SYMBOLS IN ARMS AND THE MAN

SYMBOLS PROVIDE CLUES TO THE DRAMATIC MEANING FOR THE AUDIENCE.

CHOCOLATE
Bluntschli carries chocolate into the battlefield rather than cartridges for a gun. The chocolate is a symbol of Bluntschli’s realistic and pragmatic nature. This is reiterated by the fact that many soldiers carried rations of chocolate during war as a form of sustenance. By carrying chocolate and not ammunition, Shaw (a pacifist) also makes a point about the senseless violence of war.

VIRGIL’S THE AENEID
The opening line of Virgil’s poem The Aeneid was the inspiration for the title of Arms and the Man. The line states, “Of Arms and the man I sing...” with the poem detailing Aeneid’s heroic feats on the battlefield. The word ‘arms’ refers to weaponry or ammunition.

By naming the play Arms and the Man, Shaw’s play leads audience’s to believe it would detail gallant and brave acts on the battlefield. The title is instead deceptive, and is a contrast to the poem, as the play asks the audience to question man’s involvement in war and challenges idealised views of battle and heroism.