 Year 12 English Standard

George Bernard Shaw Biography – Cloze Passage

Task – Fill in the gaps using words from the list below.

* Poverty
* Working
* Husband
* Depended
* British
* Self-education
* Playwright
* Cockney
* Didactic
* Love
* Mother’s
* Writer
* Failed
* Middle-class
* Transformation
* Comedic
* Rejected
* Antihero
* Son
* Humiliating

George Bernard Shaw was the third and youngest child (and only ) of George Carr Shaw and Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly Shaw. His father was first a government employee and then an unsuccessful grain merchant, and George Bernard grew up in an atmosphere of , which to him was more than being merely poor. At first Shaw was tutored by a clerical uncle, and he basically the schools he then attended; by age 16 he was in a land agent’s office.

Shaw developed a wide knowledge of music, art, and literature as a result of his influence and his visits to the National Gallery of Ireland. In 1872 his mother left her and took her two daughters to London, following her music teacher, George John Vandeleur Lee.

In 1876 Shaw resolved to become a , and he joined his mother and elder sister (the younger one having died) in London. Shaw in his 20s suffered continuous frustration and poverty. He upon his mother’s pound a week from her husband and her earnings as a music teacher. He spent his afternoons in the Museum reading room, writing novels and reading what he had missed at school, and his evenings in search of additional - in the lectures and debates that characterized contemporary middle-class London intellectual activities.

His fiction utterly. His next four novels were similarly refused, as were most of the articles he submitted to the press for a decade. Despite his failure as a novelist in the 1880s, Shaw found himself during this decade. He became a vegetarian, a socialist, a spellbinding orator, and tentatively a .

He became the force behind the newly founded (1884) Fabian Society, a - socialist group that aimed at the of English society not through revolution but through “permeation” (growth from within) of the country’s intellectual and political life. Shaw involved himself in every aspect of its activities.

But Shaw truly began to make his mark when he began writing his own plays. Possibly Shaw’s masterpiece, and certainly his funniest and most popular play, is Pygmalion (performed 1913). It was claimed by Shaw to be a drama about phonetics, and its , Henry Higgins, is a phonetician, but the play is a humane comedy about and the English class system. The play is about the training Higgins gives to a flower girl to enable her to pass as a lady and is also about the consequences of the experiment’s success.

Shaw died in 1950 at age 94 while working on another play.

Information has been adapted from the [Encyclopaedia Britannica website about George Bernard Shaw](https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Bernard-Shaw).

Answers

George Bernard Shaw was the third and youngest child (and only son) of George Carr Shaw and Lucinda Elizabeth Gurly Shaw. His father was first a government employee and then an unsuccessful grain merchant, and George Bernard grew up in an atmosphere of poverty, which to him was more humiliating than being merely poor. At first Shaw was tutored by a clerical uncle, and he basically rejected the schools he then attended; by age 16 he was working in a land agent’s office.

Shaw developed a wide knowledge of music, art, and literature as a result of his mother’s influence and his visits to the National Gallery of Ireland. In 1872 his mother left her husband and took her two daughters to London, following her music teacher, George John Vandeleur Lee.

In 1876 Shaw resolved to become a writer, and he joined his mother and elder sister (the younger one having died) in London. Shaw in his 20s suffered continuous frustration and poverty. He depended upon his mother’s pound a week from her husband and her earnings as a music teacher. He spent his afternoons in the British Museum reading room, writing novels and reading what he had missed at school, and his evenings in search of additional self-education in the lectures and debates that characterized contemporary middle-class London intellectual activities.

His fiction failed utterly. His next four novels were similarly refused, as were most of the articles he submitted to the press for a decade. Despite his failure as a novelist in the 1880s, Shaw found himself during this decade. He became a vegetarian, a socialist, a spellbinding orator, and tentatively a playwright.

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But Shaw truly began to make his mark when he began writing his own plays. Possibly Shaw’s comedic masterpiece, and certainly his funniest and most popular play, is Pygmalion (performed 1913). It was claimed by Shaw to be a didactic drama about phonetics, and its antihero, Henry Higgins, is a phonetician, but the play is a humane comedy about love and the English class system. The play is about the training Higgins gives to a Cockney flower girl to enable her to pass as a lady and is also about the consequences of the experiment’s success. The scene in which Eliza Doolittle appears in high society when she has acquired a correct accent but no notion of polite conversation is one of the funniest in English drama.

Shaw died in 1950 at age 94 while working on yet another play.