

# The Blue Plaque

## George Bernard Shaw

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George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856 and moved to London as a young man. He joined his mother there who was involved in a curious relationship with a charismatic music teacher called Vandeleur Lee and was already living in lodgings in the city.

For the next ten years Shaw tried to earn a living as a writer, producing a series of unsuccessful novels and a mass of poorly paid (or even unpaid) journalism. His family continued to support him. 'I did not throw myself into the struggle for life,' he later wrote, 'I threw my mother into it'.

Gradually, however, he gained a reputation as a socialist speaker and as one of the most brilliant journalists in London, a witty and opinionated writer on music and an avant-garde drama critic who was an enthusiast for the works of new European playwrights like Ibsen. In the 1890s he began to write plays himself. Although he found it impossible at first to get them staged, because they were seen as 'difficult' or even obscene, he had set off on the path which was to lead him to world-wide fame.

In 1898 he married Charlotte Payne Townsend, 'my green-eyed millionairess' as he called her, but the financial security this brought did not lessen his output. Old plays began to gain an audience at last and new ones poured forth, including such famous works as *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, *Pygmalion* and *St. Joan*. The personality that Shaw had originally created in the bohemian world of 1880s London became famous throughout the world. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925.

The plaque to George Bernard Shaw is on a house in Fitzroy Square where he lived for eleven years before his marriage.

