From Statue to Stage

Trace how one classical myth changes across later versions.

ELA.10.R.3.3 "Analyze how mythical, classical, or religious texts have been adapted."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that show who controls a transformation. Circle details that show a later version changed its source, then write S in the margin beside details about social purpose and R beside details about relationships or endings.

Pygmalion Through Three Versions

1. In Book 10 of Ovid's Metamorphoses, the sculptor Pygmalion distrusts the women around him and carves an ivory figure he considers perfect. During Venus's festival, he asks the goddess to give him a wife like his statue. Venus understands his wish and brings the figure to life. The story centers on a man's desire and a god's power. The silent statue has no stated wishes, family, or past. Written in ancient Rome, Ovid's episode uses transformation to explore art, longing, and the unpredictable favor of a deity.

2. More than eighteen centuries later, George Bernard Shaw borrowed the myth's basic pattern for his 1913 play Pygmalion. Professor Henry Higgins does not create a statue. Instead, he teaches Eliza Doolittle, a flower seller, to speak in a manner that upper-class London listeners accept. Eliza actively argues with Higgins and decides what to do after the lessons. By replacing divine magic with speech training, Shaw shifts attention from a man's ideal object to the social rules that judge people by accent and manners. His title invites comparison, but his adaptation questions the original power relationship.

3. In the 1964 film My Fair Lady, adapted from Shaw's play, songs make Higgins's and Eliza's feelings more visible to an audience. For example, musical numbers let viewers hear their private complaints and hopes, a tool unavailable in the same form in a spoken play. The film also changes the ending's effect. Shaw's printed epilogue explains that Eliza marries Freddy Eynsford-Hill and opens a flower shop. In the film's final scene, Eliza returns to Higgins's home after he sings about missing her. That reunion suggests a possible romance, so the film makes their relationship seem warmer and less settled on Eliza's independent future.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the transformation in Ovid's myth differ from the transformation in Shaw's play? Include who causes each change.

2. How does Shaw preserve the myth's basic pattern while challenging its power relationship? Use two details from the passage.

3. What social issue does Shaw's adaptation bring into focus, and what change from the myth makes that issue central?

4. Compare Shaw's printed ending with the film ending of My Fair Lady. How does the film's change affect the audience's view of Eliza and Higgins?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a mythical, classical, or religious story you know. In 3 or 4 sentences, propose an adaptation for a new genre and audience, describe two changes, and explain how at least one change would shift the story's emphasis.

ANSWER KEY

From Statue to Stage

GRADE 10 · ELA.10.R.3.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that show who controls a transformation. Circle details that show a later version changed its source, then write S in the margin beside details about social purpose and R beside details about relationships or endings. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the transformation in Ovid's myth differ from the transformation in Shaw's play? Include who causes each change.	**In Ovid, Venus brings Pygmalion's ivory figure to life. In Shaw, Higgins trains Eliza's speech, changing how others judge her.**
2	How does Shaw preserve the myth's basic pattern while challenging its power relationship? Use two details from the passage.	**Shaw keeps a male figure who tries to shape a woman, but Higgins trains Eliza rather than creating a statue. Eliza argues with him and chooses what to do after the lessons, unlike Ovid's silent figure.**
3	What social issue does Shaw's adaptation bring into focus, and what change from the myth makes that issue central?	**Shaw focuses on class judgments based on accent and manners. He replaces divine magic with speech training.**
4	Compare Shaw's printed ending with the film ending of My Fair Lady. How does the film's change affect the audience's view of Eliza and Higgins?	**Shaw's epilogue says Eliza marries Freddy and opens a flower shop. The film has her return to Higgins, suggesting possible romance and making their relationship seem warmer and Eliza's independent future less certain.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A graphic novel for teenagers could adapt the Greek myth of Icarus. Instead of warning Icarus only about wax wings, it could show him ignoring messages about a dangerous social-media challenge. It could give his sister a role in trying to stop him. These changes would shift the focus from obedience to the pressure to seek online attention.

Accept answers that accurately compare the source, Shaw's play, and the film using passage evidence. For Part 3, accept varied source texts and adaptation ideas if students name a genre and audience, describe two meaningful changes, and explain a changed emphasis.