Summary  (Pygmalion)

ACT I

It's raining. Freddy tells his mother and sister that he has not found a cab. They chide him so he tries to find one again. That's when he runs into Liza, spilling her flowers into the mud. He gives her money because she complains that her flowers are ruined. Then comes Pickering and Liza tries to sell him flowers. A bystander notices that someone (Higgins) is writing down everything she says. Liza thinks he's a member of the police but he shows her his notes and has to read them to Liza (in her own accent) since she can't read. Higgins shows off by guessing where the people come from with the base of their accents, he says that he studies phonetics. It comes out that both Higgins and Pickering wanted to meet each other. They decide to have dinner together. Higgins puts money into Liza's basket and leaves with Pickering.

Freddy arrives with his cab but his mother and sister are gone. Liza wants to take the cab home. She shows the cabman the money in her basket because he looks at her doubtfully.

Analysis: Introduction socioeconomic classes as a central theme. London: class-consciousness based on economic power and history (class differences) With accents you can guess the socioeconomic status of someone Liza will remain poor because her family is and because you can tell she is by her accent Shaw thinks, as Higgins, that the hierarchy is mutable. Higgins' Universal alphabet: shows that he believes everyone should access to elevated language

ACT II

Higgins and Pickering are at Higgins' place. Liza arrives in a cab, all cleaned up and asks for taking language lessons. She even offers him money for it. She says she wants to work in a flower shop, which requires a better accent. The idea of teaching Liza grows in Higgins' mind. She proposes her to become a full-time pupil. Pickering protests saying the girl may have feelings, but Higgins says she has none. Liza wants to leave, but Higgins offers her chocolate. He tells her he will give her money to start her own flower shop. Then she is given a bath by Mrs. Pearce. The training will be about culture and manners rather than language alone.

Alfred Doolittle, Liza's dad, arrives at the house. He claims his daughter back but as he sees that Higgins doesn't care about keeping her at all, he tries to blackmail him. He tells Higgins that Liza wanted her luggage but not with any clothes, which made him anxious. He says he doesn't mind if Liza becomes Higgins' prostitute as long as he gets money out of it. Higgins offers Alfred 10 pounds but Alfred will only take 5.

Liza enters in a Japanese kimono, she is clean. Higgins and Pickering are very surprised. They remark how difficult their job will be.

ACT III

Part 1

Mrs. Higgins is at home. She is displeased when Higgins shows up. She knows about his experiment and she tells him he is too egocentric to be presentable in front of the kind of people Liza expects to meet. Higgins tells her about the at-home experiment and the bet with Pickering. Mrs. Higgins has no time to show her displeasure because Mrs. And Miss Eynsford Hill have arrived. Soon after, Colonel Pickering arrives, followed by Freddy Eynsford Hill.

Eliza is announced. She makes a good impact with her studied grace and pedantic speech. Everything goes will until the subject of influenza is brought up. In her excitement, Liza's old accent comes back and she tells everyone about her alcoholic father.
After the meeting, Freddy offers Liza to walk, but she wants to take the cab. Clara tries to imitate Liza's accent. Mrs. Higgins tells her son that Eliza will never be presentable as long as she lives with his swears. She wants Eliza to live with the 2 bachelors.

Mrs. Higgins criticises Pickering and her son. They try to tell her about the improvement Liza has made. Mrs. Higgins says there will be a problem about what to do of Eliza after the experiment. She is exasperated by the infinite stupidity of the two men.

Part 2

Six months after the bet, Liza is taken to the embassy party, where she has to make people think she is a real lady. She behaves perfectly and attracts everyone's attention.

The ambassador's wife asks Nepommuck, an ancient student of Higgins who now teaches English, to find out more about Eliza. Nepommuck can not believe his ears when Higgins tells him that Liza comes from the London gutter. He thinks Eliza is foreign because of her perfect English. He tells the ambassador's wife that Liza is a Hungarian Princess.

Pickering has won the bet!

ACT IV

Part 1

The trio talks about the night but Higgins is more concerned about not finding his slippers. Liza finds them and puts them in front of Higgins without saying a word. When he sees them, he thinks they have just appeared out of nowhere.

Higgins and Pickering start talking about the experiment (which is now over) as if Liza was not there. They say it has been boring these last months. Liza is hurt. Pickering and Higgins go to bed.

Higgins pops off looking for his slippers. Liza throws them at his face. She thinks she is less important than the slippers to him. Higgins says she is ungrateful. She says she is confused about what is going to happen to her now. She could get married or open a flower shop, but she replies she had preferred to have been left where she was before. She asks if the clothes she is wearing are hers or if she will be accused of thievery if she takes them away with her. Higgins is hurt (something that doesn't happen often). She returns him a ring he had bought for her but he throws it into the fireplace.

Part 2

She discovers Freddy on the street. He tells her he has spent his night looking at her window from the pavement. He is in love with her. Eliza decides to become his wife. They start kissing but a constable tells them to behave properly. They end up hiring a taxi for the rest of the night.

ACT V

Eliza goes back to Higgins. She is with Pickering. He tells her she should not see herself as an experiment. She says than even when she was just a flowergirl, he would always treat her like a duchesse. His treatment taught her not phonetics, but self-respect.

Higgins is speaking very harshly to Eliza as Alfred reappears, all dressed up. He is going to marry his woman.

Higgins claims that the way he talks to Eliza is fair, because he has never treated anyone differently. He says she could come back just for the fun, or to become his daughter, or to marry Pickering. She says she will to marry Freddy, and that the two will support themselves by taking Higgin's phonetics methods to his chief rival. Higgins thinks that the character of Liza is more appealing than when she was submissive.