THE SHAW STORY

MANDATE
The Shaw Festival is the only theatre in the world which exclusively focuses on plays by Bernard Shaw and his contemporaries, including plays written during or about the period of Shaw’s lifetime (1856 – 1950).

The Shaw Festival’s mandate also includes:
- **Uncovered Gems** – digging up undiscovered theatrical treasures, or plays which were considered major works when they were written but which have since been unjustly neglected
- **American Classics** – we continue to celebrate the best of American theatre
- **Musicals** – rarely-performed musicals from the period of our mandate are rediscovered and returned to the stage
- **Canadian Work** – to allow us to hear and promote our own stories, our own points of view about the mandate period.

MEET THE COMPANY - OUR ENSEMBLE
- **Our Actors:** All Shaw performers contribute to the sense of ensemble, much like the players in an orchestra. Often, smaller parts are played by actors who are leading performers in their own right, but in our “orchestra,” they support the central action helping to create a density of experiences that are both subtle and informative.
- **Our Designers:** Every production that graces the Shaw Festival stages is built “from scratch,” from an original design. Professional designers lead teams who collaborate with each production’s director to create sets, costumes, and lighting designs that complement the play’s text.
- **Our Music:** Music played an important role in Bernard Shaw’s life – in fact, he wrote music criticism for several years under the pseudonym Corno di Bassetto. Just as the reach of musical theatre is vast and manifold, so is the Shaw’s approach - presenting Brecht, Weill, Rodgers and Hart, and everything in between.
- **Our Play Development:** The Shaw’s play development programme goals include: 1) to develop new adaptations and translations that will tell classic stories in a contemporary way; 2) to produce new plays alongside those of Shaw and his contemporaries.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
As Artistic Director Jackie Maxwell says, “We all know the man can talk, but Bernard Shaw is also one of the most prescient, provocative, sparklingly articulate writers in the English language. His words and ideas, expressed in plays that are well-known, such as this season’s *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, or in plays that are not so familiar but no less interesting, have extraordinary relevance today. It is a joy to draw attention to those ideas and bring them to life on our stages.”

OUR THEATRES
The Shaw Festival presents plays in three distinctive theatres. The Festival Theatre with 856 seats is The Shaw’s flagship theatre; the historic Court House where The Shaw first began performing seats 327; and the Royal George Theatre, modeled after an Edwardian opera house, holds 328.

THE SHAW’S COAT OF ARMS
In 1987, on the occasion of our 25th Anniversary, the Shaw Festival became only the second theatre company in the world to be granted a Coat of Arms by the College of Heralds. A large painted sculpture of our Coat of Arms adorns the lobby of the Festival Theatre.
The Players

(Characters listed in alphabetical order)

Sir George Crofts.................................BENEDICT CAMPBELL
Frank Gardner...................................ANDREW BUNKER
Rev Samuel Gardner............................RIC REID
Praed..................................................DAVID JANSEN
Mrs Kitty Warren.................................MARY HANEY
Vivie Warren..........................MOYA O’CONNELL

The Artistic Team

Director..................................................JACKIE MAXWELL
Designer................................................SUE LEPAGE
Lighting Designer.................................KEVIN LAMOTTE
Composer............................................RYAN deSOUZA

Synopsis

Mrs Kitty Warren has worked hard to provide for her daughter, but when Vivie learns the truth about her mother’s profession, the stage is set for a battle royal between mother and daughter about love, sex, money and morality. It’s Shaw at his wicked best. — SHAW CLASSIC
Mrs Warren’s Profession

We’ve described this play as a ‘battle royal’ between mother and daughter, the ultimate test of a mother-daughter relationship. The stakes are high and the brilliant onstage battles between these women encompass the struggles of women and of society that are still resonant today. Money, career, family, survival – Shaw angered critics and censors with the play so much that it was banned from performance in England for many years and actors were arrested at its first performance in New York. What play could elicit such a reaction? As Shaw himself said about it in a letter to actress Ellen Terry, “It’s much my best play; but it makes my blood run cold: I can hardly bear the most appalling bits of it. Ah, when I wrote that, I had some nerve.”

Vivie’s mother is a Madam who runs a high-end prostitution ring. While the play is not quite as shocking as it may once have been (arrests are unlikely at our production!), for a daughter to find out that her whole way of life and education was made possible because the only way her mother could earn a living was through prostitution would still be difficult to accept.

We meet Vivie Warren, newly graduated from university, who is eager to embark on a career in finance. Having been raised mostly in boarding schools, Vivie is determined to find out why her mother is so secretive about her life and her business matters – Vivie doesn’t know the source of her mother’s income, or even the name of her own father. Vivie has made friends with Frank, a young man who lives nearby and who wants to marry her. When Frank’s father, a clergyman, and Mrs Warren meet by surprise, they realize they have met long ago, under very different circumstances. Frank’s father tells Mrs Warren that he will not allow his son to marry Vivie, because of Mrs Warren’s shameful past.

In the second act, Vivie and her mother have a lively conversation in which Mrs Warren reveals that she took to prostitution in order to escape a life of poverty and drudgery. Mrs Warren (and Shaw) argue that society gives women little choice but to either slave to their death or choose less socially acceptable ways of earning a living. Mrs Warren argues:

"Why shouldn’t I have done it? The house in Brussels was real high class; a much better place for a woman to be in than the factory where Anne Jane got poisoned. None of our girls were ever treated as I was treated in the scullery of that temperance place, or at the Waterloo bar, or at home. Would you have had me stay in them and become a worn-out old drudge before I was forty?"

Deeply moved, Vivie accepts her mother’s choices and calls her “stronger than all England.” But this newfound respect is short lived. When Vivie later learns that her mother is still running her very profitable business her shock and refusal to accept this is what leads to a final showdown – theatrical fireworks between mother and daughter.
The character descriptions below are based on Shaw’s stage directions found in the script for *Mrs Warren’s Profession*.

**Mrs Kitty Warren**
Vivie Warren’s mother
40 - 50 years of age
Seen at first as spoilt, domineering, and somewhat vulgar but, eventually revealed as a smart if somewhat manipulative mother and businesswoman.

**Vivie Warren**
Mrs Warren’s daughter
Age 22
An attractive, sensible, able, strong, and confident, highly educated member of the young English middle-class.

**Sir George Crofts**
Mrs Warren’s business partner
50 years of age
A gentlemanly combination of the most brutal types of city man, sporting man, and man about town.

**Mr Praed**
Mrs Warren’s friend
Hardly past middle age
Something of the artist about him
Unconventionally but carefully dressed
Very amiable with considerate manners.

**Frank Gardner**
Rev Gardner’s son
Vivie’s romantic interest
20-ish
A pleasant, pretty, smartly dressed young gentleman who is cleverly good-for-nothing ... with agreeably disrespectful manners.

**Rev Samuel Gardner**
Frank Gardner’s father
Over 50 years of age
A clergyman who clamorously asserts himself as father and clergyman without being able to command respect in either capacity.

**Who’s Who in Mrs Warren’s Profession?**
The Playwright

George Bernard Shaw
(1856 -1950)

George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856. He wrote his first play *Widowers’ Houses* in 1892, and his third play, *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, in 1893-94.

As a theatre critic in the 1890s, Shaw grew tired of the intellectually barren melodramas that were then in fashion. His admiration for the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen encouraged Shaw to reshape the English stage with sophisticated comedies that presented what he considered important social issues. Shaw was concerned with the theatre of ideas. Although his plays were not popular initially, in the period 1904-1907 Shaw began to reach a larger audience with an influential series of productions at London’s Royal Court Theatre. His plays became known for their brilliant arguments, their wit, and their unrelenting challenges to the conventional morality of his time.

Before he died in 1950, Shaw wrote many more plays, including *Arms and The Man* (1894), *The Devil’s Disciple* (1898), *Man and Superman* (1903), *Pygmalion* (1913, later popularized as the musical *My Fair Lady*), *Heartbreak House* (1916), and *Saint Joan* (1923).

In addition to being an accomplished playwright, Shaw was also known for being a critic, essayist, vegetarian, campaigner for the simplification of spelling and reform of the alphabet, feminist, anti-vivisectionist, social activist, and one very outspoken and opinionated character. Shaw created an extensive body of work in his lifetime, which spanned nearly a century. There was hardly an aspect of human activity that he did not comment on. Shaw remained engaged throughout his life with the issues at the centre of *Mrs Warren’s Profession* and his other early plays - injustice, poverty, and the status of women.
There is no doubt that *Mrs Warren’s Profession* is one of Shaw’s most provocative plays - the political ‘hot potato’ of a woman choosing prostitution and procurement over poverty or destitution is given a thorough, no-holds barred exploration.

The emotional spine of the play, however, is the relationship between Mrs Warren and her daughter Vivie; what happens between them when the true nature of Kitty’s so far hidden profession is revealed and Vivie learns that her high-end education has been funded by it. These revelations and the reaction to them are played out in two extraordinary scenes and at the end of the play, the very nature of “mother love” and “filial duty” is wrestled to the ground. A parting is shown as perhaps inevitable but still costly.

Any student - male or female - will recognize the push and pull of the parent-child relationship, while also enjoying the interplay between the two women and the four men who satellite around them. The audience will be swept up in a play that is funny, shocking, politically stimulating and ultimately, very moving.
Sue LePage talks about designing the set and costumes for *Mrs Warren’s Profession*

**Q:** What is your vision for this play?

**A:** *We have been finding our way to an edgy sensibility for the design that I hesitate to label. There are hints of Edward Gorey and Tim Burton—it’s evolving!*

**Q:** What do you find most striking about this play?

**A:** *This is a delicious play about people who are not necessarily very nice, but very interesting to be with!*

**Q:** What do you want audience members to know about your design?

**A:** *It has a witty, dark, modern sensibility, using lots of Art Nouveau; even Gothic ingredients in a fresh mix.*
**Mrs Warren’s Profession**

**A Timeline**

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<td>Mrs Warren’s Profession is published. Immediately in trouble with London’s censor, it is banned from public performance</td>
<td>First private performance of Mrs Warren’s Profession</td>
<td>North American premiere in New Haven (Oct. 27)  - License to perform is revoked (Oct. 28)  - Censored version of play opens in NYC (Oct. 30)  - Tickets sell on the blackmarket for as much as $60  - Play closed after one performance  - Everyone involved is arrested and charged with offending public decency</td>
<td>All charges are dropped</td>
<td>First public showing in England</td>
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Written in 1893-94 and published in 1898, *Mrs Warren’s Profession* was banned from public performance in England until a production at the Prince of Wales Theatre, Birmingham, on July 27, 1925. The first London production was at the Regent Theatre, King’s Cross, on September 28, 1925 and it finally reached the West End in a production at the Strand Theatre on March 3, 1926 where it ran for sixty-eight performances.

The first American production was at the Hyperion Theatre, New Haven, on October 27, 1905 where the mayor revoked the theatre’s license after just one performance of the play. The producer-director, Arnold Daly, then took the play to the Garrick Theatre, New York, where it opened on October 30, 1905 but was again closed by order of the mayor, and this time Daly and the cast were arrested on a charge of “offending public decency.” When charges were eventually dropped, the play reopened at the Manhattan Theatre on March 9, 1907 and then went on a national tour. The most recent Broadway revival was at the Vivian Beaumont Theatre in 1976 with Ruth Gordon as Mrs Warren and Lynn Redgrave as Vivie Warren.

In Canada *Mrs Warren’s Profession* premiered in an American touring production at the Walker Theatre, Winnipeg, on April 30, 1907 but closed after three performances after being mauled by the local critics. The first Canadian production was at the Canadian Repertory Theatre, Ottawa, on December 12, 1950 directed by Sam Payne.

This is the Shaw Festival’s fourth production of the play, following productions in 1976 (directed by Leslie Yeo), 1990 (Glynis Leyshon), and 1997 (Tadeusz Bradecki).
CRITICS’ VERDICT HOSTILE.

Opinions of the Newspapers, by Which Daly Said He Would Abide. From The Herald.

“...the lid” was lifted by Mr. Arnold Daly and “the limit” of stage indecency reached last night in the Garrick Theatre in the performance of one of George Bernard Shaw’s “unpleasant comedies” called “Mrs. Warren’s Profession”—a profession, by the way, which is the occupation of a certain class of female harpies.

“...the limit of indecency” may seem pretty strong words, but they are justified by the fact that the play is morally rotten. It makes no difference that some of the lines may have been omitted and others toned down—there was superabundance of foulness left.

The whole story of the play, the atmosphere surrounding it, the incidents, the personalities of the characters are wholly immoral and degenerate. The only way successfully to expurgate “Mrs. Warren’s Profession” is to cut the whole play out. You cannot have a clean pigsty. The play is an insult to decency because—

It defends immorality.
It glorifies prostitution.
It besmirches the sacredness of a clergyman’s calling.
It pictures children and parents living in calm observance of most unholy relations.

And, worst of all, it countenances the most revolting form of degeneracy by flippantly discussing the marriage of brother and sister, father and daughter, and makes one supposedly moral character of the play, a young girl, declare that choice of shame, instead of poverty, is eminently right. If New York’s sense of shame is not aroused to hot indignation at this theatrical insult, it is indeed in a sad plight.

Excerpt from the preface of Mrs Warren’s Profession

“...a leading New York newspaper, which was among the most abusively clamorous for the suppression of Mrs Warren’s Profession, was fined heavily for deriving part of its revenue from advertisements of Mrs Warren’s houses.

Many people have been puzzled by the fact that whilst stage entertainments which are frankly meant to act on the spectators as aphrodisiacs are everywhere tolerated, plays which have an almost horrifying contrary effect are fiercely attacked by persons and papers notoriously indifferent to public morals on all other occasions. The explanation is very simple. The profits of Mrs Warren’s profession are shared not only by Mrs Warren and Sir George Crofts, but by the landlords of their houses, the newspapers which advertise them, the restaurants which cater for them, and, in short, all the public officials and representatives whom they silence by complicity, corruption, or blackmail. Add to these the employers who profit by cheap female labor, and the shareholders whose dividends depend on it ... and you get a large and powerful class with a strong pecuniary incentive to protect Mrs Warren’s profession, and a correspondingly strong incentive to conceal, even from their own consciences no less than from the world, the real sources of their gain. These are the people who declare that it is feminine vice and not poverty that drives women to the streets, as if vicious women with independent incomes ever went there ... “
Shaw Shock and Culture
(from Shaw’s preface to Plays Unpleasant)

I had no taste for what is called popular art, no respect for popular morality, no belief in popular religion, no admiration for popular heroics. As an Irishman I could pretend to patriotism neither for the country that I had abandoned nor the country that had ruined it. As a humane person I detested violence and slaughter, whether in war, sport, or the butcher's yard. I was a Socialist, detesting our anarchical scramble for money, and believing in equality as the only possible permanent basis of social organization, discipline, subordination, good manners, and selection of fit persons for high functions. Fashionable life, open on indulgent terms to unencumbered ‘brilliant’ persons, I could not endure, even if I had not feared its demoralizing effect on a character which required looking after as much as my own. I was neither a skeptic nor a cynic in these matters: I simply understood life differently from the average respectable man … Judge then, how impossible it was for me to write fiction that should delight the public.

Shaw holds the British public accountable for prostitution; not the prostitutes themselves
(Excerpt from Mrs Warren’s Profession)

Mrs Warren’s Profession places the protagonist’s decision to become a prostitute in the context of the appalling conditions for working class women in Victorian England. Faced with ill health, poverty, and marital servitude on the one hand, and opportunities for financial independence, dignity, and self-worth on the other, Kitty Warren follows her sister into a successful career in prostitution. Shaw’s fierce social criticism in this play is driven not by conventional morality, but by anger at the hypocrisy that allows society to condemn prostitution while condoning the discrimination against women that makes prostitution inevitable.
Plays Unpleasant

**SHAW’S PLAYS UNPLEASANT** consists of a volume of three plays, including *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, *The Philanderer* and *Widowers’ Houses*. As to why Shaw labeled the plays in this volume “Unpleasant”, he says:

The reason is pretty obvious: their dramatic power is used to force the spectator to face unpleasant facts. No doubt all plays which deal sincerely with humanity must wound the monstrous conceit which it is the business of romance to flatter. But here we are confronted, not only with the comedy and tragedy of individual character and destiny, but with those social horrors which arise from the fact that the average homebred Englishman, however honorable and good-natured he may be in his private capacity, is, as a citizen, a wretched creature who, whilst clamoring for a gratuitous millennium, will shut his eyes to the most villainous abuses if the remedy threatens to add another penny in the pound to the rates and taxes which he has to be half cheated, half coerced into paying …

In *Mrs Warren’s Profession* I have gone straight at the fact that, as Mrs Warren puts it, ‘the only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her.’ There are certain questions on which I am, like most Socialists, an extreme Individualist. I believe that any society which desires to found itself on a high standard of integrity of character in its units should organize itself in such a fashion as to make it possible for all men and all women to maintain themselves in reasonable comfort by their industry without selling their affections and their convictions. At present we not only condemn women as a sex to attach themselves to breadwinners, licitly or illicitly, on pain of heavy privation and disadvantage; but we have great prostitute classes of men: for instance, the playwrights and journalists, to whom I myself belong, not to mention the legions of lawyers, doctors, clergymen, and platform politicians who are daily using their highest faculties to belie their real sentiments; a sin compared to which that of a woman who sells the use of her person for a few hours is too venial to be worth mentioning; for rich men without conviction are more dangerous in modern society than poor women without chastity. Hardly a pleasant subject, this!

My first three plays, *Widowers’ Houses*, *The Philanderer*, and *Mrs Warren’s Profession* were what people call realistic. They were dramatic pictures of middle class society from the point of view of a Socialist who regards the basis of that society as thoroughly rotten economically and morally … All three plays were criticism of a special phase, the capitalist phase, of modern social organization, and their purpose was to make people thoroughly uncomfortable whilst entertaining them artistically.
Prostitution was rampant in Victorian England and was a major social concern. Some estimates put the number of prostitutes in Victorian London at about 80,000, while the respected medical journal, The Lancet, estimated in 1857 that one in sixty houses in London was a brothel and one in every sixteen females was a prostitute … There was as much disagreement about the causes of prostitution as there was about the numbers of prostitutes, and there were many debates and arguments about what to do to alleviate the problem. For perhaps a majority of Victorian social reformers prostitution was a moral issue.

Where prostitution was believed to be a moral problem and prostitutes were believed to be ‘fallen’ or ‘corrupt’, the appropriate response was believed to be punishment. For Shaw, however, punishment, succour, and legal intervention were ineffective ways of dealing with prostitution. It was necessary, he argued, to identify and respond to the root causes of prostitution, causes that had much more to do with economics than with morality. Victorian social reformers identified many causes of prostitution – moral turpitude, alcohol, seduction, sexual abuse, poverty – but for Shaw the “fundamental condition of the existence of this traffic is that society must be so organized that a large class of women are more highly paid and better treated as prostitutes than they would be as respectable women.” Responsibility for prostitution in Shaw’s view, lay not with any particular segment of society – and certainly not with the prostitutes themselves – but with society as a whole: “ladies and gentlemen, clergymen, bishops, judges, Members of Parliament, highly connected ladies leading society in Cathedral towns, peers and peeresses, and pillars of solid middle-class Parliament.” The connection between such people and prostitution was that they supported and profited from “industrial enterprises which employ women and girls… [on] wages which are insufficient to support them.” Not all young working-class women were “saved from the streets” by husbands or parents.

There are always orphans and widows and girls from the country and abroad who have no families and no husbands; and these must submit to the blackest misery that a slum garret and an income of from eighteen pence to a shilling a day can bring to a lonely, despised, shabby, dirty, underfed woman, or else add to their wages by prostitution...

The issue, then, in late-Victorian England, was not so much whether prostitution and promiscuity should be presented on stage, but how they should be presented…As Shaw put it, “members of Mrs Warren’s profession shall be tolerated on the stage only when they are beautiful, exquisitely dressed, and sumptuously lodged and fed,” and at the end of the play they are expected to “die of consumption to the sympathetic tears of the whole audience, or step into the next room to commit suicide, or at least be turned out by their protectors and passed on to ‘redeemed’ by old and faithful lovers who have adored them in spite of all their levities.”
Women in the Labour Market
by Bernard Shaw

Excerpt from Bernard Shaw’s The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism and Capitalism, 1928.

… As no industrial employer would employ a woman if he could get a man for the same money, women who wished to get any industrial employment could do so only by offering to do it for less than men. This was possible, because even when the man’s wage was a starvation wage it was the starvation wage of a family, not of a single person. Out of it the man had to pay for subsistence of his wife and children, without whom the Capitalist system would soon have come to an end for want of any young workers to replace the old ones. Therefore even when the men’s wages were down to the lowest point at which their wives and children could be kept alive, a single woman could take less without being any worse off than her married neighbours and their children. In this way it became a matter of course that women should be paid less than men; and when any female rebel claimed to be paid as much as a man for the same work (“Equal wages for equal work”), the employer shut her up with two arguments: first, “If you don’t take the lower wage there are plenty of others who will,” and, second, “If I have to pay a man’s wages I will get a man to do the work.”

The most important and indispensable work of women, that of bearing and rearing children, and keeping house for them, was never paid for directly to the woman but always through the man; and so many foolish people came to forget that it was work at all, and spoke of Man as The Breadwinner. This was nonsense. From first to last the woman’s work in the home was vitally necessary to the existence of society, whilst millions of men were engaged in wasteful or positively mischievous work, the only excuse for which was that it enabled them to support their useful and necessary wives. But the men, partly through conceit, partly through thoughtlessness, and very largely because they were afraid that their wives might, if their value were recognized, become unruly and claim to be the heads of the household, set up a convention that women earned nothing and men everything, and refused to give their wives any legal claim on the housekeeping money. By law everything a woman possessed became the property of her husband when she married: a state of things that led to such monstrous abuses that the propertied class set up an elaborate legal system of marriage settlements, the effect of which was to hand over the woman’s property to some person or persons yet unborn before her marriage; so that though she could have an income from the property during her life, it was no longer her property, and therefore her husband could not make ducks and drakes of it. Later on the middle classes made Parliament protect their women by The Married Women’s Property Acts under which we still live; and these Acts, owing to the confusion of people’s minds on the subject, overshot the mark and produced a good deal of injustice to men. That, however, is another part of the story: the point to be grasped here is that under the Capitalist system women found themselves worse off than men because, as Capitalism made a slave of the man, and then, by paying the woman through him, made her his slave, she became the slave of a slave, which is the worst sort of slavery.

This suits certain employers very well, because it enables them to sweat other employers without being found out. And this is how it is done. A labourer finds himself bringing up a family of daughters on a wage of twenty-nine shillings a week in the country (it was thirteen in the nineteenth century), or, in or near a city, of from thirty (formerly eighteen) to seventy, subject to deductions for spells of unemployment. Now in a household scraping
along on thirty shillings a week another five shillings a week makes an enormous difference: far more, I repeat, than another five hundred pounds makes to a millionaire. An addition of fifteen shillings or a pound a week raises the family of a labourer to the money level of that of a skilled workman. How were such tempting additions possible? Simply by the big girls going out to work at five shillings a week each, and continuing to live at home with their fathers. One girl meant another five shillings, two meant another ten shillings, three another fifteen shillings. Under such circumstances huge factories sprang up employing hundreds of girls at wages of from four-and-sixpence to seven-and-sixpence a week, the great majority getting five. These were called starvation wages; but the girls were much better fed and jollier and healthier than women who had to support themselves altogether. Some of the largest fortunes made in business: for example in the match industry, were made out of the five shilling girl living with, and of course partly on, her father, or as a lodger on somebody else’s father, a girl lodger being as good as a daughter in this respect. Thus the match manufacturer was getting three-quarters of his labour at the father’s expense. If the father worked in, say, a brewery, the match manufacturer was getting three-quarters of his labour at the expense of the brewer. In this way one trade lives by sweating another trade; and factory girls getting wages that would hardly support a prize cat are plump and jolly and willing and vigorous and rowdy, whilst older women, many of them widows with young children, are told that if they are not satisfied with the same wages there are plenty of strong girls who will be glad to get them.

It was not merely the daughters but the wives of working men who brought down women’s wages in this way. In the cities young women, married to young men, and not yet burdened with many children or with more than a room or two to keep tidy at home (and they were often not too particular about tidiness), or having no children, used to be quite willing to go out as charwomen for an hour a day for five shillings a week, plus such little perquisites and jobs of washing as might be incidental to this employment. As such a charwoman had nothing to do at home, and was not at all disposed to go on to a second job when she had secured the five shillings that made all the difference between pinching and prodigality to her and her husband, the hour easily stretched to half a day. The five shillings have now become ten or so; but as they buy no more, the situation is not altered.

In this way the Labour market is infested with subsidized wives and daughters willing to work for pocket money on which no independent solitary woman or widow can possibly subsist. The effect is to make marriage compulsory as a woman’s profession: she has to take anything she can get in the way of a husband rather than face penury as a single woman. Some women get married easily; but others, less attractive or amiable, are driven to every possible trick and stratagem to entrap some man into marriage; and that sort of trickery is not good for a women’s self-respect, and does not lead to happy marriages when the men realize that they have been “made a convenience of.”

This is bad enough; but there are lower depths still. It may not be respectable to live on a man’s wages without marrying him; but it is possible. If a man says to a destitute woman “I will not take you until death do us part, for better for worse, in sickness and in health and so forth; nor will I give you my name and the status of my legal wife; but if you would like to be my wife legally until tomorrow morning, here is sixpence and a drink for you, or, as the case may be, a shilling, or a pound, or ten
pounds, or a hundred pounds, or a villa with a pearl necklace and a sable mantle and a motor car,” he will not always meet with a refusal. It is easy to ask a woman too virtuous; but it is not reasonable if the penalty of virtue be starvation, and the reward of vice immediate relief. If you offer a pretty girl twopence halfpenny an hour in a match factory, with a chance of contracting necrosis of the jawbone from phosphorous poisoning on the one hand, and on the other a jolly and pampered time under the protection of a wealthy bachelor, which was what the Victorian employers did and what employers still do all over the world when they are not stopped by resolutely socialistic laws, you are loading the dice in favor of the devil so monstrously as not only to make it certain that he will win, but raising the question whether the girl does not owe it to her own self-respect and desire for wider knowledge and experience, more cultivated society, and greater grace and elegance of life, to sell herself to a gentleman for pleasure rather than to an employer for profit. To warn her that her beauty will not last for ever only reminds her that if she takes reasonable care of her beauty it will last long past the age at which women, “too old at twenty-four,” find the factory closed to them, and their places filled by younger girls. She has actually less security of respectable employment than of illicit employment; for the women who sell labour are often out of work through periods of bad trade and consequent unemployment; but the women who sell pleasure, if they are in other respects well conducted and not positively repulsive, are seldom at a loss for a customer. The cases which are held up as terrible warnings of how a woman may fall to the lowest depths of degradation by listening to such arguments are pious inventions, supported by examples of women who through drink, drugs, and general depravity of weakness of character would have fallen equally if they had been respectably married or had lived in the strictest celibacy. The incidental risks of venereal diseases are unfortunately not avoidable by respectable matrimony: more women are infected by their husbands than by their lovers. If a woman accepts Capitalist morality, and does what pays her best, she will take what district visitors call (when poor women are concerned) the wages of sin rather than the wages of sweated labour.

There are cases, too, where the wedding ring may be a drawback instead of a make-weight. Illicit unions are so common under the Capitalist system that the Government has had to deal with them; and the law at present is that if an unmarried woman bears a child she can compel its father to pay her seven-and-sixpence a week for its support until it is sixteen, at which age he can begin to help to support her. Meanwhile the child belongs to her instead of to the father (it would belong to him if they were married); and she is free from any obligation to keep his house or do any ordinary drudgery for him. Rather than be brought into court he will pay without demur; and when he is good-natured and not too poor he will often pay her more than he is legally obliged to. The effect of this is that a careful, discreet, sensible, pleasant sort of woman who has not scrupled to bear five illegitimate children may find herself with a legally guaranteed steady income of thirty-seven-and-sixpence a week in addition to what she can earn by respectable work. Compared to with five legitimate children she was on velvet until the Government, after centuries of blind neglect, began to pension widows.

In short, Capitalism acts on women as a continual bribe to enter into sex relations for money, whether in or out of marriage; and against this bribe there stands nothing beyond the traditional respectability which Capitalism ruthlessly destroys by poverty, except religion and the inborn sense of honour which has its citadel in the soul and can hold out (sometimes) against all circumstances.
Women in the Labour Market Today

Canada’s Gender Wage Gap

- Women make 70.5% of the wages men make for full-time, year-round work.
- When you take part-time workers into account, the gap is 64 cents for every dollar.
- University-educated women only earn 68% as much as men.
- Jobs earning less than $35,000 a year are mostly held by women. Jobs earning $60,000 or more a year are mostly held by men by a ratio of 2.5 to 1.

Women have taken action to narrow the wage gap, yet it continues to persist:

- Women are now more educated. In fact, 50% of women between ages 25 and 44 have a post-secondary qualification, compared to 40% of men.
- Women are working in greater numbers and for longer hours.
- Women are having fewer children and taking less time away from work.

So ... why does the gap in women’s earnings continue to exist? It is a complex problem with multifaceted reasons:

- Men and women work in different types of jobs. Women tend to pool in lower-paying occupations. For example, in 2004, two-thirds of working women were in teaching, health, administrative or sales and service jobs: the “pink ghettos.” Women are less likely to work in the best-paid and high growth industries (i.e., computer science).
- Two-thirds of minimum wage earners are women and no matter how many hours one works at minimum wage, it’s often not enough to sustain above the poverty line.
- Women tend to work in the “caring” professions and non-profit organizations. Careers in these sectors tend to be undervalued.
- Women tend to be more timid wage negotiators than men.
- Women may choose certain fields and specialties because they like the camaraderie, the presence of other women, the flexibility of the work schedule or a less competitive environment. These perks may come at the cost of lower pay.
- Persistent stereotypes about women’s productivity and suitability for management positions continues to challenge the workplace.
- Doubts about women’s commitment to work (especially if she is a mother) are still prevalent.
- Ongoing assumptions that women are not the main breadwinners for their families.

Sources: www.canadianlabour.ca/index.php/women
What You’re Worth. An article by Joanna Pachner that appeared in the March, 2008 issue of Chatelaine Magazine
Timeline excerpt from Beyond the Home Fires: A History of Canada’s Working Women by Kate Dupuis
**GBS: Concessions versus Confessions**

When, as anticipated by Shaw, the Lord Chamberlain refused to license *Mrs Warren’s Profession* for public performance in England, Shaw submitted an expurgated text, omitting the entire second act and transforming Mrs Warren from brothel-keeper to pickpocket. This “mutilated” (Shaw’s word) version was licensed on March, 19, 1898 and given a public reading (not full performance) on March 30, 1898 at the Victoria Hall, Bayswater, thus safeguarding Shaw’s copyright on the play. A printed version of the expurgated text, with Shaw’s handwritten changes, is in the British Library.

**Other banned works by Bernard Shaw**

Two more of Shaw’s plays were banned in 1909: *The Shewing Up of Blanco Posnet* - a one-act play banned in London on the grounds that it was blasphemous - and Press Cuttings, banned on the grounds that it contained public figures. *Blanco Posnet* was not performed in a London theatre until 1921.

This article appeared in the New York Times on June 26, 1909.

**Victorian Women and Education**

Unlike most other British and North American universities at this time, Cambridge (the university Vivie Warren attended) did not award women degrees upon completion of their studies. Women students were tolerated, but the university’s governing bodies were exclusively male and typically reacted unfavourably whenever efforts were made to improve the status of women at the university. In 1896, proposals to grant women degrees generated heated debate in the all-male Senate. Male students celebrated the defeat of the resolution to grant degrees to women with violent street demonstrations. In 1921, when women were finally allowed to take degrees, Vivie’s college was attacked by a mob of male undergraduates.

To excel in such an intimidating environment would demand extraordinary commitment and persistence, attributes Vivie would need to establish herself in the professional world after leaving Cambridge – a world also dominated by men.
Say What?
A Glossary of Selected Terms from Mrs Warren’s Profession

devilling: generally working for another who takes credit and/or remuneration.

facer: an unexpected, stunning blow or defeat.

freemasonry: a natural fellowship based on similar or common experience.

governor: one’s father or an address to a strange man, a superior, or an employer.

greenhorn: an inexperienced or unsophisticated person.

high Cambridge degree: women received permission in 1881 to take exams at Cambridge University, followed by the granting of titles for the degrees women achieved. In 1894, Vivie has done the work but does not receive the B.A. like her male colleagues.

inexorable: not capable of being persuaded.

mater or pater: mother or father; from the Latin, mater/pater; to an old man, it’s a respectful form of address; chiefly British.

off my peck: not hungry; a slang for food; if one is peckish, one is hungry.

patrimony: inheritance from one’s father.

Philistine: a person disdainful of intellectual or artistic values.

Providence: manifestation of divine care or direction.

public-house: an inn or tavern providing food and lodging for traveling public, usually licensed to sell ale and wine; also used to describe a brothel in the 18th century.

Saturday half-holiday: in the later Victorian era, the work day on Saturday usually ended mid-afternoon.

three score and ten: 70 years old; score = 20 years

tripos: early 19th C. honours exams introduced by Cambridge University to establish higher academic standards; named after the three-legged stools used at the oral defense of a thesis.

whitelead: a heavy poisonous basic carbonate of lead that is marketed as a powder or as a paste in linseed oil, has good hiding power and is used chiefly in exterior paints.

workhouse: Parliament passed the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834 provided the building of workhouses for the poor which were intended to be harsh and hostile so that only the truly destitute would seek refuge in them.

wrangler: named from the style of argument at a defense/thesis; one engaging in argument or debate.
Books & Articles


Websites

www.canadianlabour.ca/index.php/women

www.canadianlabour.ca/equality/Enwomenspamphlet.pdf

www.friesian.com/valley/dilemmas.htm


www.educeth.ch/english/readinglist/shawgb/

www.nottinghamplayhouse.co.uk

www.answers.com/topic/mrs-warren-s-profession-play-1

www.thefileroom.org/publication/atkinshistory.html
## CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:
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Study Guide Response Sheet  

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Page References: 22, 22, 23, 24, 25, 25, 26, 26-28, 29, 30, 32, 32, 33-34, 35, 35, 36, 37, 37, 38
Theme 1: Secrets

Mrs Warren’s Profession is a play that involves many secrets: family secrets, societal secrets, and personal secrets. Let’s explore the theme of secrets within the play and in our day-to-day lives.

Victorian Women & Secret Professions
The title of the play, Mrs Warren’s Profession, invites us to wonder about the play’s plot. For example, what is Mrs Warren’s profession?

With a partner:
- Use the internet or a literary source to research women’s professions in Victorian England (1837-1901).
- Investigate the status of women during the late 1800s.
- What work opportunities did women have in the late Victorian era?
- What were work conditions like for women during this time period?
- Based on your research, what do you think Mrs Warren’s profession is in the play?
- If Mrs Warren’s profession was a secret, what might her secret profession be?
- Share what you think Mrs Warren’s profession is with the class. Explain why her profession is a secret.

Secret Professions of Today
As a class:
- Are there any professions today that women keep secret?
- Brainstorm some possible secret professions that presently exist.
- Why are some professions kept a secret?
Creating Scenes of Secrets

Throughout Mrs Warren’s Profession, a series of secrets are revealed to one person or a select few. In the play, the importance of keeping this revolving door of secrets hidden is paramount. As secrets build, the element of suspense is heightened. Suspense is a device used to build tension through atmosphere and mood; it involves mental uncertainty, excitement, or anxiety which is intended to emotionally involve the audience. When attending the live performance, pay close attention to the series of secrets that unfold.

In groups of 3:

- Create a three-part scene that centers on a series of three secrets. Each part of the scene involves three characters. In each part, an attempt to reveal a secret between two of the characters is made. In each case, the secret is kept from the third character. Preliminary decisions to make:
  
  → Where does the scene take place?
  → Who are the three characters in relation to each other?
  → What are the three secrets? (Note: Each character has a secret)
  → Why is each secret being kept from the third person?

- Part One: Create a brief lead-up to the first secret (e.g., the reason for the secret) without telling the audience what it is.
  
  → Before Character A reveals or explains secret 1 to Character B, Character C enters.
  → The first secret is quickly covered up by Characters A and B so that Character C does not find out about the secret.
  → Create a reason for Character A to exit the scene.

- Part Two: Create a brief lead-up to the second secret without telling the audience what it is.
  
  → Before Character B reveals/explains secret 2 to Character C, Character A re-enters.
  → The second secret is covered up by Characters B & C so that Character A does not find out about the secret.
  → Create a reason for Character B to exit the scene.

- Part Three: Create a brief lead-up to the third secret without telling the audience what it is.
  
  → Before Character C reveals/explains the third secret to Character A, Character B re-enters.
  → The third secret is covered up by Characters C & A so that character B does not find out about the secret.
  → Create a possible conclusion for the scene.

- Connect the three parts to create a scene that flows without any breaks.

- Rehearse the scene three times.

- Present the scene to the class.

In the same groups:

- Repeat the steps as above, exposing the secret when the character enters. What is the character’s reaction to hearing the secret? What action might they take? Perform the scene for the class.

- As a class discuss which version of the scene is more interesting and why.
Aspects of **loyalty** and **betrayal** have a strong presence in *Mrs Warren’s Profession*. Activities for this theme explore the following questions: To whom are we loyal and why? If our loyalty is broken, how does this betrayal affect us?

**Mind Map: Loyalty & Betrayal**

In groups of 3-4:
- Using the mind map below, brainstorm ideas on the meanings of loyalty and betrayal (e.g., what does it mean to be loyal? How does it feel to be betrayed?)
- Share your ideas of loyalty and betrayal with the class.
- Write class ideas on a display board using the mind map structure. *Note: Include multiple ideas in each bubble.*
- Discuss the similarities and differences among the groups.

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**DISCUSSION**

**MRS WARREN**: ... you are the only one that ever turned on me. Oh, the injustice of it!
Social Groups and Their Loyalties

In groups of 3-4:

- Discuss the different social groups, cliques, and relationships observed at school, in your community, and at home (e.g., sports team, cheerleading squad, science club, drama club, teachers, student council, service club, boyfriend/girlfriend, mother/daughter, brother/sister, etc.)
- Select four different groups and list their shared loyalties in the table below.
- Share your ideas with the class.
- As a class, discuss the similarities and differences between the various group types.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group type or name</th>
<th>What loyalties does the group share?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Tableaux: Loyalty & Betrayal

In the same groups of 3-4:

- Discuss actions that would be considered grave acts of betrayal within the groups you have listed.
- Create a third column for the table above and list 2 or 3 acts of betrayal for each group.
- Decide why the acts of betrayal listed would be grave for each group.
- Create a tableau that portrays one of the group types and their loyalties.
- Create another tableau for the same group type but this time, portray the effects of the group after they have been betrayed.
- What specific changes occur between tableau 1 and tableau 2? Make sure to clearly communicate the difference(s) between the group’s loyalties (tableau 1) and betrayals (tableau 2).
- Put the two tableaux together. Create a sound effect that cues the group to move from tableau 1 to tableau 2 (e.g., bell sound). The transition between the two tableaux should be smooth, slow, and continuous.
- Present the tableaux sequence to the class.
- Class discusses the group type, the loyalties, and the betrayals.
- Discuss the impact of the various betrayals for each group (e.g., Why does a particular act affect one group more than another?)
Victorian England: Socio-Historical Context

With a partner:

- Use the internet or a literary source to answer these questions about England’s Victorian era (1837-1901):
  - In 1894, when Shaw wrote *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, what political and social circumstances influenced Victorian life? Identify 2-4 political and/or social influences.
  - A new ideal and cause in the Victorian era was a movement called the “New Woman.” What information can you discover about this movement?

- Based on your social-historical research, identify at least four prominent social groups that lived in England during the late 1800s.

Character Analysis: Characteristics, Group Type, Loyalties

In groups of 3-4:

- The charts on pages 27-28 include quotations from characters in *Mrs Warren’s Profession*.
- Read the quotations for each character.
- Fill in the chart based on your research of Victorian life and the character’s words.
  - Step 1: In column B, write 2-3 characteristics that describe the personality of each character.
  - Step 2: In column C, select a group type that represents each character.
    - Note: A character can assume more than one type. Group types include:
      - Rich or Poor
      - Dependent or Independent
      - Moral or Immoral
      - Business or Aesthetic
    - Note: Locate a definition for aesthetic in the dictionary.
  - Step 3: In column D, write 2-3 interests or loyalties of each character.
  - Step 4: Share your ideas with the class. As a class, discuss each group’s similarities and differences. Based on your research of the “New Women,” would you describe Miss or Mrs Warren as “New Women”? 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Write 2-3 characteristics that describes each character.</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>What “type” does each character represent? (e.g., rich/poor; dependent/independent; moral/immoral; business/aesthetic)</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>Write 2-3 personal interests and/or loyalties of each character.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MRS WARREN:</td>
<td>What do the people that taught you know about life or about people like me? Would they have ever done anything for you if I hadn’t paid them? Haven’t I brought you up to be respectable? And how can you keep it up without my money and my influence and Lizzie’s friends.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MRS WARREN:</td>
<td>Oh, my darling, how can you be so hard on me? Have I no rights over you as your mother?</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIVIE WARREN:</td>
<td>I hardly know my mother. Since I was a child I have lived in England, at school or at college, or with people paid to take charge of me. I have been boarded out all my life. My mother has lived in Brussels or Vienna and never let me go to her. I only see her when she visits England for a few days. I don’t complain: it’s been very pleasant; for people have been very good to me; and there has always been plenty of money to make things smooth. But don’t imagine I know anything about my mother. I know far less than you do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>VIVIE WARREN: [with intense contempt] If I thought that I was like that – that I was going to be a waster, shifting along from one meal to another with no purpose, and no character, and no grit in me, I’d open an artery and bleed to death without one moment’s hesitation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRANK GARDNER:</td>
<td>No: that’s what you thought of afterwards. What you actually said was that since I had neither brains nor money, I’d better turn my good looks to account by marrying somebody with both. Well, look here, Miss Warren has brains: you can’t deny that.</td>
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<tr>
<td>REV GARDNER:</td>
<td>Brains are not everything.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRANK GARDNER:</td>
<td>No. Of course not: there’s the money.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Character</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Write 2-3 characteristics that describes each character.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>What “type” does each character represent? (e.g., rich/poor; dependent/independent; moral/immoral; business/aesthetic)</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Write 2-3 personal interests and/or loyalties of each character.</td>
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REV SAMUEL GARDNER: [terrified] Sh-sh-sh, Frank, for Heaven’s sake! [He looks round apprehensively. Seeing no one within earshot he plucks up courage to boom again, but more subdued.] You are taking an ungentlemanly advantage of what I confided to you for your own good, to save you from an error you would have repented all your life long. Take warning by your father’s follies, sir; and don’t make them an excuse for your own.

REV SAMUEL GARDNER: – er – you see, as rector here, I am not free to do as I like. Er – what is Mr Praed’s social position?

GEORGE CROFTS: Well, what’s he to do? No profession. No property. What’s he good for?

GEORGE CROFTS: [taking her seriously] … Well, now as to practical matters. You may have an idea that I’ve flung my money about; but I haven’t: I’m richer today than when I first came into the property. I’ve used my knowledge of the world to invest my money in ways that other men have overlooked; and whatever else I may be, I’m a safe man from the money point of view.

MR PRAED: I don’t believe it. I am an artist; and I can’t believe it: I refuse to believe it. It’s only that you haven’t discovered yet what a wonderful world art can open up to you.

MR PRAED: You know, my dear Miss Warren, I am a born anarchist. I hate authority. It spoils the relations between parent and child; even between mother and daughter. Now I was always afraid that your mother would strain her authority to make you very conventional. It’s such a relief to find that she hasn’t.
Characters and circumstances in *Mrs Warren’s Profession* set up our final theme: Meaningful Choice. The following activities focus on making choices that are meaningful within various contexts and circumstances. This theme explores multiple perspectives when making choices. For example, when is a choice right or wrong and why?

**Shaw’s Subjects and the Play’s Themes**

To start, let’s examine the playwright’s choices: When comparing *Mrs Warren’s Profession* to Shaw’s other plays, you might notice that Shaw chooses to focus on particular topics. George Bernard Shaw (often referred to as Bernard Shaw or GBS) was concerned with the following subjects and these themes are repeated throughout his work.

1. Socialism
2. The faults of capitalism
3. Education
4. Family relationships
5. The class system
6. The folly of romanticism
7. Creative evolution
8. Leadership
9. The status of women
10. The principles and practices of religion
11. The folly of nationalism
12. The politics of corruption
13. The folly of war
14. Love

**Making the Right (?) Decision**

On your own:
- Read the story of *Mrs Warren’s Profession* on p. 4 of this study guide.
- Based on your current knowledge of *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, which subjects relate to the play’s subject matter, plot, and characters?
- In the table below, write the subjects you think relate to the play and why.
- Share and discuss your ideas with the class. *Note: For reference, the teacher can create a master list of all applicable subjects and post on a display board.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects or themes in <em>Mrs Warren’s Profession</em></th>
<th>Reason(s) why you have selected this subject/theme</th>
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<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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</table>
As a class:
In *Mrs Warren's Profession* Shaw presents some moral debates that challenge both his characters and the audience.

Mrs Warren chooses her profession as a way out of poverty, and as her business grows, so do her earnings. She puts her money to good use by providing an education for her daughter, Vivie. A college education would give Vivie opportunities Mrs Warren never had. Mrs Warren's actions seem admirable until Vivie realizes what her mother does for a living. Vivie is faced with a serious moral dilemma: to accept or reject her mother's choices.

Imagine that the class has the power to make moral decisions for the rest of the world. Presented below are three cases that challenge the class to consider multiple viewpoints. Read the cases and follow the instructions provided. **Following each case, reflect as a class on the issues raised.**

**Activity**

**Case #1**
During the sinking of a large ship more than 20 survivors crowd into a lifeboat built for 7. If the lifeboat is not lightened, it will sink and all 20 survivors will drown. Included in the group of 20 is the ship’s captain. He concludes that the best course of action is to force some individuals to go over the side and drown. Such an action, he believes, is not unjust for if this does not happen, everyone will die! The only possibility for rescue requires great efforts of rowing, which influences the captain's decision to sacrifice the weakest aboard. After days of hard rowing, the survivors are rescued and the captain is tried for his actions.

• Prepare a statement about this situation from the perspectives of:  (a) the jury, (b) the captain,  (c) the survivors, (d) the passengers thrown overboard.
• If you were the captain, how would you have dealt with this situation? Prepare a short dramatization of what might occur during the trial.

**Case #2**
A gifted young student is studying at a well-recognized medical school, which has an extremely high tuition cost. The student is ineligible for a scholarship because of the family’s wealth. Due to the heavy academic demands of the medical program, the student cannot take on a part-time job. The student is financially supported by her father. The student has just discovered that the family money is generated from drug dealing.

• Prepare a statement about this situation from the perspective of (a) the student, (b) the father, (c) the medical school, (d) the student’s school residence advisor.
• Prepare a short dramatization of a few options available to the student. What problems are associated with each choice.

**Case #3**
Paul has been accused of embezzling funds from his company. He and his family are well-respected members of their community. Paul financially supported his sons in establishing a fair trade venture in a third world community. That community has used the money from this venture for a much needed fresh water supply, a new medical clinic and a local school.

• Divide the class into 4 groups
• Assign each group the following characters:  a) Paul’s family members, b) Paul’s business associates, c) representatives from the village, d) jurors
• Instruct each group to prepare a statement about this situation to be delivered in a courtroom setting.
• Prepare a short dramatization of what might occur during the trial.
Post-performance
Classroom Activities

The following pages suggest questions and activities students might explore AFTER attending *Mrs Warren’s Profession*. Activities relate to Ministry of Education expectations for the Arts and Character Education at the junior, intermediate, and senior levels. To obtain Ontario Curriculum documents, visit www.edu.gov.on.ca. See pages 1 - 20 for supplementary information.

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**Theme 1: Secrets**

**Secrets Revealed: Understanding the Silence**

In group of 3-4:

- As the play unfolds, Vivie Warren learns about her mother’s secrets.
- With this knowledge, what does Vivie discover about herself and the world as she knows it?
- What do we learn by following her journey?
- How does the conspiracy of silence surrounding the issues in *Mrs Warren’s Profession* encourage the development of social injustice such as, prostitution, class distinction, and poverty?

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**Theme 2: Loyalty & Betrayal**

Etiquette is a system of rules that dictate how people should interact with one another. During the Victorian era, etiquette involved an extremely complex system of manners that upheld the values of the day, such as respectability, order and stability; refinement and delicacy; diction and poise. Manners and social graces, such as addressing a young lady as “Miss,” adopting the correct posture and gait, properly holding a lady’s wrist-fan or a tea cup, the way a gentleman bowed, and the colours of one’s dress were all measurements of a person’s social class. Heightened forms of courtesy and respectability became external signs of a person’s moral virtue. Crudeness and disregard for the rules of etiquette could be the cause of social ostracism.
Respectability: Social Mores and Etiquette of the Victorian Era

With a partner:
- Use the internet or a literary source to research the practices of respectability and etiquette during England’s Victorian era (1837-1901).
- As you do your research, take notes. The information gathered will help you in the next activity.

In groups of 3-4:
- Which characters in Mrs Warren’s Profession uphold the practices of Victorian etiquette and respectability?
- Complete the table below by selecting 2-4 examples from the play.
- Share your ideas with the class and compare the similarities/differences among the groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Character’s ideas or actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fads, fashion and politics shape the architecture of each generation. Historically and multi-culturally each era compares itself to the next which can lead to great expectations, trials, and accomplishments.

Generations: A Timeless Gap
In groups of 3-4:

In Mrs Warren’s Profession Vivie and her mother have grown up in different classes – each with their own social rules and expectations. This challenges their loyalties and puts them at odds with each other.

- Think of a scene or situation from the play that illustrates this tension between mother and daughter.
- In today’s world, what would be a similar point of tension between a mother and daughter?

Mrs Warren explains that in her youth she had limited opportunities and no education. Mrs Warren has worked hard to give her daughter opportunities she did not have herself so that Vivie can enjoy a better life.

- What did Mrs Warren do to compensate for her lack of financial security and education?
- In the end, does Vivie have more freedom and choice than Mrs Warren had?

Vivie is unable to understand her mother’s motivations or reasoning and Mrs Warren believes that her daughter is indebted to her because of the opportunities she has bestowed upon her. Due to Mrs Warren’s expectations, she finds it difficult to fully understand that her daughter has matured and earned her autonomy. Praed warns both Vivie and Mrs Warren by saying:

PRAED: … I am afraid your mother will be a little disappointed. Not from any shortcoming on your part, you know: I don’t mean that. But you are so very different from her ideal.

PRAED: I think, you know – if you don’t mind my saying so that we had better get out of the habit of thinking of her as a little girl. You see she has really distinguished herself; and I’m not sure, from what I have seen of her, that she is not older than any of us.

- Do you think Mrs Warren’s expectations of her daughter are too high and unrealistic? Do you think Vivie is unreasonable and insensitive toward her mother? Give evidence to support your opinions.
It’s remarkable and sometimes unsettling to realize that parents were once young; that they have had a life beyond parenting and family. It is difficult for parents to come to terms with their own children’s development as they mature into independent adults who are guided by their own goals, ideals, and choices.

- As Vivie matures, how could Vivie and Mrs Warren adjust their perspectives so that they maintain a greater sense of value and respect for each other’s boundaries and choices?

In Act II, Shaw illustrates the distance between the play’s younger and older generations by separating the two groups at dinner. Frank and Vivie are relegated to the “kids” table where they critically view the adults:

VIVIE: [With intense contempt for them] If I thought that I was like that — that I was going to be a waster, shifting along from one meal to another with no purpose, and no character, and no grit in me, I’d open an artery and bleed to death without one moment’s hesitation.

FRANK: Oh no, you wouldn’t. Why should they take any grind when they can afford not to? I wish I had their luck. No: what I object to is their form. It isn’t the thing: It's slovenly, ever so slovenly.

- What values do Vivie and Frank demonstrate in the passage above?

Throughout the ages, oppositional differences have existed between parents and their children. For Kitty Warren and her daughter Vivie, these differences are sparked by social pressures, morals, and pride. What Vivie cannot accept is that her mother continues to work in her profession, even though she is now financially independent. This, ultimately, is what the final showdown comes to. In the end, Vivie makes the decision to earn her living her own way — away from her mother and her mother’s profession.

- Share your ideas from pages 33 – 34 with the class. Discuss the similarities and differences among the groups.
- As a class, discuss the following questions:
  1. Who is more responsible for maintaining the mother-daughter bond: Vivie or Mrs Warren? Why?
  2. Who do you think has the right to betray the other: Vivie or Mrs Warren? Why?

Theme 3: Meaningful Choice

As discussed in the pre-performance activities, Shaw was concerned with specific themes that are repeated throughout his work. Two themes found in Mrs Warren’s Profession are the status of women and the class system.
Shaw’s Characteristic Writing Style

Shaw often communicates his themes through:

1. **SATIRE.** Shaw wanted to expose ill-conceived attitudes and malignant social conditions. This he did with a view to bringing about change.

2. **DIDACTICISM.** Shaw wanted to instruct his audiences. As a result, his plays are never without a message.

3. **INVERSION.** Shaw delighted in creating topsy-turvy situations, inverting the usual view to establish a fresh perspective from which new truths could be discovered. Accordingly, Shaw’s children lecture their parents with wisdom; Shaw’s women prey upon men; his tyrants turn out to be tenderhearted and so on. Frequent use of paradoxical language, in which the absurdly improbable proves correct, is a common occurrence in Shaw’s work.

4. **SURPRISE.** Shaw makes frequent use of surprise. In many cases, the surprise is largely visual. At other times, sudden twists of plot provide surprise.

5. **OPERATIC CONSTRUCTION.** Shaw borrows many conventions from opera. In his plays, actors’ speeches are constructed and arranged in arias, duets, and choruses. As a director, Shaw was acutely sensitive to the rhythms and tones of each line.

With a partner:
- Now that you have attended the live performance of the play, which of the above elements do you think Shaw incorporated into *Mrs Warren’s Profession*?
- Note: There may be more than one writing style used in the play.
- Share your answer(s) with the class and compare the similarities and differences among the other groups.

Prostitution: A Moral or Social Problem (?)

Divide the class into 2 groups:
- Group 1 reads “Prostitution: A Moral or Social Problem” on p. 13 of this guide and shares their moral opinion on prostitution.
- Without reading the article on p. 13, Group 2 shares their moral opinions on prostitution.
- Compare similarities and differences between the two groups. If there are any differences of opinion between the groups, discuss the reasons why.
**Prostitution: A Socio-Historical Perspective**

Divide the class into 4 groups:

- Use the internet or a literary source to research women’s work throughout the ages. Find out about society’s opinions and the nature of women’s work in the following decades: 1890s (Group 1), 1940s (Group 2), 1990s (Group 3), and 2040s (Group 4).

**Activity**

- The task for each group will be to create living statues or tableaux that represent the conditions, circumstances, and societal opinions of women’s work in each decade.

- One member of each group will take on the role of an interpreter for a social history museum; other members of the group will be the statues or characters in a tableau.

- The tour guide will either instruct or physically move the statues/characters into position and interpret the scene for the class.

- The class will take the roles of museum patrons in present day.

- As the class observes the statues/tableaux, the interpreter will explain how the art created by the group reveals the conditions, circumstances, and societal opinions of women’s work throughout the decades (i.e., 1890 – 1990s) and what women’s work might look like in the future (i.e., 2040s).

**Possible Extension**: Create a living docu-drama of ‘women’s work though the ages’. Combine the four statues/tableaux into one flowing story adding creative movement transitions and music to connect the four decades.

**Discussion**

In groups of 3-4:

Based on the excerpt below, discuss Shaw’s perspective on the economics of prostitution.

If you offer a pretty girl twopence half penny an hour in a match factory, with a chance of contracting necrosis of the jawbone from phosphorous poisoning on the one hand, and on the other a jolly and pampered time under the protection of a wealthy bachelor, which was what the Victorian employers did and what employers still do all over the world when they are not stopped by resolutely socialistic laws, you are loading the dice in favor of the devil so monstrously as not only to make it certain that he will win, but raising the question whether the girl does not owe it to her own self-respect and desire for wider knowledge and experience, more cultivated society, and greater grace and elegance of life, to sell herself to a gentleman for pleasure rather than to an employer for profit.

(See pages 14-16 of guide for the complete essay, “Women in the Labour Market.”)
Final Questions

In groups of 3-4:

- Discuss these final questions:

  1. Would you characterize the ending of Mrs Warren’s Profession as a happy one? If so, why? If not, why not?
  2. What do you think is left unresolved? What has been resolved?
  3. Given your knowledge of the historical, economic, and cultural circumstances of England’s Victorian era, whose choices are more justified: Mrs Warren’s or Vivie’s?
  4. Do societies still discriminate based on gender and economic status? Provide any possible examples.

- Share your answers/ideas with the class and discuss the similarities and differences among the groups.

Vivie’s Diary: An In-Role Writing Activity

As seen on stage, at the end of the play, Vivie and Mrs Warren part ways. In Shaw’s stage notes, he writes:

[Mrs Warren goes out, slamming the door behind her. The strain on Vivie’s face relaxes; her grave expression breaks up into one of joyous content; her breath goes out in a half sob, half laugh of intense relief. She goes buoyantly to her place at the writing-table; pushes the electric lamp out of the way; pulls over a great sheaf of paper; and is in the act of dipping her pen in the ink when she finds Frank’s note. She opens it unconcernedly and reads it quickly, giving a little laugh at some quaint turn of expression in it.] And good bye, Frank. [She tears the note up and tosses the pieces into the waste paper basket without a second thought. Then she goes at her work with a plunge, and soon becomes absorbed in its figures.]

On your own:

- Imagine life for Vivie one year later. What do you think the future holds for her?

- In-role as Vivie, compose a diary entry one year after the end of the play. The diary entry should explain how she is presently feeling with her life circumstances as well as reflect on her past choices.
Mrs Warren’s Profession
STUDY GUIDE RESPONSE SHEET

To help us understand the needs and expectations of teachers regarding study guides, please complete this response sheet and mail to: Shaw Festival, Education Dept. P.O. Box 774, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON L0S 1J0 or e-mail to: education@shawfest.com.

Part I
Have you ever used a Shaw Study Guide? YES _____ NO ______

If no, please indicate below the reason(s) for not using a Shaw study guide.
Lack of time _____
Lack of interest _____
Not applicable or appropriate _____
Did not receive a study guide _____
Did not know that guides were available online or sent to school groups who book a play _____
Other _____

If yes, did The Shaw study guide help you and your students? YES _____ NO _____

Please indicate which component(s) of The Shaw study guide you found most and/or least useful.

☑ Most useful
☒ Least useful

   The Synopsis & Story _____
   Who’s Who in the Play _____
   The Playwright _____
   Director’s & Designer’s Notes _____
   Production History _____
   The World of the Play (historical background, articles) _____
   Did You Know?/Theatre Terms (trivia & definitions) _____
   Additional Sources _____
   Classroom Activities _____

Part II
The study guide is helpful to me as a teacher.
Strongly agree ___  Agree ___  Neutral ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree ___

The content of the study guide is well-balanced.
Strongly agree ___  Agree ___  Neutral ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree ___

The format for the study guide is engaging.
Strongly agree ___  Agree ___  Neutral ___ Disagree ___ Strongly disagree ___

Part III
Please include suggestions for improving the Shaw Festival study guides.
________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________