair. It's about trying to get an unfair advantage.

"I know the difference between the sort of manner you and she put on before one another and the real manner."

— Louka, Act 2, Section 1

Louka, a pragmatist, tells Sergius, a romantic, the truth. He and Raina act out a pantomime of love, but they don't really talk to or value each other. What Louka heard between Raina and Bluntschli was "the real manner." She also knows that the way Sergius treats her is honest and real.

"Do you like gratitude? I don't. If pity is akin to love, gratitude is akin to the other thing."

— Bluntschli, Act 3, Section 1

Here, Bluntschli is reacting to Raina's accusation that he is ungrateful for her help. However, he doesn't believe gratitude is a good basis for a relationship between any two people. Bluntschli doesn't want someone to follow or care about him because of gratitude. Rather, he wants to be loved for himself, not for what he can do for a person. He says that gratitude breeds resentment because no one wants to be beholden to someone else who has taken pity on him.

"When you get into that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it

*impossible to believe a single word
you say."*

— Bluntschli, Act 3, Section 1

Bluntschli not only realizes that Raina is lying but also thinks it's okay to lie. This is a novel and thrilling concept to Raina because all her life, people have told her she has to be perfect to be good enough. Part of being perfect is never lying. Yet Bluntschli points out that her actions lie. She is not honest about her true self.

*"Do you know, you are the first
man I ever met who did not take
me seriously?"*

— Raina, Act 3, Section 1

Bluntschli has just told Raina he knows she lies. Raina thinks Bluntschli is teasing her (and thus, not taking her seriously) when he is, in fact, doing her the favor of treating her as someone with intelligent thoughts. Bluntschli replies that he is actually the first man to take her seriously. This is likely very true. The audience sees in Raina's parents a good example of two people who never seem to take each other seriously. Catherine lies to her husband all the time, and Petkoff never listens to her ideas and opinions.

*"I am a brave man. My heart
jumped like a woman's at the first
shot; but in the charge I found that
I was brave."*

— Sergius, Act 3, Section 2

Sergius seems surprised to realize he was brave in battle even if it was merely the adrenaline rush that made him so. But in love, he is not brave at all. He wants to do what is expected of him: marry Raina and lie about who he is for the rest of his life.

However, by the end of the play, he will find he is brave in love as well.

*"I would marry the man I loved,
which no other queen in Europe
has the courage to do."*

— Louka, Act 3, Section 2

Here, Louka calls him on his lack of bravery. She says she would marry the man she loved no matter how far beneath her he might be. This, she claims, makes her braver than any queen because no queen would do that. They all submit to the dictates of society and social class.

*"Oh, war! war! The dream of
patriots and heroes! A fraud,
Bluntschli, a hollow sham, like
love."*

— Sergius, Act 3, Section 2

This quote is a nutshell summary of the entire play. Sergius says that soldiers lie to themselves about the brave conquests they will make in war. However, once you get there, it's a sham. In the same way, love is a sham. You can't choose the person you really want, and you are expected to act in accordance with social rules, not speak honestly.

Symbols

Chocolate

Chocolate is a symbol of [Bluntschli's](#) pragmatism. He knows he will be hungry, but he might not need additional cartridges. Therefore, he carries chocolate with him. [Raina](#) is appalled to

hear this because it is not in keeping with her ideas of a heroic soldier. However, his statement makes her see the reality of the hardships soldiers actually face. For that reason, she is grateful Bluntschli tells her this information; he is speaking to her as an adult. Therefore, she offers him some of her chocolate and even a place to sleep in her home.

Sergius's Portrait

In the first act [Sergius's](#) portrait stands in a position of honor in [Raina's](#) room. At one point, she holds it up and even seems to venerate it. However, the appearance of the portrait is more important to Raina than the actual man it represents. Indeed, she doesn't really know this man. This is apparent because she doesn't know whether Sergius will be heroic in battle and because is shocked to hear that he wasn't. She has an idealized concept of love and beats herself up for not being able to live up to the impossible standard that she herself has set. But no one could. The portrait, venerated but cold, is a symbol of all this.

The Petkoffs' Library

In Act 1 [Raina](#) refers to her home having a library, the only one in town. She says this in order to brag about how well appointed their home is and how wealthy her family is. They are so wealthy that they can have money to spend on intellectual pursuits. In the third act the audience actually sees this library. It is described as a single shelf of books in poor condition. Therefore, one can assume Raina was bragging about the library because she thought the soldier would never see it but be impressed. This is similar to [Shaw's](#) description of the shabby décor in Raina's room and her elaborate furs. The Petkoffs spend money on things that will make them look good—things people will see, like the furs. They are less concerned with the appearance of bedroom furniture or a library, which others will not see but in which the family might take pride. The outward appearance of being a family who can afford a library is more important than actually having one.

Themes

Heroism in Battle

The play begins with [Catherine](#) telling [Raina](#) of [Sergius's](#) heroism in battle. Raina is pleased and also a little relieved to hear of it, indicating she doesn't really know much about Sergius. Still, she accepts Catherine's statements at face value and assumes he was brave. Thus, when the man ([Bluntschli](#)) later tells her that all soldiers feel fear in battle, Raina says that *some* soldiers do, meaning that Sergius doesn't. He assures her quite confidently they do: "All of them, dear lady, all of them, believe me." In writing this, [Shaw](#) did not consider this to be an insult to soldiers or an admission of weakness. Rather, he considered fear to be a normal human emotion and an appropriate response to being in battle.

Shaw, a pacifist (a person who is opposed to war), knew that soldiers were hungry, cold, unwashed, and worn down from days of battle. He indicates this in Bluntschli's statement that he hasn't closed his eyes in 48 hours. Shaw knew that sometimes soldiers want to give up. This is not necessarily a betrayal of their cause. They are just desperate for the relief of uninterrupted sleep.

Bluntschli refers to Sergius's heroic charge as not being heroic at all. Rather, he saw him as being laughable, like Dox Quixote or an operatic tenor, simply pretending to be brave. Later, in Act 2, Sergius calls soldiering "the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak." This statement may arise from Sergius's feelings of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychological condition that occurs when someone suffers extreme stress. A near-death experience such as the cavalry charge might well cause PTSD. However, Sergius is unwilling to admit to such symptoms. Indeed, he later says honestly to [Louka](#) that he discovered in the charge that he was really brave. Nevertheless, he does not want to stay in the military.

Near the end of the play, Sergius states that war, "the dream of patriots and heroes" is "a fraud ... a hollow sham." He means that he realizes war is not simply a matter of the strongest army representing the noblest cause and winning. He sees now that bravery and heroism have little to do with it.

Lovers Lying about Love

Just as [Shaw](#) portrays soldiers lying about their heroism in war, he portrays the young lovers lying about love. They lie both to themselves and to each other. [Raina](#) tells herself that she loves [Sergius](#), she adores him, she admires him. However, she barely knows him and hasn't had a real conversation with him. When her mother tells her he was heroic in battle, she is pleased but also relieved. She's never discussed the upcoming battle with him. She's never discussed what it entails, what risk it will pose to him, or whether he is scared. Rather, she is like a knight's lady, giving her hero a ribbon and happily waving as he goes off to get run through with a sword.

When Sergius and Raina reunite after the war, he drops to one knee and kisses her hand. Sergius has just announced he is quitting the army—something that troubles him but which he says anyone who knew him would understand. However, he doesn't discuss this with Raina. Rather, they call one another "my queen" and "my king," and Raina talks about being unworthy of him. Raina says she thinks they have found a "higher love."

When Raina leaves the room, Sergius repeats this phrase to [Louka](#), saying he finds "higher love" tiring. But he is not blaming Raina. Rather, he blames himself for not being able to live up to her impossible expectations of him. In fact, they both have impossible expectations of themselves and of each other. Raina believes she can never lie to Sergius but also that to be worthy of him, she must be perfect in thought, word, and deed. Barring that, she must never allow him to realize she is imperfect.

She cannot live up to this standard, and neither can Sergius. Rather, he must be "Sergius, the hero of Slivnitsa ... Sergius, the apostle of higher love." He wonders what those Sergiuses would think if they saw him now, imperfect as he is.

But both Raina and Sergius can be their real selves with other people. Raina tells [Bluntschli](#) that he is the first man who hasn't taken her seriously, but he knows she is mistaken. He is the first man who has taken her seriously. He is the first man who has really talked to her. Indeed, he is the first man who loves her for *herself* rather than for the façade she puts on.

Irrelevance of Class and Rank

[Shaw](#) was an avowed socialist and believed that the class system in Britain at his time was wrong. Birth should not determine one's success. Rather, merit should. Shaw was a member of the Fabian Society, whose goal was to take over not through violence but through gradually changing people's minds. To help change minds, Shaw inserted socialist ideals, such as the ideal of a classless society, into his plays.

This point is mostly revealed through the character of [Louka](#), a clever, pretty girl who deserves to be rewarded for her intelligence. Louka is initially described as "so defiant that her servility to [Raina](#) is almost insolent," but she does what she needs to do. She also knows what's going on in the house. She knows Raina's shutter is broken, she knows Raina has a man in her room, and she knows Raina loves that man more than she loves [Sergius](#).

While [Nicola](#), her fellow servant, knows his place, Louka doesn't want to know hers. She considers it cowardly to cling to old beliefs about class. She says if she were queen, she'd be brave and marry the person she loved even if he were a common man. Of course, this is easy for her to say because she isn't queen and, if she were, she'd be the one making the rules. However, this statement has an effect on Sergius. He realizes it is more important to marry someone for whom he feels true affection than someone of the same class.

Perhaps part of what persuades him is Louka's question: "Did you find ... that the men whose fathers are poor ... were any less brave than the men who are rich?" Sergius responds, "Not a bit." Shaw's point is that social class and money have little to do with bravery.

What's more, class has little to do with intelligence. [Bluntschli](#) is Swiss, a nationality that doesn't recognize ranks of nobility. He states that he has the highest rank known in Switzerland, that of a free citizen. However, he is also a soldier for hire. This implies that he is of a lower class than Sergius, and [Catherine](#) is horrified that her daughter might marry someone like him. Yet both Sergius and [Petkoff](#) sit in awe while Bluntschli drafts orders they were at a loss to draft.

In the end, both Sergius and Raina realize that the military ranks and social classes of their sweethearts are irrelevant.

Raina says she helped Bluntschli because he was her chocolate cream soldier, no more than that.