

EDUCATING RITA

CURRICULUM GUIDE

Play by WILLY RUSSELL
Production directed by MARIA AITKEN

Curriculum Guide by
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HUNTINGTON THEATRE COMPANY

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

There are a number of ways to use this curriculum guide, depending upon your own curriculum and teaching style. On pages 3 to 4 is general background information – Playwright, Characters, Synopsis, Objectives and Audience Etiquette – to be used as preparation before your students have read or seen the play.

On pages 5 to 8 you will find Themes, Motifs and Allusions, which will help students understand and appreciate the play. On pages 8 to 9 is the Arts Assessment, which consists of several interactive, hands-on activities in drama and design to inspire further consideration of the play. All of these sections may be used before or after your students have read or see the play

On pages 10 to 20 are Supplementary Materials that will enhance your students' experience of the play. We have designed these materials to be versatile, so that you can use them selectively as you see fit. The first of these is the Mastery Assessment on pages 10 to 12. This consists of several questions on the play, broken down scene-by-scene, which we have designed to insure both that the students are doing the assigned reading, and that they are giving it thought and consideration. These questions are ideal for quizzes or homework assignments.

The remaining Supplementary Materials begin on page 13, and include additional activities, important quotes, open response questions, and a vocabulary list.

For more advanced students, we have included several additional short readings on page 20. These are to be used alongside the discussion of the role of literature in the play.

On pages 21 to 23 are multiple Lesson Plans designed for 2-, 4-, and 6- day units. Please feel free to mix and match questions and exercises from different sections, and to use this curriculum guide in whatever way suits the needs of your class.

PLAYWRIGHT



Willy Russell was born in Whiston, near Liverpool and left school at fifteen. He began writing as a songwriter and transitioned to playwriting in the late '60s. His plays include:

- *Keep Your Eyes Down*
- *John Paul George Ringo and Bert*
- *One For The Road*
- *Stags and Hens*
- *Educating Rita*
- *Blood Brothers*
- *Shirley Valentine*
- *South Bank Show*
- *Our Day Out – The Musical*

Russell has also written numerous screen and radio plays. *The Wrong Boy*, his first novel, was published by Transworld in October 2000.

CHARACTERS IN *EDUCATING RITA*

Frank: A middle-aged, alcoholic poet and professor of literature at an English University, frustrated with the pretensions of academia.

Rita: A 26 year-old hairdresser from Liverpool, frustrated with her marriage and with working-class culture.

SYNOPSIS

Frank takes on an additional Open University student – a student not enrolled in the proper university who comes for private tutorials after working hours - to pay for his drinking habit. He expects “some silly woman attempting to get into the mind of Henry James,” and is surprised when the unsophisticated and guileless Rita walks into his office. She says that she wants to learn about literature to get more out of life – which, to her, is synonymous with fitting in with high society. Rita’s unaffected insight into the texts Frank assigns vitalizes him, and his instruction helps Rita to understand the beauty of literature, and how it applies to her life.

Over the course of the year of these tutorials, both characters have problems in their personal lives. Frank’s wife has left him, and he has begun living with a former student. Rita is married to an unambitious man who is pressuring her to have a child. Rita’s exposure to literature gives her the strength to leave her husband, which inspires Frank, but it also makes her artificial and pedantic, which frustrates him and drives him further into his alcoholism. As the tension between the liberating and power of literature and the pretention of academia build, the pair’s relationship

becomes strained, and both characters' lives are affected in ways they had not foreseen.

The entirety of the play is set in Frank's office, during Frank's and Rita's tutorials, and the audience only learns about outside events indirectly through their conversations.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Identify central themes, motifs, and allusions in *Educating Rita*, including:
 - a. The play's relationship with George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* and with Greek mythology
 - b. Class conflict in England
 - c. The Role of Literature in everyday life
2. Discuss how a play about a middle-aged English academician and a hairdresser from Liverpool relates to American culture and to their own lives.
3. Participate in hands-on activities that enhance understanding of the play and of the production.
4. Critique the Huntington Theatre Company's production of the play.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

Because many students have not had the opportunity to view live theatre, we are including an audience etiquette section with each curriculum guide. Teachers, please spend time on this subject; it will enhance your students' experience at the Huntington.

1. How does one respond to a live performance of a play, as opposed to a film at a movie theater? What is the best way to view a live performance? For what should you look and listen?
2. What is the audience's role during a live performance? How do you think audience behavior can affect an actor's performance?
3. What do you know about the theatrical rehearsal process? Have you ever participated in one as an actor, singer, director, or technician?
4. How do costumes, set, lights, sound, and props enhance a theatre's production?

THEMES, MOTIFS, AND ALLUSIONS

- ***Pygmalion***

Educating Rita is loosely based on George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*, which is itself based on the Greek myth of Pygmalion and Galatea, most famously told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. In the myth, the sculptor Pygmalion is one of the most attractive men in Greece, but although women adore him, he is not interested. One day he sculpts a statue that is so beautiful that he falls in love with it. He names it Galatea: "she who is milk-white." He courts his statue as if it were alive, giving it gifts and dressing it in fine clothing. He prays to the goddess Aphrodite to bring him a woman equal to the statue in beauty. Aphrodite is intrigued, and goes to view the statue herself – and when she does, she sees that this statue of "unparalleled beauty" is, in fact, a statue of her. She is flattered, and as a reward to Pygmalion, she brings Galatea to life. Pygmalion and Galatea marry, and have a son.

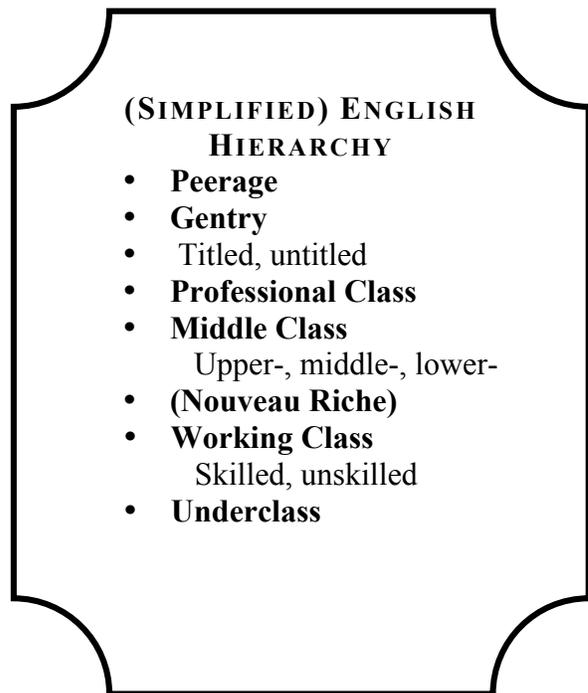
George Bernard Shaw wrote *Pygmalion* in 1912. Henry Higgins is a professor of Phonetics, who one day meets a young cockney girl named Eliza Doolittle on a London street. Higgins bets his friend Colonel Pickering that he can correct Eliza's speech and other low-class mannerisms to the point where she can pass as a duchess in high London society. Over the next few months Higgins instructs Eliza, until he believes that she is ready, and he takes her to an ambassador's party. Eliza performs marvelously, and Higgins wins the bet. Once the mission is accomplished, Higgins becomes bored with Eliza, and disregards her. She stands up to him, and says that she is going to marry a man who has been courting her. Higgins is attracted by her defiance, and begins to show an affection for her similar to the affection she had for him, but she is no longer interested.

- Authors and playwrights have successfully reworked the story of Pygmalion and Galatea into many successful novels, plays, and movies. In addition to *Pygmalion* and *Educating Rita*, it has influenced *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Pinocchio*, *Emma*, *Frankenstein*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *My Fair Lady*. More recently, it was the foundation of the 80s classic film *Pretty Woman*.
 - What is it about this story that makes it such a frequent object for recreation?
 - Considering that they are working with fundamentally the same story, how have so many of these recreations been successful?
 - What has Russell done to make *Educating Rita* in particular successful and unique?
- The recurrence of an idea, image, or literary technique is called a *motif*. How does the motif of art coming alive in the Pygmalion myth develop and complement Russell's play? Who or what is the true Galatea in *Educating Rita*? Who is Aphrodite? (*You may wish to return to this question after discussing the section on the role of literature.*)

- The Greek poet Ovid wrote about Pygmalion and Galatea in 8 A.D., and George Bernard Shaw modernized it in 1912 – a difference of 1,904 years. Russell re-modernized the story in 1980 – only 68 years after Shaw’s version. Is Russell’s version redundant? If not, what happened in those 68 years to justify another reworking?
- The reworking of classics is common to virtually every kind of art. What do you think of it? Does it make old works relevant to modern society, or is it just a kind of cheating or laziness on the part of the artist?
- **GROUP PROJECT:** Take a favorite myth or story, and modernize it. Don’t just place the plot in a modern setting; use the story’s themes to address issues that weren’t relevant when the story was written. Write a short script, cast actors from your group, and perform your play for the class.

- **Class Conflict**

In *Educating Rita*, Frank’s and Rita’s positions in the English class system affect their relationship and their lives in many ways. Rita is a cockney, that is, a working-class person from the East-end of London (the word also refers to this demographic’s accent). She wants to learn about literature so that she can socialize with the upper-, better educated, class. She is fond of Frank because he appears to be a person from high society and well-educated. Although Frank’s specific social background is unclear, we know that he is from the professional class. However, Frank has become jaded with high society, which is why he is fond of Rita: she is a person who appreciates high culture without the pretentiousness of high society.



- Investigate the history of the class system in England. How do Frank and Rita typify their social classes? How do they deviate from them? If you have time, briefly investigate the class systems of other nations – we suggest Russia, India, or Mexico. How do these systems compare with England’s? If Frank and Rita were from one of these nations, what positions on its hierarchy would they hold?

- Many have made the analogy that class is to the English social system as race is to the American social system. Based on the play and your own experiences, do you think that this is a fair statement?
 - If so, how do you explain the presence of racism in England? How do you explain the presence of class discrimination in the United States?
 - If not, what do you think would be a more suitable American equivalent to class distinctions?
- **GROUP PROJECT:** Research the upcoming wedding between Prince William – the third in line for the British throne – and Kate Middleton, an Englishwoman who is not of high birth.
 - How have the English reacted to the Prince’s engagement? How does the Prince’s family history play into the significance of this engagement?
 - Break into two groups, and stage a debate over whether this is a suitable engagement for the Prince, and if it is suitable for Middleton. Regardless of which group you are on, use the themes in *Educating Rita* to support your argument. Is the play simply saying that class distinctions are irrelevant, or is its message more complex?
- **GROUP PROJECT:** In scene 3 of *Educating Rita*, Frank makes a distinction between high culture and low culture when he corrects Rita’s incorrect notion that “all books are literature,” and Rita herself admits that certain novels are “sort of posher” than pulp fiction.
 - In groups, list at least 10 examples from television, movies, books, music, or Youtube of what Frank would call high culture, and 10 examples of what he would call low-culture. Do you notice any patterns in these two lists? What factor or factors did you use in determining what goes on which list? Was there any overlap?
 - Is it fair to say that high culture is for high society, and low culture is for low society? Why or why not? (*It may be useful to return to this question after discussing the role of literature.*)

- **The Role of Literature**

Perhaps the strongest theme in the play is the role of literature, and how different attitudes towards literature mirror different attitudes towards life. Frank is jaded and irreverent towards literature. This is best symbolized by his hiding his liquor behind books in his library: books for him are now nothing but a façade for his self-pitying lifestyle. At the play’s beginning, Rita too is irreverent towards literature - she says of reading E.M. Forster that “it’s borin’, that’s what it is, bloody borin’.” Over the course of the play, both characters learn, forget, and then relearn to respect literature.

- An *Ars Poetica* is a piece of poetry about poetry. More generally, it can be used to describe any work of art that discusses the purpose of art. In this sense, *Educating Rita* can be considered an *Ars Poetica*.
 - What do you think, according to the play, is the role of literature?
 - Before reading the next exercise, write your own ideas of why we create and study art. Feel free to include examples from your own experience.
- GROUP PROJECT: On page 20, you will find excerpts from several *Ars Poetica*.
 - Discuss them among yourselves, and try to write one-sentence summaries of what they mean.
 - Do you disagree with any of these *Ars Poetica*? Why?
 - Which of these *Ars Poetica* comes closest to the describing the role of literature in *Educating Rita*? Do you think that any of these is particularly applicable to Frank? To Rita?
 - When you see the production at the Huntington Theatre Company, if you look closely you will see part of one of these quotes featured prominently in the theatre. Why do you think that the builders of the theatre chose that particular quote?

ARTS ASSESSMENT

- **Drama**

- **Characterization:** choose a character from *Educating Rita* to portray, as if you were preparing for rehearsal. Consider your character's cultural background and how it influences his or her actions in the play. Then, as your character, answer the following questions:
 1. What do I want? What is my overall objective?
 2. What stands in the way of what I want? What or who are my obstacles in the way of achieving my objective? Does what I want change throughout the course of the play? How?
 3. How, if at all, does my character change during the course of the play? What is my character's journey or plot transformation?
 4. Are there any contradictions inherent in my character?
- **Role Playing:** Improvise an important moment from *Educating Rita*. Test the effects of changing something about the performance – tone of voice, a character trait, or a vital remark. How does such a change affect the selected moment? How does the pacing or posturing of an actor affect the timing of the piece? Is it possible that a change in the tone of voice can turn a serious moment into a humorous one?

Improvise a scene that is mentioned in the play but is not present, i.e. Frank's wife leaving him, the moment when Rita's husband discovers that she is still on the birth control pill, Frank giving a lecture drunk, or Rita talking to Trish a few hours after Trish's attempted suicide.

Choose one character at a particularly defining moment in his or her life, prior to or subsequent to the events of *Educating Rita*. Individually create a monologue, or in pairs create a dialogue, which portrays this defining moment in the character's life. How do the character's choices and reaction to this fictional defining moment compare with the events in the play?

• **Design**

- **Costume Design:** Imagine that you have been asked to design costumes for the play. For each scene, write down what Frank and Rita are wearing. Then, draw the costumes, or provide pictures from magazines or the internet as a visual aid for your plan.

Remember that costuming provides visual clues to the audience about what is happening in the play. How should the characters' costumes change as their characters develop? How do the characters' ages and position in the English social hierarchy affect their costumes? What colors and styles do you think reflect the characters' personalities and moods?

After attending the Huntington Theatre company's production of *Educating Rita*, compare your costuming ideas with those of the production's costume designer.

- **Set and Lighting Design:** The entirety of *Educating Rita* takes place in Frank's office. On one hand, this makes the set designers' job easier: the stage only has to represent one location. On the other hand, it presents a new challenge: the one location that they build has to be an appropriate environment for all the events and time periods of the play.

Imagine that you are the set and lighting designer, and write a detailed description of the play's set, or make a detailed drawing. How big is Frank's office? How is it decorated? What furniture is there, and how is it arranged? Where on the set will the characters be at crucial moments in the scene?

In answering these questions, bear in mind the personalities of the characters. Would it be reasonable for Frank to have a television in his office? What evidence from the text can you offer to support your answer?

Do not look at the description of the set at the end of the play until you have made your own plan. Then, compare the two. After attending the production, compare your description, the description at the end of the play, and the Huntington's set. Which is most appropriate for the events of the play?

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

- **Mastery Assessment**

- Act One

Scene 1

1. Where does Frank plan to go after tutoring his Open University student?
2. What does Rita think of the painting in Frank's office? What does Frank think of it?
3. What does Rita think that "the educated classes" don't find offensive, but "the masses" do?

Scene 2

1. What is it that Rita says she will not do until she passes her exam?
2. In the scene, Rita calls something immoral, and Frank corrects her, saying that it is actually amoral. What is the difference?
3. How was Frank's wife leaving him "an enormous benefit to literature"?
4. How did Frank meet the girl he lives with?

Scene 4

1. Why does Rita write her essays at work?
2. How would Rita resolve the staging difficulties in *Peter Gynt*?

Scene 5

1. What happened to Rita's essay and Frank's books?
2. What does Frank mean when he says "the great thing about booze is that it makes one believe that under all the talk one is actually saying something."
3. Why doesn't Frank want to see *The Importance of Being Earnest* with Rita?

Scene 6

1. What play did Rita see in the theatre?
2. According to Frank's description, what is the difference between a tragedy and "something that's tragic"?

Scene 7

1. Why didn't Rita show up at Frank's dinner party?
2. Whom did Rita find crying at the pub?

Scene 8

1. Frank describes Rita's *Macbeth* essay as both "wonderful" and "worthless." What does he mean?

➤ Act Two

Scene 1

1. Where has Rita been over the summer? Where has Frank been?
2. Who is Trish?
3. What's funny about the line "Everything in the flat's dead unpretentious, just books an' plants everywhere"?
4. Why is Frank disappointed at the end of the scene?

Scene 2

1. What has happened to Rita's voice? Under whose influence?
2. Why doesn't Frank want Rita to go to France over Christmas?

Scene 3

1. Why is Frank being forced to take a sabbatical?
2. Why is Frank upset that in her essay on *The Blossom*, Rita interprets the poem as a sexual metaphor?

Scene 4

1. Where does Rita work now? Although her new job probably pays about as much as her old job, it is different from working at the hairdresser's in one important respect. What is it?
2. What is the topic of the essay that Frank assigns for the following week?

Scene 5

1. Why does Frank suggest changing his name to Mary Shelley?
2. When Rita tells Frank that she has changed her name, he responds: "What is it now then? Virginia? Or Charlotte? Or Jane? Or Emily?" What is the significance of the names Frank suggests?

Scene 7

1. Where is Frank going?
2. What did Rita's roommate try to do?
3. Russell plays a sort of trick on the audience at the play's conclusion: in Act II, scene 7, beginning with the line "All I've ever done is take from you. I've never given anything," Russell sets up an expectation, which he builds for a few lines, and then undermines when Rita begins giving Frank a haircut. Can you find the joke?

Additional Activities

Slang

Frank and Rita each have a distinct speaking style, which goes beyond a simple difference of accent. Frank speaks with a grammatical, academic English, while Rita speaks with a dialectic, informal English, using plenty of slang.

- It is generally accepted in Academia that formal English is better for communicating abstract ideas than informal English. Is this true? In the play, are the ideas that Rita expresses any less complex than Frank's? Is each character's speech better suited for one kind of topic? Support your answers with specific citations from the text.

When Massachusetts Senator John Kerry was campaigning for president in Ohio in 2004, he went goose-hunting in an effort to relate to the average Ohioan. He hurt his own case, however, when at the sporting goods store he asked "Can I get me a huntin' license here?"

More recently, the prominent African-American Republican Michael Steele told the *Washington Times* "We want to convey that the modern-day GOP looks like the conservative party that stands on principles, but we want to apply them to urban-suburban hip-hop settings... It will come to the table with things that will surprise everyone - off the hook."

Later, at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, President Obama said "Michael Steele is in the house tonight – or as he would say, 'in da heezy.' Wassup?"

- **GROUP PROJECT:** Name a few examples from your own experience of people using slang this way.
- Of these three politicians – Kerry, Steele, and Obama – and the examples that you listed, which, if any, do you think use slang in the same way that Frank uses it?
- To what extent do your economic status, race, and job affect what slang you are "allowed" to use? If your economic status changes, should your slang also change? Consider our discussion of social class in your answer.

Critique

- After attending the production of *Educating Rita* at the Huntington Theatre Company, write a two-page review of the production. Try to critique the artistic and technical aspects of the play – the set, lighting, etc. – and the play in general – how well the Theatre Company as a whole brought Russell's play to life.
- **GROUP PROJECT:** Divide into two groups: those who felt that the Huntington's production of *Educating Rita* was a well-considered adaptation of the play,

and those who did not. Stage a debate with the opposing side. If you are arguing against the Huntington's production, give specific examples of how it fell short. If you are arguing in favor, give specific examples of how it improved your understanding of the play.

- **Important Quotes**

Use the following quotations to discuss specific events in Educating Rita in context, or to discuss the universal ideas expressed by the quotations. You might use the quotations as springboards to role-playing, or as the first lines of letters, poems, or short stories. Develop any theme you choose. Also search for pictures, paintings, music, or any work of art to which you might apply one of these quotations as a title.

➤ **Act One**

“...y’keep goin’, tellin’ yourself life’s great. There’s always another club to go to, a new feller to be chasin’, a laugh an’ a joke with the girls. Till, one day, y’ own up to yourself an’ y’ say, is this it? Is this the absolute maximum I can expect from this livin’ lark? An’ that’s the big moment that one, that’s the point when y’ have to decide whether it’s gonna be another change of dress or a change in yourself.” Scene 2

“Do you mean like that working-class culture thing?... But I don’t see any, y’ know, culture. I just see everyone pissed, or on *Valium*, tryin’ to get from one day to the next. Y’ daren’t say that round our way like, cos they’re proud. They’ll tell y’ they’ve got culture as they sit there drinkin’ their keg beer out of plastic glasses.” Scene 4

“He thinks we’ve got choice because we can go into a pub that sells eight different kinds of lager. He thinks we’ve got choice already: choice between Everton an’ Liverpool, choosin’ which washin’ powder, choosin’ between one lousy school an’ the next, between lousy jobs or the dole, choosin’ between *Stork* an’ butter.” Scene 5

“Instead of creating poetry I spent – oh – years and years trying to create literature.” Scene 5

“I can’t talk to the people I live with anymore. An’ I can’t talk to the likes of them on Saturday [at your dinner party], or them out there, because I can’t learn the language. I’m a half-caste. I went back to the pub where Denny was, an’ me mother, an’ our Sandra, an’ her mates. I’d decided I wasn’t comin’ here again... I went to the pub an’ they were singin’, all of them singin’ some song they’d learnt from the juke-box... Well I did join in with the singin’, I didn’t ask any questions, I just went along with it. But when I looked round me mother had stopped singin’, an’ she was cryin’. Everyone just said she was pissed [drunk] an’ we should get her home. So we did, an’ on the way I asked her why... She said, ‘Because- because we could sing better songs than those...’ and that’s what I came back.” Scene 7

“I don’t know that I want to teach you. What you already have is valuable.” Scene 8

➤ **Act Two**

“It is indeed because I have ‘so much going for me’ that I do it. Life is such a rich and frantic whirl that I need the drink to help me step delicately through it.” Scene 1

“This –(*picking up his poetry and moving round to Rita*)- this clever, pyrotechnical pile of self-conscious allusions is worthless, talentless shit and could be recognized as such by anyone with a shred of common sense. It’s the sort of thing that gives

publishing a bad name. Wit? You'll find more wit in the telephone book, and, probably more insight. Its one advantage over the telephone directory is that it's easier to rip. It is pretentious, characterless and without style." Scene 5

"Found a culture have you, Rita? Found a better song to sing have you? No – you've found a different song, that's all – and on your lips it's shrill and hollow and tuneless. Oh Rita, Rita..." Scene 5

"I might go to France. I might go to me mother's. I might even have a baby. I dunno. I'll make a decision, I'll choose. I dunno." Scene 7

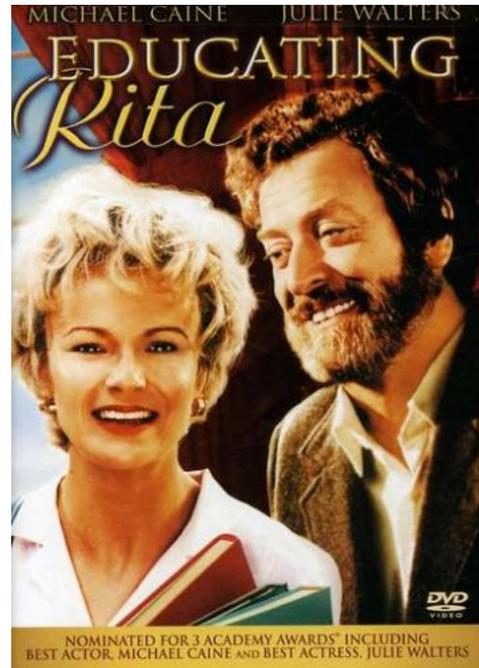
- When preparing the *Important Quotes* section of this guide, we found that the play's important lines tended to be spoken by Rita at the beginning of the play, and by Frank at the end. This change is a reflection of a certain personal shift between Rita and Frank throughout the play. Can you describe this shift?

Open Response and Writing

1. In the opening scene, Rita has difficulty getting through the door to Frank's office. She says "One of these days you'll be shoutin' 'Come in' an' it'll go on forever because the poor sod on the other side won't be *able* to get it. An' you won't be able to get out." In the next scene, she oils the door. How is this symbolic?
2. Frank and Rita both have distinctive ways of speaking. How do these ways of speaking characterize them?
3. In Act I, Scene 2, Rita asks Frank if he likes the woman he is living with, and he responds "I like her enormously; it's myself I'm not too fond of." By the play's conclusion, do you think that Frank would give the same answer? Why or why not?
4. Throughout the play, Frank playfully flirts with Rita, as in Act I, Scene III: "Right now there's a thousand things I'd rather do than teach; most of them with you, young lady..." Rita consistently brushes off these advances as jokes. Are they jokes? Why does Frank do this? Why does Rita ignore him? How do these few lines give the play more character and depth?
5. Rita's husband is afraid that she is having an affair, which she thinks is ridiculous. Why? (You may find it useful to re-read scene 5.)
6. In Act II, scene 5, Rita says "I don't need you. I've got a room full of books. I know what clothes to wear, what wine to buy, what plays to see, what papers and books to read. I can do without you." Why is she wrong in assuming that this is what makes her educated? Consider the definition and purpose of education in your answer.
7. Although the play ends on a more-or-less upbeat note, it has many of the characteristics of a tragedy. In fact, Frank himself says in Act II, scene 1 that Rita leaving "is as inevitable as tragedy." Is the ending truly happy? How would the tone of the play be different if the curtain fell at the end of Act II, scene 5?
8. What do you make of the play's title? Frank learns just as much as Rita in the play, if not more. Why, then is he not mentioned in the title?
9. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle famously wrote about the "three unities" in drama. They are:
 - Unity of Action: a play should follow one main action (no subplots).
 - Unity of Place: A play should only have one setting.
 - Unity of Time: The action of a play should conclude within 24 hours.

Which of these unities did Russell observe in *Educating Rita*? Which did he ignore? Does this add or detract from the play's value?

10. In 1983, a movie version of *Educating Rita* came out, directed by Lewis Gilbert. Compare Gilbert's direction in the film with Maria Aitken's directing of the Huntington's production. What did the directors do differently? How do these differences affect the overall feel of the production? Which do you prefer?



- **Vocabulary**

The following vocabulary list is taken from the text of the play.

1. Assonance
2. Patina
3. Marxist
4. Naïve
5. Encapsulate
6. Wearisome
7. Inevitable
8. Ultimatum
9. Masquerade
10. Bursar
11. Sabbatical
12. Resonant
13. Pyrotechnics

The following words will be useful in discussing the play.

1. Cockney
2. Professional Class
3. Motif
4. *Ars Poetica*
5. Irony
6. Academia
7. Jaded

• **Supplementary Readings**

These readings are meant to be used in conjunction with your discussion on the role of literature in Educating Rita.

Hamlet, by Shakespeare

“Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.”

Siren Song, by Margaret Atwood

“This is the one song everyone would like to learn: the song that is irresistible:

the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see beached skulls

the song nobody knows
because anyone who had heard it
is dead, and the others can't remember.
Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit?
I don't enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical
with these two feathery maniacs,
I don't enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.
Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can,
you are unique

at last. Alas
it is a boring song
but it works every time.”

The Decay of Lying, by Oscar Wilde

“Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life... the self-conscious aim of Life is to find expression, and that Art offers it certain beautiful forms through which it may realise that energy.”

Introduction to Poetry, by Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

Manifesto, by Nicanor Parra

“For our parents
Poetry was a luxury
But for us
It's something of the utmost importance
We can't live without poetry...
...The poet is there
So that the tree doesn't grow twisted.

V for Vendetta, the Wachowski Brothers

“Artists use lies to tell the truth, while politicians use them to cover the truth up.”

LESSON PLANS

Choose activities that are appropriate for your classroom period. All assignments are, of course, only suggestions. Only a teacher knows his or her class well enough to determine the level and depth to which it can study a piece of literature.

- **Two Day Lesson Plan**

This plan introduces students to the context and major themes of the production.

- Day One – Introducing the Play

1. Please review *Audience Etiquette* with your class.
2. Read the *Synopsis*. Discuss the play's relationship with *Pygmalion*.
3. If time allows, discuss other works with similar themes that the students have studied.

- Day Two – The Production

- **Four Day Lesson Plan**

This plan introduces students to the production and then, after viewing the performance, asks them to think critically about what they have seen. Includes time for class discussion and individual assessment.

- Day One – Introducing the Play

1. Same as above; complete before seeing the production.
2. Distribute the *Vocabulary* sheet, and tell students that several of these terms will appear on the test.

- Day Two – The Production

- Day Three – Follow-up Discussion

1. Answer any questions students may have about the production.
2. Discuss one or more of the items from *Themes, Motifs, and Allusions*.
3. Homework: Students should prepare for a test on the material, which will include vocabulary, quotes, and an open-ended question.

- Day Four - Test

1. Individual Assessment: Have students define several words from *Vocabulary*. Choose five of the *Important Quotes*, and have students identify their speaker and their significance in the play. Choose three prompts from *Open Response and Writing*, and have students respond to one in a well-reasoned, thesis-driven essay.

2. Homework: Have students complete a three page, double-spaced response to one of the *Open Response and Writing* prompts.

- **Six Day Lesson Plan**

This plan completely integrates Educating Rita into your schedule. Within six school days, you can introduce the play, assign reading and vocabulary, and assess your students individually and in groups. Ideally, students will view the play after completing the Mastery Assessment questions.

- Day One – Introducing the Play

1. Same as above.
2. Homework: Read Act One and answer the corresponding *Mastery Assessment* questions. Students do not have to write out the answers to the questions, but there may be a quiz. Distribute the *Vocabulary* sheet and tell students that several of these words will appear on the test.

- Day Two – Act One

1. Address any questions that the students may have on the reading or the questions.
2. Discuss Act One, using prompts from *Themes, Motifs, and Allusions*.
3. Homework: Read Act Two and answer the corresponding *Mastery Assessment* questions. Students do not have to write out the answers to the questions, but there may be a quiz.

- Day Three – Act Two

1. Again, please review *Audience Etiquette* with your class.
2. If you doubt that your students are doing the reading, give a quiz, either inventing your own questions or taking them from the *Mastery Assessment*.
3. Address any questions that the students may have on the reading or the questions.
4. Discuss Act Two, using prompts from *Themes, Motifs, and Allusions*.

- Day Four – The Production

- Day Five – Group Work

1. Ask if students have any questions about the production.

2. Break students into groups, and have them do one of the group projects from the *Themes, Motifs, and Allusions* or *Additional Activities* sections, or any of the activities from the *Arts Assessment*.
3. Homework: Students should study for a test the following day, which will include vocabulary, quotes, and an open-ended question.

➤ Day Six – Test

1. Individual Assessment: Have students define several words from *Vocabulary*. Choose five of the *Important Quotes*, and have students identify their speaker and their significance in the play. Choose three prompts from *Open Response and Writing*, and have students respond to one in a well-reasoned, thesis-driven essay.
2. Homework: Have students complete a three page, double-spaced response to one of the *Open Response and Writing* prompts that did not appear on the test.