

MAJOR BARBARA

BY
BERNARD SHAW



Education Partner

THE
Great-West Life
ASSURANCE COMPANY



Shaw FESTIVAL

PRESENTS

Major Barbara

By
Bernard Shaw

This study guide for *Major Barbara* contains background information for the play, suggested themes and topics for discussion, and curriculum-based lessons that are designed by educators and theatre professionals.

The lessons and themes for discussion are organized in modules that can be used independently or interdependently according to your class's level and time availability.

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COVER: DIANA DONNELLY AND BENEDICT CAMPBELL
PHOTO BY SHIN SUGINO

MAJOR BARBARA

Running time: 3 hrs 20 mins approx.

including two intermissions

Previews June 10

Opens June 24

Closes October 29

For a calendar of performances visit:

www.shawfest.com

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The Players

Lady Britomart Undershaft.....Mary Haney
 Stephen Undershaft..... David Leyshon
 Morrison/Bilton..... Micheal Querin
 Barbara Undershaft..... Diana Donnelly
 Sarah Undershaft.....Charlotte Gowdy
 Charles Lomax..... Evan Buliung
 Adolphus CusinsBen Carlson
 Andrew Undershaft Benedict Campbell
 Rummy MitchensSharry Flett
 Snobby Price..... Andrew Bunker
 Jenny Hill Jenny L. Wright
 Peter Shirley Jay Turvey
 Bill Walker..... Patrick Galligan
 Mrs. Baines Patty Jamieson
 Army Members..... Cathy Current, Evert Houston, Chilina Kennedy

Directed by Joseph Ziegler
Designed by Christina Poddubiuk
Lighting Designed by Kevin Lamotte
Musical Direction and Original Music by Allen Cole



Stage Manager: Allan Teichman
Assistant Stage Manager: Beatrice Campbell
Technical Director: Jeff Scollon
Production Stage Manager: Judy Farthing



*Costume Sketches of Adolphus Cusins and Barbara Undershaft
by Christina Poddubiuk*

The Story

Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara* has been called the most controversial of Shaw's works, while also being recognized as a major work in the history of modern drama.

As the play begins it is an evening in January 1906, in the library of Lady Britomart Undershaft. When her son Stephen enters, Britomart announces that as a grown man, Stephen must now take charge of the family affairs, as neither of his two sisters are capable, or in a position to do so. Sarah has become engaged, but cannot guarantee any money for years, and Barbara, the most promising member of the household, has joined the Salvation Army and taken up with a tempestuous Greek scholar, Adolphus Cusins.. Lady Britomart cannot avoid the topic any longer— she must speak of the children's father, the great military industrialist Andrew Undershaft.

Some time ago, perhaps 20 years, Undershaft and his wife had separated. The cause of this was that he made it clear that he would never pass on the business to his (then-infant) son, Stephen. The reason was the Undershaft family tradition: through generations of armourers and now artillery manufacturers, the business had always been deeded to a "foundling" - that is, an orphan, one who was perhaps abandoned ("found"), and likely born out of wedlock. To Lady Britomart, legitimacy was uppermost, and so was "primogeniture", the system of passing on an estate to the eldest son. And so they separated. But now she is in financial need, and so she has invited Andrew to visit with the intention of asking him for a substantial contribution. The family is summoned to the library and informed of her plans. Barbara is amused and expectant; she decides that her father, after all, has a soul to be saved like everyone else, and, as a Major in the Salvation Army, she determines to take up

the challenge. However, Undershaft believes that two things are necessary to salvation: money and gunpowder. Love, truth, and mercy are the graces of a "rich, strong, and safe life." And so Undershaft plans to demonstrate his power over the Army in his effort to win Barbara over to his cause.

Many of his plays are known for their involved arguments and *Major Barbara* is no exception. Shaw himself called the play "a discussion in three long acts," and much of the play's action consists, in fact, of words. When the play was published in 1907 Shaw added, as with many of his works, a lengthy preface, contributing further discussion about the play itself.

In addition, the play is noted for its unconventional attitudes toward morality as well as its irony and humour. Issues of wealth and poverty, business and religion, cynicism and idealism are seriously examined within the play, but it is sometimes easy to overlook the fact that *Major Barbara* is also a comedy, albeit a very practical one. Shaw uses the play to entertain his audience, to make people laugh, while focusing on issues that are as important today as they were when the play was first written.

Shaw's seeming criticism of Christianity caused some to accuse him of blasphemy, while others defended what they saw as Shaw's realistic presentation of religion. Critics complained about the violence of the play, particularly in the second act, saying it was so excessive as to be beyond realism. Others disagreed, saying the depiction of violence was perhaps unrealistic only in the fact that it was subdued.

Despite the opinions of critics the play was an overwhelming success with the public, and remains so today.

The Playwright:

George Bernard Shaw 1856 -1950

George Bernard Shaw, born in Dublin in 1856, began his writing career as a novelist and journalist, but gained his great fame as a playwright. Most people consider Shaw the second-greatest playwright in the English language, after only Shakespeare.

Growing up in Dublin, Shaw developed a wide knowledge of music, art and literature under the influence of his mother, a singer and vocal music teacher. At age 20 he moved to London, where he spent his afternoons in the British Museum and his evenings pursuing his informal education by attending lectures and debates. He declared himself a socialist in 1882 and joined the new "Fabian Society" in 1884. Soon he distinguished himself as an effective public speaker, and an incisive and irreverent critic of music, art and drama.

Shaw's first play, *Widowers' Houses*, was produced at a private theatre club in 1892. It was followed by *The Philanderer* and *Mrs Warren's Profession*. These three plays were published as *Plays Unpleasant* (1898). More palatable, though still rich with challenges to conventional middle-class values, were his *Plays Pleasant* published the same year: this volume included the plays *Arms and The Man*, *Candida*, *The Man of Destiny* and *You Never Can Tell*. In 1897 Shaw attained his first commercial success with the American premiere of *The Devil's Disciple*, the income from which enabled him to quit his job as a

drama critic and to make his living solely as a playwright.

In 1898 he married Charlotte Payne-Townshend, an Irish heiress whom he had met through his Fabian friends Beatrice and Sidney Webb.

Although Shaw's plays were not popular initially, in the period 1904-07 he began to reach a larger audience through 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. Among his plays presented there were the premieres of *John Bull's Other Island* (1904), *Man and Superman* (1905), *Major Barbara* (1905) and *The Doctor's Dilemma* (1906). His best-known play, *Pygmalion*, was first performed in 1913. Two generations later, it attained even greater fame as the musical *My Fair Lady*.

During World War I, Shaw's anti-war speeches and a controversial pamphlet entitled *Common Sense About the War* made him very unpopular as a public figure. In *Heartbreak House* (performed 1920) Shaw exposed, in a country-house setting, the spiritual bankruptcy of the generation responsible for the carnage. Next came *Back to Methuselah* (1922) and *Saint Joan* (1923), acclaim for which led to his receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature for 1925.

Shaw continued to write plays and essays until his death in 1950 at the age of 94.



Bernard Shaw: 1905

Director's Notes

by

Joseph Ziegler

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence.

From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy.

Good is Heaven. Evil is Hell.

William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

I first learned of the battle between good and evil from the nuns of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in the early sixties. The war in heaven between God and his highest angel, Lucifer, made quite an impression on my young mind. I was taught that all evil was a result of the fall of Lucifer, who became Satan. Through him came the temptation of Adam and Eve, and the corruption of mankind, and Original Sin. I attained the “age of reason” pretty sure that the fate of the world was being fought over by the forces of good and evil. Sort of like *Star Wars* or *The Empire Strikes Back*. Whether I was aware of it or not, I grew up convinced of the existence of an Absolute Morality.

To me, that's what this play is about. At its centre is the confrontation of good and evil: Barbara and the Salvation Army, with their mission of saving the souls of human beings, versus Undershaft and his munitions factory, with their mission of finding “improved methods of destroying life and property”. In the course of the action, views are stated and battle lines are drawn. “Right is right; and wrong is wrong,” says Stephen Undershaft. “There is one true morality for every man; but every man has not the same true morality,” says his father. Barbara

says: “There are neither good men nor scoundrels: there are just children of one Father; and the sooner they stop calling one another names the better.” And yet her faith is shaken to the core when the Salvation Army accepts help from the profits of “drunkenness and murder.”



Joseph Ziegler Photo by David Cooper

In his dealings with Barbara and her fiancé Cusins, Undershaft brings them to confront some very hard realities: that without money there is no real power, that the world is more complex than the two camps of good and evil, that they must throw off the paralyzing effects of absolute morality. Undershaft seems always to have the upper hand in these discussions, but Undershaft isn't the answer, nor does he have the answers. That's why he needs both Major Barbara and Cusins.

All three come close to a resolution near the end of the play. Cusins asks: “Then the way of life lies through the factory of death?” Barbara's answer: “Yes, through the raising of hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of the Shadow.”

The realization that they reach, by the end of the play, is that true salvation has to do with saving people's bodies as well as their soul.

Production History

Major Barbara had its premiere in London, England on November 28, 1905, as part of the celebrated Vedrenne-Barker repertory experiment at the Court Theatre. Granville Barker himself created the role of Adolphus Cusins.

A film version in 1940 was directed by Gabriel Pascal, with costumes by Cecil Beaton and additional dialogue by Shaw. The cast included such familiar names as Rex Harrison, Wendy

Hiller, Robert Morley, Sybil Thorndike and Emlyn Williams.

The first production in Canada was at Toronto's Comedy Theatre in February 1925, in a presentation by the Cameron Matthews English Players. Our 2005 version marks the play's fifth appearance at the Shaw Festival, following productions in 1967, 1978, 1987 and 1998.



Ben Carlson, Patrick Galligan and Diana Donnelly in a scene from Major Barbara
Photo by David Cooper

The Salvation Army

The title of the play, *Major Barbara*, refers to a young woman who became active in the Salvation Army. The founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, began his career working as an apprentice in a pawnbroker's shop, where he learned about the humiliation and degradation of poverty. Eventually he became a traveling minister, whose powerful preaching attracted so much attention that he was invited in London to lead a series of large religious meetings. Realizing that he had found his destiny, Booth formed his own organization called 'The Christian Mission'. Despite his best efforts, however, Booth struggled to attract converts. It was not until 1878 when The Christian Mission changed its name to The Salvation Army that things began to happen. The idea of an Army fighting sin caught the imagination of the people. Booth's fiery sermons drew more and more people to start a new life as one of his soldiers. Joining the Salvation Army involved swearing the following covenant:

HAVING accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord, and desiring to fulfill my membership of His Church on earth as a soldier of The Salvation Army, I now by God's grace enter into a sacred covenant.

I will be responsive to the Holy Spirit's work and obedient to His leading in my life, growing in grace through worship, prayer, service and the reading of the Bible.

I will make the values of the Kingdom of God and not the values of the world the standard for my life.

I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life, allowing nothing in thought, word or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest or immoral.



*Costume sketch for Adolphus Cusins
by Christina Poddubiuk*

I will maintain Christian ideals in all my relationships with others: my family and neighbours, my colleagues and fellow Salvationists, those to whom and for whom I am responsible, and the wider community. **I will** uphold the sanctity of marriage and of family life.

I will be a faithful steward of my time and gifts, my money and possessions, my body, my mind and my spirit, knowing that I am accountable to God.

I will abstain from alcoholic drink, tobacco, the non-medical use of addictive drugs, gambling, pornography, the occult, and all else that could enslave the body or spirit.

I will be faithful to the purposes for which God raised up The Salvation Army, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, endeavouring to win others to Him, and in His name caring for the needy and the disadvantaged.

I will be actively involved, as I am able, in the life, work, worship and witness of the corps, giving as large a proportion of my income as possible to support its ministries and the worldwide work of the Army.

I will be true to the principles and practices of The Salvation Army, loyal to its leaders, and I will show the spirit of Salvationism whether in times of popularity or persecution.



The Uniform of the Salvation Army



In 1878, when The Christian Mission became the newly named Salvation Army, the familiar military terms became standard and flags, badges, brass bands and uniforms were added together with a military style rank system for its staff. Trimmings worn on the uniform indicated rank, seniority and responsibility, as in traditional military rankings.

At first these marching Salvationists dressed in an odd assortment of clothing and headgear. It took almost two years to standardize the Salvation Army uniform, but by the beginning of 1880 a standard navy blue serge uniform was introduced for both men and women. Men wore a high neck tunic with a stiff collar over a scarlet jersey. Their headgear was a military cap with a red band, on which the words **The Salvation Army** had been worked in gold letters. Women wore long navy skirts, close-fitting high neck tunics with white lace-edge collar. A large black straw bonnet was Catherine Booth's idea. Cheap, durable, protective and solidly unworldly, the bonnet with its red band and huge ribbon bow became a well-known symbol.

The men however, continued for much longer to display individual preference in headgear. Pith helmets, toppers, derbies, sailor hats and discarded military band helmets proudly appeared adorned with a Salvation Army hatband until 1891, when Headquarters finally brought the troops under regulation caps - one hatband for officers, another for soldiers.

Even without religious motivation, the wearing of military ceremonial uniforms was widely popular among the working class men in the late 19th century in Britain.

The majority of pioneer Salvationists were proud of their uniforms because of the great crusade for which the uniform stood. Partly because of pride and because of economic necessity (officers and soldiers have always had to purchase their own uniforms and in 1890 a uniform would cost on average three weeks' salary) many Salvationists wore their uniforms on any occasion where formal clothes would be expected. Weddings, funerals, family portraits, visiting relatives and town hall meetings would be some of the occasions one might expect to see the uniform.

Up until recently women continued to wear a smaller version of the Victorian bonnet. However most countries around the world are now adopting the less-expensive felt bowler hat style, and the high-collar tunics are also being replaced by an open-neck jacket.

According to culture and climate different uniforms may be worn in other countries. White, grey, beige, safari type with shorts or perhaps a sari with a Salvation Army sash have all been adopted. Not all Salvation Army members wear a uniform. It is a personal choice to do so, but the reason for wearing it remains unchanged. It stands for:

- A commitment in the war against evil.
- As a personal testimony to the wearer's own Christian faith and practice.
- It signifies the availability of the Salvationist to anyone needing a helping hand and listening ear.

Poverty in London

In the 19th century, Britain had been the world's leading industrial nation. By the early 1900s other countries like Germany and the USA were competing strongly with Britain, taking jobs away from Britain and leaving people in poverty. As people realized that poverty was not really the fault of the poor they began to support the view that the government should do something to help the young, the old.

Until the early 1900s most people thought that the poor were poor because they wasted their money on drink. However, social reformers like Charles Booth in London and Seebohm Rowntree in York showed that poverty was caused by a number of key factors:

- Unemployment or partial unemployment (the inability to get a permanent job);
- The death of a wage earner in the family; illness;
- Low wages;
- Large families and the unemployed.

Efforts at combating poverty began with a number of acts passed by the Conservative party, such as the Unemployed Workmen's Act in 1903, and the Employment of Children Act 1903. Local councils passed by-laws on issues like child labour.

They also cleared slum housing and built new housing for the poor.

Most of the changes relied upon the attitude of local authorities. Some did take action, others did not, usually because of the cost of measures like building new housing.

Old people were poor because they could no longer work and earn money. And if they had any, their savings would be very little. Children were poor because their parents were poor.

Around the same time, young and ambitious politicians became part of the government. Two of the most important were David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill. Both men felt that the state of Britain's poor was a national disgrace.

Other studies made people and politicians aware that the most

vulnerable in society were also often the worst off. When people were too old to work, they had to rely on their family or charity to feed and house them. Malnourishment and even violent abuse were not uncommon. It is not surprising that in the poor districts attendance in schools was very high. For many of these children, school was a warm, safe place compared to home and work. But in this culture of poverty, the young and the old suffered greatly. It was the perfect place for the Salvation Army to spread its message.



*Jenny L. Wright and Diana Donnelly
Photo by David Cooper*

Classroom Applications

The following pages suggest questions and activities students might explore

BEFORE attending the play.

Theme One

WARM UPS

ACTIVITY

Finding Similarities

Major Barbara reveals similarities between people and principles that appear very different at first glance. Discuss links that might join these apparently dissimilar pairs:

- a thief and a saint
- a brewery and a theatre
- blood and fire
- a weapons factory and a church

Open for Business

- In groups, select one of the following words: book, gavel, fork, shovel, needle, wrench.
- Decide what type of business might use this object as a symbol.
- Draw the object as it would appear on your company logo.
- Create a tableau to depict a typical working day for your company.
- Have the class guess the business portrayed.

Theme Two

TRANSFORMATION

ACTIVITY

Half the class (Group A) will create a tableau to depict the work of a sword. The other half the class (Group B) will create a tableau to depict the work of a cross. Pair each person from Group A with a person from Group B.

- Allow pairs time to study each other's pose for the tableau.
- Begin with the original tableau (Group A as the sword and Group B as the cross).
- On a signal from the teacher, everyone will move in slow motion to transform into the opposite tableau, copying the pose of his or her assigned partner.
- On a signal from the teacher, return to the original tableau.
- Allow different members of the class to observe the transformation and comment on the mood and ideas generated by the exercise.



*Diana Donnelly as Major Barbara
Photo by David Cooper*

Theme Three

MOTHERS AND SONS

READING

Major Barbara begins with the following conversation between a mother (Lady Britomart) and her son (Stephen):

Stephen: *(entering)* What's the matter?

Lady Britomart: *(writing at a desk)* Presently, Stephen.

Stephen sits down and looks at a newspaper.

Lady Britomart: Don't begin to read, Stephen. I shall require all your attention.

Stephen: It was only while I was waiting-

Lady Britomart: Don't make excuses, Stephen. *(He puts down the paper.)* Now! *(She stops writing and goes to Stephen)* I have not kept you very long, I think.

Stephen: Not at all, Mother.

Lady Britomart: Bring me my cushion. *(He gets the cushion and arranges it for her as she sits down.)* Sit down. *(He sits down and fidgets his tie nervously.)* Don't fiddle with your tie, Stephen. There is nothing the matter with it.

Stephen: I beg your pardon. *(He fiddles with his watch instead.)*

Lady Britomart: Now are you attending to me, Stephen?

Stephen: Of course, Mother.

Lady Britomart: No, it's not of course. I want something much more than your everyday matter-of-course attention. I am going to speak to you very seriously, Stephen. I wish you would leave that chain alone.

Stephen: Have I done anything to annoy you, Mother? If so, it was quite unintentional.

Lady Britomart: Nonsense! My poor boy, did you think I was angry with you?

Stephen: What is it then, Mother? You are making me very uneasy.

Lady Britomart: Stephen, may I ask how soon you intend to realize that you are a grown-up man, and that I am only a woman?

Stephen: Only a ---

Lady Britomart: Don't repeat my words, please. It is a most aggravating habit. You must learn to face life seriously, Stephen. I cannot bear the whole burden of our family affairs any longer. You must advise me.



READING, continued

- Invite two volunteers to read the passage aloud to the class. Discuss what the passage reveals about Stephen's character, Lady Britomart's character, and the relationship between mother and son.
- In pairs, read the passage again. Assign each pair one of these circumstances:
 1. It is Stephen's wedding day to a girl that his mother hates.
 2. It is 3:00 am and Stephen has just been released from the police station for drunken behavior in a tavern. Unknown to Stephen, the police have already called his mother.
 3. Stephen has just been elected President of the United States. He will be making his inauguration speech in less than one hour.
 4. The scene takes place in a hospital where Stephen's mother is dying.
 5. Through unwise investments, Stephen's father has just lost everything the family owns. Stephen and his mother have never been involved in family finances before.
 6. Stephen is a big-time criminal who learned all he knows about crime from his mother.
- Discuss how different circumstances (subtexts) create different readings.

Theme Four

THE COURT OF RIGHT AND WRONG AND IN-BETWEEN

ACTIVITY

Imagine that the class has the power to make moral decisions for the rest of the world. Below are a number of cases that come before the class in “The Court of Right and Wrong and In-Between”. Follow the instructions provided.

Case #1

In Canada, a rich child and a poor child both need the same life-saving medical procedure. The rich child’s parents go to New York and pay for the treatment immediately, while the poor child is put on a 6-month Ontario waiting list for free care. Time is an important factor in the success rate of this treatment.

- Prepare a statement about this situation from the perspectives of: (a) the rich child’s parents; (b) the poor parents; (c) the New York doctors; (d) the Ontario health officials. Prepare a short dramatization of what might occur one year later in the lives of both families.

Case #2

For the convenience of customers, a bank installed an ATM machine next to a video gambling game in a large tavern. Ever since the ATM machine was installed, customers have been staying longer in the tavern. The tavern owner is thinking of using his increased earnings to open a second tavern across town. A recent study has revealed that patrons lose most money on gambling machines after they’ve had too much to drink.

- Prepare a statement about this situation from the perspective of (a) the banker; (b) the tavern owner; (c) a patron who lost his entire paycheck on the video game; (d) the video game company president.
- Prepare a short dramatization of what might occur one year later if (a) the ATM machine is removed from the tavern; (b) the ATM machine is allowed to stay in the tavern.

Case #3

A large industrialist makes most of his money by selling weapons of war to any government that can pay for them. To win his daughter’s affection, he anonymously donates a large sum of money to a church-operated soup kitchen where his daughter volunteers. When his daughter learns about her father’s gift, she stops volunteering at the soup kitchen, although everyone there begs her to stay.

- Prepare a statement about this situation from the perspective of (a) the father; (b) the daughter; (c) an unemployed worker who gets food from the soup kitchen; (d) another volunteer at the soup kitchen.
- Prepare a short dramatization of what might happen if (a) the industrialist continues to support the soup kitchen; (b) the industrialist takes his money back.



ACTIVITY, continued

Case #4

A reformed criminal has donated millions of ill-earned dollars to build a women's shelter for a local welfare agency. Several homeless mothers and their children have benefited from his charity. At the opening of the shelter, the media take pictures of the criminal and local politicians.

- Prepare a statement about this situation from the perspective of (a) the criminal; (b) a homeless mother with two young children; (c) a local politician; (d) the welfare agency.
- How might the shelter change the life of the people involved? Prepare a short dramatization of any of their lives one year later.

Case #5

A major cigarette company supports a theatre, where it identifies itself as a patron of the arts on signs and program material. The theatre has promoted local playwrights, provided a livelihood for several artists, and attracted millions of tourist dollars to the region.

- Prepare a statement about this situation from the perspective of (a) the cigarette company; (b) a playwright whose work has been praised by the media; (c) an actor supported by the theatre; (d) an anti-smoking lobbyist.
- Prepare a short dramatization of what might occur if the cigarette company is forced to stop identifying itself as the benefactor of the theatre.

Case #6

A brilliant young student is currently studying at a very expensive medical school. The student is ineligible for a scholarship because of the family's wealth. The student cannot get a part-time job because of the heavy demands of the medical school timetable. The student is supported entirely by his or her father. The student has just discovered that the family money comes 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?
- Compare the student's situation with Meadow Soprano's on the TV show *The Sopranos*.

Theme Five

THE FLAG OF THE SALVATION ARMY



The red flag of the Salvation Army has a blue border and a yellow star. The blue represents the holiness of God, the yellow represents the fire of the Holy Spirit, and the red represents the blood of Jesus Christ. The motto, “Blood and Fire”, written on the star, stands for the blood of Jesus and the fire of the Holy Spirit. The flag is carried at the head of marches and is given a prominent place in Salvation Army halls.

DISCUSSION

- Why do you think William Booth’s church gained so much popularity after it began calling itself an army?
- How are the flag and the motto of the Salvation Army similar to a country at war?
- What makes flags such powerful symbols of identity?
- What life events do you think would lead a young woman to devote herself to the Salvation Army?
- What life events might cause someone to leave the Salvation Army?

AFTER attending *Major Barbara*

Theme Six

THE IRONY OF MOTHERHOOD

Lady Britomart makes several statements about her efforts to be a good mother. Taken together, these statements provide an example of a form of humor called irony. Statements are said to be ironic when they have one meaning for the speaker and another meaning for the listener.

- **Lady Britomart claims that a mother’s job is to choose spouses for her children.**
She is pleased with her choice for her daughter Sarah because the young man will inherit wealth. About her daughter Barbara, she says: “Let snobbish people say what they please; Barbara shall marry, not the man they like, but the man I like”. She tells her son Stephen: “You are much too young to begin matchmaking; you would only be taken in by some pretty little nobody. Of course, I don’t mean that you are not to be consulted; you know that as well as I do”.
- **Lady Britomart claims that a mother’s job is to treat her children as adults.**
She accuses Stephen of ungratefulness when he complains that she treats him like a child. She says: “You know I have never treated any of you as children. I have always made you my companions and friends, and allowed you perfect freedom to do and say whatever you liked, so long as you liked what I could approve of.”



DISCUSSION

- What contradictions or ironies do Lady Britomart’s words communicate?
- Based on your observations of her in the play, would you call Lady Britomart a good mother? Why or why not?
- Would Lady Britomart’s children call her a good mother? What proof do you have to support your opinion? What involvement do you think a mother should have in selecting her children’s spouses? Does a mother have a right to voice an opinion about her children’s choice of casual dates?
- Lady Britomart claims to treat her offspring as her companions and friends, rather than as children. Does she demonstrate this behavior in the play? Do you think parents should treat children as companions and friends? Why or why not?
- Do you agree with Lady Britomart’s assessment of fathers? In our society, do mothers take responsibility for the difficult tasks associated with raising children? Are fathers the ones who do the fun things with their children? What does the term “Disney Dad” mean?

Theme Seven

A PORTRAIT OF TWO LIFESTYLES

Two characters in *Major Barbara* are women of approximately the same age, Lady Britomart and Rummy Mitchens. Lady Britomart was born into nobility, while Rummy Mitchens was born into the lower class of society.

Two characters in *Major Barbara* are men of approximately the same age, Stephen Undershaft and Bill Walker. Stephen was born into great wealth, while Bill Walker was born into poverty.

DISCUSSION

- How are Lady Britomart and Rummy Mitchens similar in their actions and desires? How are they different?
- How are Stephen Undershaft and Bill Walker similar in their actions and desires? How are they different?

ACTIVITY

- Divide the class into groups of 4.
- The task for each group will be to create living statues of either the two women (Lady Britomart and Rummy Mitchens) or the two men (Stephen Undershaft and Bill Walker).
- Two members of each group will be assigned the role of either the women or the men.
- Two members of each group will be assigned the role of sculptor. One sculptor will be responsible for molding one of the characters; the other sculptor will mold the second character.
- Sculptors will decide on the posture and activity for the statues to assume.
- Sculptors will either instruct or physically move their assigned statue into position.
- After the statues are in place, the two sculptors in each group will decide on changes necessary to increase the effect of the composition.
- The sculptors will then pretend to be museum guides.
- The class will take the roles of museum patrons in the present day.
- As the class observes the statues, the sculptors will explain how their art reveals class distinctions in the early 20th century.

Theme Eight

CLASS DISTINCTIONS

In the early 20th century of *Major Barbara*, British class distinctions were beginning to blur. Members of the aristocracy, once the undisputed upper class, were becoming more and more reliant on the wealth of the rising business class. The business class, in return, gained respectability and acceptance into high society through its association with nobility. The marriage between Lady Britomart and Andrew Undershaft is an illustrative example. Without Undershaft's vast sums of money, Lady Britomart's family could not afford to maintain a position in society. For the lower classes of factory workers and unemployed, the allegiance between aristocrats and wealthy industrialists offered a common enemy - capitalism.

Snobby Price, an unemployed house painter in *Major Barbara*, identifies the "rules" for lower class workers in a capitalist society:

Capitalists don't like workers who are too intelligent.

Workers drink alcohol because it's their only source of happiness.

Workers should do as little as they can at work. Workers should leave half their jobs undone so that others workers can also be employed.

Workers should follow the example of the capitalist bosses and take whatever they can lay their hands on.

DISCUSSION

- What events in *Major Barbara* demonstrate the 20th century need for workers' unions?
- Do you believe that today's factory workers and laborers generally work as little as they can?
- How would society be different if everyone worked as efficiently as possible?
- Mr. Undershaft explains that his factory workers maintain discipline by keeping the men just below themselves in their places. "The men snub the boys and order them about; the carmen snub the sweepers; the artisans snub the unskilled labourers; the foremen drive and bully both the laborers and the artisans...". How does Snobby Price reveal a similar type of lower class snobbery?
- What is the irony of Snobby Price's name?

CLASS DISTINCTIONS , continued

ACTIVITY

- Imagine that Snobby Price has started a training company for working class employees in factories, stores, and restaurants.
- Imagine that Snobby has hired your class to produce video seminars to teach workers the four rules (listed on page 20) for working in a capitalist society.
- In groups, create seminars for new workers, using such dramatic techniques as mime, tableaux, role-played demonstrations, and before and after depictions.



Costume sketch for Rummy Mitchens by Christina Poddubiuk



Costume sketch for Snobby Price by Christina Poddubiuk

Theme Nine

THE CRIME OF POVERTY

Andrew Undershaft calls poverty “the worst of crimes” and tells Barbara that the “religion of money”, not preaching, is needed to eradicate it. When people have money, he claims, they can afford to have morals.

DISCUSSION

- What wrong-doings in *Major Barbara* are caused by poverty?
- Are all poor people in the play involved in wrongful behaviour?

ACTIVITY

- Imagine that Andrew Undershaft wants to show Barbara that poverty is linked to crime. Imagine that he persuades her to follow Snobby Price to a tavern where they can hide and listen to the customers.
- Re-enact a conversation in which Snobby convinces people in the tavern to go to the Salvation Army and be saved. The conversation should refer to incidents in the play. Follow the guideline below to help create the conversation:
 1. When Snobby enters the tavern, people notice that he has more money than usual.
 2. Snobby brags that he stole the money from Bill Walker at the Salvation Army shelter. Snobby tells the story of events that led Bill to donate the money.
 3. People want to know what they can get from the Salvation Army and how to get it.
 4. Snobby describes how to get free food by pretending to be saved and confessing to sins that you haven't committed. He uses his own experiences as an example.
 5. People think it must be easy for Salvation Army workers to tell when people are lying.
 6. Snobby explains how easy it is to fool the Salvation Army workers.
 7. People ask what the Salvation Army shelter is like and who works there.
 8. Snobby describes the shelter and the workers.
 9. Snobby convinces the people in the tavern to go to the Salvation Army to be “saved”.

Theme Ten

WORDS TO LIVE BY

Andrew Undershaft agrees to “adopt” Adolphus Cusins as his foundling heir on the condition that Adolphus agrees to the “true faith of an Armoror”. Adolphus must pledge to follow the covenant for arms dealing: “To give arms to all men who offer an honest price for them, without respect of persons or principles: to aristocrat and republican, to Nihilist and Tsar, to Capitalist and Socialist, to Protestant and Catholic, to burglar and policeman, to black man, yellow man, and white man, to all sorts and conditions, all nationalities, all faiths, all follies, all causes and all crimes”.

DISCUSSION

- How easy is it for individuals to get weapons today? Where do most people get weapons from?
- Do you agree that weapons should be sold to anyone who can afford them? If not, who should be allowed to have or buy weapons?
- Should all countries have equal access to weapons of war? If not, who should decide which countries are allowed to have weapons?
- What should happen if a country disobeys the rules for having weapons?
- Where do countries like Iraq and Pakistan get their weapons?
- The National Rifle Association (NRA) claims that weapons ensure our safety by deterring others from attacking us. Do you agree or disagree that weapons are an agent of peace?

Undershaft weapons manufacturers live by the following mottos:

- If God gave the hand, let not Man withhold the sword.
- All have the right to fight; none have the right to judge.
- To Man the weapon: To Heaven the victory.
- Peace shall not prevail save with a sword in her hand.
- Nothing is ever done in this world until men are prepared to kill one another if it is not done.

Theme Ten

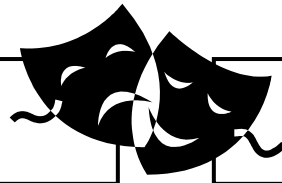
WORDS TO LIVE BY, continued

ACTIVITY

- Imagine that your class is planning an anti-war demonstration at one of the Undershaft weapons factories.
- What peace slogans would you write to mock the Undershaft factory mottos?
- Divide into groups and create a chant for each of the peace slogans you have created.
- Decide how to march to the factory. What will you bring with you?
- When you get to the factory, you discover that police are barricading the doors. What do you do?
- Beginning with the march to the factory, enact the peace rally at the factory. Assign some members of the class to play the police.
- Imagine that, during the rally, the press interview Mr. Undershaft in his office. What questions would the reporter ask? What answers would Mr. Undershaft give?



*David Leysbon as Stephen Undershaft and Benedict Campbell as Andrew Undershaft
Photo by David Cooper*



BLOCKING: The actor's movement on stage is known as "blocking". The Stage Manager writes the blocking notation into the Prompt Script.

COSTUME: Anything that an actor wears on stage is referred to as a costume. The Wardrobe department (the department responsible for creating costumes) provides clothes, shoes, hats, and any personal accessories such as umbrellas, purses and eyeglasses.

DROP: A drop is a large piece of painted canvas that is "flown in" by the flyman (see FLYMAN).

GREEN ROOM: The green room, usually near the entrance to the stage, is where the actors and crew sit while waiting for their turn to go on stage. One possible explanation of how the green room got its name is that actors used to wait for their entrances at the back of the theatre in an area where the scenery was stored. Perhaps the scenery was green, or the name "scene room" evolved into "green room".

ORCHESTRA PIT: The orchestra pit is the place where the musicians perform during a musical. Usually the orchestra pit is between the front row of the audience and the stage.

PROPS: A property or "prop" is anything that the audience sees that is not worn by an actor and is not a structural part of the set. Some examples are: tables, chairs, couches, carpets, pictures, lamps, weapons, food eaten during a play, dishes, cutlery, briefcases, books, newspapers, pens, telephones, curtains and anything else you can imagine.

PROSCENIUM: A term describing the physical characteristics of a theatre. A proscenium theatre is one in which the audience and the actors are separated by a picture-frame opening that the audience looks through to see the actors. Surrounding this opening is the PROSCENIUM ARCH. If there is an acting area on the audience side of the proscenium arch, it is referred to as the APRON or FORESTAGE.

SCRIM: A scrim is a piece of gauze that is painted and used as part of the scenery. When a scrim is lit from in front it is opaque, you cannot see through it. When a scrim is lit from behind it is transparent, you can see through it. This allows for many different visual effects to be created by the lighting and set designers.

THRUST STAGE: A thrust stage is a stage that is surrounded on three sides by the audience.

DIRECTOR: The person who guides the actors during the rehearsal period. The director decides what the important messages of the play are and how they will be conveyed to the audience.

DESIGNERS: The people who work with the director to decide what the production will look like. Designers must choose the colour, shape and texture of everything you see on the stage. There are several areas that need to have designers: costumes, set, lighting and sometimes sound. The designers work very closely with the director to create the environment in which the play will take place.

DYER: The person who dyes fabrics for the Wardrobe department.

FLYMAN: The person responsible for the manipulation of the scenery which is in the fly gallery (the space above the stage). The scenery is manipulated by ropes attached to a counterweight system.

MILLINER: The person who makes the hats which the actors wear on stage.

PROPS BUYER: The person who buys items that will be used or adapted to become props. Props buyers also purchase the raw material used to build props.

SCENIC ARTISTS: The people who are responsible for painting and decorating the surfaces of the set. Some of the techniques they use include: wood graining, stenciling, marbling and brickwork. They also paint the drops and scrims that are flown in.

STAGE CARPENTER: The person who ensures that everything runs smoothly on stage during a performance. The stage carpenter and stage crew are responsible for changing the sets between scenes and acts.

STAGE MANAGER: The person who makes sure that all rehearsals and performances run smoothly. During a performance the stage manager also makes sure that all of the technical elements (e.g. lights, sound, curtains flying in and out) happen at exactly the right time.

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR: The person who is responsible for coordinating all of the technical elements of a production. Technical directors work with the people who build the sets, props, costumes, wigs and special effects to make sure that everything runs smoothly.

Major Barbara

STUDY GUIDE RESPONSE SHEET

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Alternatively you can send your information by e-mail education@shawfest.com

Did you make use of the following elements of this Study Guide? If so, please make any comments you feel might be useful:

- The Players:** YES _____ NO _____
- Running Time:** YES _____ NO _____
- The Story:** YES _____ NO _____
- The Playwright:** YES _____ NO _____
- Director's Notes:** YES _____ NO _____
- Production Notes:** YES _____ NO _____
- Background Information:** YES _____ NO _____
- Lessons before the play:** YES _____ NO _____
- Lessons after the play:** YES _____ NO _____
- Glossary of Jobs and Terms:** YES _____ NO _____

Please feel free to make any other comments or suggestions:
