



George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*

Themes

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Misconception of War

In *Arms and the Man*, Bernard Shaw condemns war as a vicious, barbarous, and inhuman act. The cavalry charge for which Sergius is so much praised is unprofessional and foolish.





Contrary to the romantic notion of war and knighthood, Shaw, through Bluntschli, says that all wise soldiers are afraid to die. Shaw uncovers the horrors of war. He brings forth the weakness of man at time of war.

Shaw also points out the importance of food in the war. Food is more important than ammunition. That is why the practical soldier Bluntschli carries chocolate instead of cartridge in the battle field. Raina ironically calls Bluntschli a chocolate cream soldier.



At the end Bluntschli cures Raina of her illusions and romantic views by telling her about his experience as a soldier. Thus, the play is about Shaw's anti-war and anti-military views.



Misconception of Love

Arms and the Man is subtitled "An Anti-Romantic Comedy." Shaw denounces false romantic relations, based on social obligations. In the play, Raina and Sergius plan to marry because their social status requires a mate from the same social level.



It is also because
Sergius plays the role
of the type of hero
that Raina has been
taught to admire, and
Raina plays the role
that Sergius expects
from a woman of her
station.



They are both acting out a romance according to their idealised standards for courtship rather than according to their innermost feelings. Raina has fallen for her brave army officer who looks handsome in his uniform.



When Bluntschli and Louka force Raina and Sergius to examine their true feelings, Raina and Sergius discover that they have the courage and desire to follow their hearts instead of seeking to meet social expectations.

