

AP English Notes  
December 15, 2004

Quiz 17 was given today.

Please alert me to dates for your school's exam and last day before the winter break.

These notes are from Spark Notes at <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/pygmalion/section2.rhtml> by Barnes and Noble.

### Summary Act 2

The next day, Professor Higgins and Pickering are meeting at 27 A Wimpole Street, when Eliza—the flower girl shows up at the door, to the tremendous doubt of the discerning housekeeper Mrs. Pearce, and the surprise of the two gentlemen. Prompted by his careless brag about making her into a duchess the night before, she has come to take lessons from Higgins, so that she may sound genteel enough to work in a flower shop rather than sell at the corner of Tottenham Court Road. As the conversation progresses, Higgins alternates between making fun of the poor girl and threatening her with a broomstick beating, which only causes her to howl and holler, upsetting Higgins' civilized company to a considerable degree. Pickering is much kinder and considerate of her feelings, even going so far as to call her "Miss Doolittle" and to offer her a seat. Pickering is piqued by the prospect of helping Eliza, and bets Higgins that if Higgins is able to pass Eliza off as a duchess at the Ambassador's garden party, then he, Pickering, will cover the expenses of the experiment.

\_\_\_\_\_ This act is made up mostly of a long and animated three-(sometimes four-)way argument over the character and the potential of the indignant Eliza. At one point, incensed by Higgins' heartless insults, she threatens to leave, but the clever professor lures her back by stuffing her mouth with a chocolate, half of which he eats too to prove to her that it is not poisoned. It is agreed upon that Eliza will live with Higgins for six months, and be schooled in the speech and manners of a lady of high class. Things get started when Mrs. Pearce takes her upstairs for a bath.

\_\_\_\_\_ While Mrs. Pearce and Eliza are away, Pickering wants to be sure that Higgins' intentions towards the girl are honorable, to which Higgins replies that, to him, women "might as well be blocks of wood." Mrs. Pearce enters to warn Higgins that he should be more careful with his swearing and his forgetful table manners now that they have an impressionable young lady with them, revealing that Higgins's own gentlemanly ways are somewhat precarious. Alfred Doolittle, Eliza's father, who has learned from a neighbor of Eliza's that she has come to the professor's place, comes a-knocking under the pretence of saving his daughter's honor. When Higgins readily agrees that he should take his daughter away with him, Doolittle reveals that he is really there to ask for five pounds, proudly claiming that he will spend that money on immediate gratification and put none of it to useless savings. Amused by his blustering rhetoric, Higgins gives him the money.

\_\_\_\_\_ Eliza enters, clean and pretty in a blue kimono, and everyone is amazed by the difference. Even her father has failed to recognize her. Eliza is taken with her transformation and wants to go back to her old neighborhood and show off, but she is warned against snobbery by Higgins. The act ends with the two of them agreeing that they have taken on a difficult task.