

Answer the following questions.

(i) Name three other plays written by Shaw.

Ans. The famous plays of Bernard Shaw include; Arms and the Man, Candida, The Devil's Disciple, Caesar and Cleopatra, Man and Superman.

(ii) What is the source of the title 'Arms and the Man'?

Ans. The title of the play, "Arms and the Man", has been taken from Dryden's translation of the opening lines of "Aenied" by Roman poet, Virgil. The opening lines of Dryden's translation run as follows: "Arms and the Man I sing, who forced by fate, / And haughty Juno's unrelenting hate".

(iii) What is the historical background of the play 'Arms and the Man'?

Ans. Victorian rule (1837 - 1901), Victorian literature and Serbo-Bulgarian War (14 November 1885 - 28 November 1885) is the historical background of the play "Arms and the Man".

(iv) What are the major themes of 'Arms and the Man'?

Ans. Love, war, incompetent authority, ignorance vs. knowledge, class, bravery and personal honesty are the major themes of "Arms and the Man".

(v) What is the major conflict in 'Arms and the Man'?

Ans. There are two distinct conflicts in the play. The first conflict is the view of war as romantic and idealistic and the true realities of war as illustrated by the character of Bluntschli. The second conflict would be the view of love and marriage as illustrated through the character of Louka.

(vi) In which two countries the war was going in 'Arms and the Man'?

Ans. The war was going on between Serbia and Bulgaria. The Serbo-Bulgarian War erupted on 14 November 1885 and lasted until 28 November 1885. Final peace was signed on 3 March 1886 in Bucharest.

(vii) What is pragmatism?

Ans. Pragmatism is a philosophical tradition that began in the United States around 1870. Pragmatism is a rejection of the idea that the function of thought is to describe, represent, or mirror reality. Instead, pragmatists consider thought an instrument or tool for prediction, problem solving and action.

(viii) How does Bernard Shaw view romanticism?

Ans. Shaw has a low opinion of romanticism. Romanticism in "Arms and the Man" serves as the play's theoretical villain. It is always a reflection of ignorance; once a character gains knowledge, they abandon their poetic ideas as Sergius and Raina do.

(ix) What is meant by the subtitle 'An Anti-Romantic Comedy'?

Ans. Arms and the Man, subtitle "An Anti-Romantic Comedy" means that the dramatist purpose is to satirize the romantic conception of life. Shaw has no faith in emotions and sentiments. Throughout the drama he denounces the idealism and insists on realism. He does it through humour of character and humour of situation at the same time.

(x) What is Byronism?

Ans. Byronism refers to an attitude which possesses the characteristics of English poet Byron or his poetry, especially romanticism, melancholy, and melodramatic energy. Byronism is seen in the character of Major Saranoff, who is a shining example of Raina and her mother's romanticized image of a hero. Sergius is also a Byronic hero because he has an underlying despair about life.

(xi) There are many types of war and many types of love in 'Arms and the Man'.

Ans. There are two wars; Serbo-Bulgarian War and Russian-Austrian War. There are two types of war; romanticized war and realistic war. Three love affairs; Raina-Sergius, Raina-Bluntschli, and Louka-Sergius can be grouped into two categories - romantic love and realistic love.

(xii) What characteristics make a person a good soldier?

Ans. Captain Bluntschli represents Shaw's ideal soldier. He harbors no romantic ideals; he views war as business to be efficiently dispatched. If Bluntschli demonstrates what a soldier should be, Sergius and Major Petkoff demonstrate what he should not be. Sergius is filled with poetic ideas about bravery and honour, and Major Petkoff is the picture of incompetence.

(xiii) Which character best serves as Shaw's spokesman?

Ans. Captain Bluntschli serves best as Shaw's spokesman. He is a thirty four year old realist who sees through the absurd romanticism of war. He is the representative of average humanity; he is what Shaw would like Man to be.

(xiv) Which characters have illusions about themselves and the world they live in?

Ans. Raina, Catherine and Sergius have illusions about themselves and the world they live in. Raina reads romantic novels and imagines herself a heroine. Raina's mother, Catherine, shares many of her daughter's illusions about love and warfare. Sergius believes in the romantic ideals championed by poetry and opera.

(xv) Who holds the most power in Petkoff's household?

Ans. Catherine, Raina's mother and Petkoff's wife, holds the most power in Petkoff's household. She runs her house energetically and ably, with a strong ruling will and definite ideas about upholding her position as an aristocrat.