

## **Shaw's Style**

Shaw's style illustrates his great self-confidence, partly through controlled amazement and shock. This style causes the reader's mind to be dazed, and it then takes in assertions without realizing that it is doing so. But he did not depend entirely upon his subject matter to produce style. Its chief effect on the hearer or the reader are those of calm and force. Shaw uses few adjectives, is quick and skilful with nouns. Colours and grace are discarded. Shaw's meaning enters the mind without delay. By simply speaking the truth, instead of expressing sentiments which they were supposed to have, Shaw's characters become comical and therefore interesting.

In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw demonstrates the conflict between idealism and realism to confirm his belief in realism. The romantic ideal of war as a famous opportunity for a man to display courage and honour is dismissed when Sergius admits that his heroic cavalry charge that won the battle was the wrong thing to do. His notable action does not get him his promotion and Sergius learns that "Soldiering, my dear madam, is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak." His attitude towards war is shown through the dialogue of his characters.

Sergius and Raina must face the fact that their ideals about love are false. Fortunately, both of them are actually released by this knowledge to pursue their true loves. But first, Sergius goes through a period of despair in which he questions whether life is futile if the ideals by which he has set his standards of conduct fail to hold up when exposed to reality. This question is an underlying current throughout the play. Shaw gives a happy resolution, but it is a serious question that most people must face in life.

Much is made of Bluntschli's realism through keeping chocolates instead of ammunition in his cartridge belt, showing disrespect for over-romanticizing, and reacting in a practical manner to his father's death.

However, Nicola is the skilled realist in the play. Nicola's message is: adapt, exploit, survive. Bluntschli proves to have a romantic side, after all, and thus is the most balanced character in the play in that he seems to know when to temper his romanticism with realism and when to stick to his ideals.