

The importance of being earnest literature review examples

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Oscar Wilde's play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, contains a torrent of sarcasms and attacks on the dandiest societal norms which loomed over the Victorian society. The play describes the obsession of two belles, Gwendolen Fairfax and Cecily Cardew, with the name Ernest and the following perplexing actions which occur in this context. While Jack, the guardian of Cecily, leaves for sabbaticals by fabricating stories about his fictitious brother, Ernest, he actually lives the character in London and gives wings to his life of freedom. He falls for Gwendolen only to know that she will get betrothed to the person named Ernest. Enquiring about Jack's identity, Algernon falls for Cecily, who also is dwelling in a realm of imagined affair with Ernest. He travels to the estate posing as Ernest. After confrontations and confusions, the curtains fall resolving Jack to be Lady Bracknell's nephew. The play mocks the pretentiousness and the shallow nature of the society through the paramount importance attributed to just a name, rather than the real human virtues associated with the character.

The Importance of Being Earnest explores the notion of the omnipotence of marriage and it attains the position of the subject for philosophical debates and speculations. The play further exposes the innate hypocrisy of the society through the character of Jack Worthing, whose one side epitomizes the Victorian ideal of honor, duty and respectability, and the other the articulation of his repressed desires. Algernon too lives a dual life and makes epigrammatic pronouncements which make no sense at all. A proponent of aestheticism, Algernon regards living as a kind of art. While Gwendolen embodies the archetypal Victorian womanhood, Wilde explores the Victorian parameters of sophistication and fashion through the character along with

Lady Bracknell, her mother. Cecily, an antithesis to Gwendolen, represents the unspoiled and ingenious. She exudes her imaginative capacity by weaving her world of love with Ernest. In stark contrast to other characters, she refrains from speaking in epigrams and is closer to reality.

Thus, the play exposes the shallow Victorian society and satirizes it aptly. As one of Wilde's most eminent works, the play has lived on in the core of the hearts of a gazillion all across the globe and has gained immortality in the history of English literature.