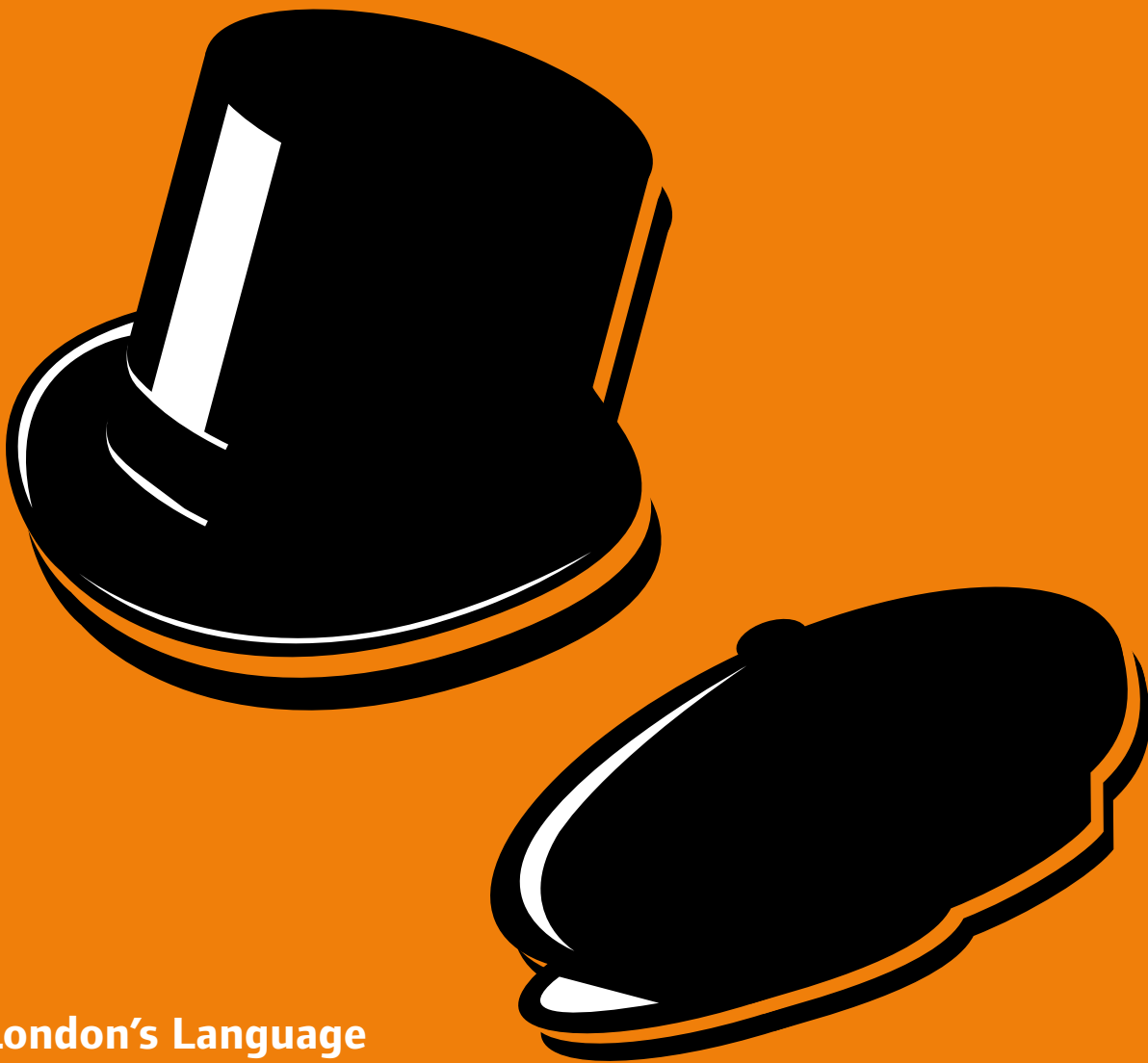


class

Distinction



London's Language

Lesson 1

Class Distinction

Class Distinction

Aims

- To explore social class in *Pygmalion* through practical exercises.
- To enable participants to develop skills in creating characters through physicality.
- To encourage participants to think about how social class affects their own lives.

Materials Required

- **Warm-Ups** (double sided sheet)
- **Appendix 1** (Turn Detective; one per person)
- **Appendix 2A** (Extracts from *Pygmalion*; one per person)
- **Appendix 3A** (Class Distinction worksheet; one per person)
- **Appendix 3B** (My Class worksheet; one per person)
- **Whiteboard** or **flipchart**
- **Pencils** and **marker pens**

Duration

- It should take approximately two hours to complete all the activities but the lesson can be reduced or extended as necessary to suit the timetable.
- It is important to stress that the drama sessions will work in a safe and imaginative way, and that the participants will be expected to contribute and listen without judgement or criticism from others.

Warm-Up

Select a vocal warm-up and a game from the Warm-Up sheet (choose an exercise from either side of the page).

1.1 Status Swap

- Participants (preferably standing) read the selected pieces of text from Appendix 2A (*Pygmalion* extracts) through twice, firstly so that they are comfortable with the text and secondly to identify the characters' thoughts and feelings.
- Once they've done this, ask the participants to begin walking around the space, encouraging them to walk as individuals as this is an individual investigation of character. Do not allow participants to walk in circles, but encourage them to walk with energy.
- Next, ask the participants to begin thinking about how a king or queen might walk, thinking in particular about their body language and attitude; where is their eye level, do they move quickly or slowly, are they heavy or light?
- After sufficient time, repeat the exercise, but this time, ask the participants to move as a homeless person, noting down the differences. Expand the exercise further by considering other jobs, such as:

Judge	Market trader
Nurse	Servant

- Bring the group back to a circle for a brief discussion and ask the following prompt questions:

Which status did you prefer and why?
How did it make you feel?
Which was the easiest status to portray?
Which was the hardest status to portray?

- Develop the exercise further by selecting six or seven of the more confident participants to explore character in more depth. On your command, ask the selected participants to begin walking around the space, interchanging between high and low status roles, such as a king or queen and then a homeless person.
- Other interchanges to explore might be: homeless person to servant, servant to judge, judge to market seller, market seller to nurse. After sufficient time bring the exercise to a close with a round of applause and finish off by asking the following prompt questions to the whole class:

What were the most interesting characters to watch and why?
What physical clues gave away the status of each character?
Could a homeless person become a king or a queen?

1.2 Sorting the Characters

- The characters listed below should be written on the whiteboard or flipchart.

Henry Higgins
Colonel Pickering
Eliza (Flower Girl)
Mrs Higgins
Mrs Pearce

- Once you have done this, establish key facts about each of them and the relationship they have with one another. For example; Henry Higgins, Professor of Phonetics, son of Mrs Higgins, becomes friend to Colonel Pickering. Split the class up into smaller groups and give each group Appendix 3A (Class Distinction worksheet). Participants should then decide the social class of each character. After sufficient time ask the following prompt questions:

What social class structures exist in *Pygmalion*?
In what way do the characters demonstrate their social class?
Do any of the characters 'move class' during the play, if so who?

- It may be useful to record responses on the whiteboard or flipchart, or if working in small groups ask participants to take notes. Extend the exercise further by asking participants to think of modern day examples to the characters (eg; Leona Lewis and David Beckham are both excellent examples of a modern day Eliza Doolittle).

1.3 Picture Perfect

- Divide the class into groups of five or six and ask each of them to create a tableau using scenarios 1–4 (shown below). A tableau is much like pressing pause on a DVD with the actors 'frozen' in time. The tableau needs to show the class of each character and their relationships with the other characters. Prompt questions might be:

What physical shape is the character in at this moment and what are they doing?

What do the characters think of each other?

How can we show this in their body language?

- Develop the tableau exercise further by asking each group to decide on their characters' ambitions. 'I want...' is a good way to begin, ie; 'I want...to be rich, better, happy etc.
- Complete the exercise by asking each group to present their tableau. Those watching should guess who the characters are but keep in mind how they came to that conclusion, ie; was it their body language, group interaction etc.
- Finally, each group should vocalise their characters' ambitions. A discussion should ensue as to how possible it might be for each of the characters to achieve their stated ambition.

SCENARIOS

Scenario 1 Meeting Eliza for the first time.

Location A wet and rainy market at night.

Characters present Eliza, Colonel Pickering, Professor Higgins, market traders.

Scenario 2 Eliza at the end of the play.

Location Mrs Higgins' house.

Characters present Eliza, Mrs Higgins, Colonel Pickering, Professor Higgins, Alfred Doolittle, Mrs Higgins' maid.

Scenario 3 Meeting Alfred Doolittle for the first time.

Location Professor Higgins' study.

Characters present Alfred Doolittle, Eliza, Professor Higgins, Colonel Pickering, Mrs Pearce.

Scenario 4 Alfred Higgins at the end of the play.

Location Mrs Higgins' house.

Characters present Alfred Higgins, Eliza, Colonel Pickering, Professor Higgins, Mrs Higgins.

1.4 My Class

- Leaving space between one another, ask the group to lie down on the floor and close their eyes. After a few relaxing breaths ask each of them to think about the social class they most identify with. A good way in to this is to talk about personal goals and ambitions, not necessarily work related, but also sport, travel, family etc. A final question might be: does class affect your ability to fulfil these goals and ambitions?
- Distribute Appendix 3B (My Class worksheet) and pencils/pens. Give the participants a short time to complete it, offering support if necessary but encouraging individual work.
- Collect the My Class worksheets together and ask the participants to return to their tableau groups. Randomly allocate the completed My Class worksheets and ask each group to select three of the most interesting ambitions and statements that they find funny, interesting or challenging. From here each group should create a new tableau, based on a London street scene showing as many different classes and ambitions as possible.
- Develop this exercise further by encouraging the use of some of the phrases from the completed My Class worksheets as dialogue building into a group improvisation using tableau, vocal intonation, volume and accents.

DVD Point

To inspire the group improvisation, select Class on the enclosed DVD. The scene shown was written by young people in schools and performed by professional actors.



Turn Detective (HOMEWORK EXERCISE)

- As a homework exercise distribute Appendix 1 (Turn Detective worksheet) and read aloud the homework instruction (right).
- Each participant should collect 'London's Language'.
- Collected material can be displayed as an interesting wall display in the classroom.
- In this instance it should have a 'class' focus.



Collect two examples of people talking about **CLASS**. It might be someone you overhear on the bus, at school, on the street, a character from television or cut out from a newspaper or magazine. It could be something you agree with or something that makes you angry or makes you laugh, essentially something you find interesting.

