

Synopsis

Heartbreak House, describes the impact of Ellie Dunn, daughter of the idealistic and unworldly Mazzini Dunn, upon the eccentric, complacent and 'horribly Bohemian' household of 88-year-old Captain Shotover, with whom she strikes up an alliance. It includes energetic beautiful, dominating Hesione Hushabye, who determined Ellie shall not marry the ageing business magnate Boss Mangan. Hesione's husband the romantic liar and fantasist Hector Hushabye. Hesione's sister, the apparently conventional, newly returned Lady Utterword and Lady Utterword's devoted brother-in law Randall, a prototype of the useless artist.

The story begins with the arriving of Ellie Dunn, a young singer, as the guest of Mrs. Hesione Hushabye. No one bothers to greet visitors; the members of the family are treated like strangers; strangers are welcomed like old friends. It seems that the arriving of Ellie Dunn is the signal for the conflicts which then happen in the house. The arrival of Ellie Dunn uncover Hector's affairs in front of Hesione. Hector's affairs makes Hesione confused since she feels that she has been a very

good wife for her husband, Hector Hushabye, and also makes Hesione think that Hector does not love her anymore. Since Hesione does not want to talk about Hector's affairs, Hesione finally decide to follow Hector's attitude. That is why when Ellie's fiancée, Alfred Mangan, visits her house, Hesione is intended to flatters Alfred Mangan in order to make Hector jealous. Hector who feels that his position as a husband is under Hesione's position, does not want to do anything toward Hesione's action. It makes Hesione and Hector get in to a deep misunderstanding between each other. On the other hand, Ellie's visits the house also uncover Alfred Mangan's lie about his money, which then makes Ellie commit her affair with Captain Shotover and finally Ellie break her engagement with Alfred Mangan.

Biography of George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw ranks next to Shakespeare among English playwrights, and yet he did not begin to write drama until he was middle-aged. He made up for the lost time with an amazing output of forty-seven plays during a creative life that spanned the Victorian and modern eras. A brilliant and opinionated man, Shaw was essentially self-educated, and he did a splendid job of teaching himself what he needed to know. Above all else, he was always vigorously engaged with the world around him; his long, productive life bristled with vitality, intelligence, and a consuming passion of ideas.

Irish by birth, Shaw came to England at the age of twenty and lived in and near London throughout the rest of his life. After writing several unsuccessful novels, the young Shaw turned to reviewing books and paintings in order to earn a living. He first became known as a music critic; from his mother, an aspiring singer, he had learned much about music, and he combined this knowledge with an excellent taste and a sparkling prose style to become the most influential music critic of his day.

Shaw's lively intelligence did not confine itself to art, fiction and music. At an early age he became committed to the cause of social reform. He joined the Fabian movement, a type of socialism founded in England in the 1880s to reform the social, economic and political systems gradually through peaceful, democratic measures. Although he was shy by nature, Shaw turned himself into an outstanding public speaker. He continued to participate actively in politics the rest of his life. However, he found a particularly satisfying forum for his ideas in reviewing drama and eventually in writing plays of his own.

In the 1890s Shaw became recognized as London's wittiest and stimulating drama critic. He took drama very seriously: in particular, he idolized the Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen, whose unsparing critique of middle-class life revealed to Shaw the potential impact of drama upon society. After writing his influential essay "The Quintessence of Ibsenism" (1891), Shaw began to try his own hand at writing plays. the result, *Widowers' Houses* (produced in 1892), proved to be the first of many plays to come in the years ahead.

At first Shaw's plays were too controversial for English theatergoers, who were accustomed to light or sentimental entertainments but not to provocative examinations of moral and social issues. However, Shaw continued to write and publish his plays, usually accompanying them with lengthy and argumentative prefaces that expressed his ideas on a wide range of subjects. Eventually he established himself as the leading English playwright of the modern period with such works as *Arms and the Man* (1894), *Candida* (1895), *Caesar and Cleopatra* (1898), *Man and Superman* (1903), *Major Barbara* (1907), *Pygmalion* (1912), *Heartbreak House* (1917), and *Saint Joan* (1923). For those achievements the playwright was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925.

For the most part, Shaw's plays are comedies of ideas, works that present complex and often controversial themes within the framework of entertaining plots, appealing and unpredictable characters and witty dialogue. Shaw's works are insistently rational, ridiculing the conventions and prejudices of his time.

Heartbreak House was written as early as 1913 and it was in its final form by 1916-1917, the play was not pub-

lished until 1919. Its first performance was the Theatre Guild production on November 12, 1920.

In a way that criticism has not yet fully appraised, *Heartbreak House* presents almost the whole range of Shaw's thought, for few of his plays are more representative or inclusive in the themes and motifs touches upon if not explored; war, love, society, education, religion, politics, and science.