

# The importance of being earnestly portrayed literature review

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



The distinctive feature of drama as a genre is that there can be a considerable difference between the experiences of reading the script and viewing it in person. In the cases of some playwrights, such as William Shakespeare, it is the power of the words that have endured; in more modern times, it has become more and more important for the audience to actually see the play performed to receive the full impact of the play. In the case of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *The C Above High C*, it is the latter that has more of a need to be played before an audience to deliver its full impact.

*The C Above High C* bristles with stage directions that are quite specific; each visual is selected to deliver meaning to the viewer, in ways that simply reading the directions does not permit. For example, at the beginning of Scene 2, when President Eisenhower wakes up screaming, the scene is quite specific. The bed is underneath a portrait of George Washington, placed above this adulterous bed to show how far the moral leadership in the Presidency has plummeted. President Eisenhower is wearing longjohns – night garb that permits the very least amount of dignity. In contrast, the red-haired Kay Summersby is “very handsomewearing a fancy slip” (Reed, p. 293). It is one thing to read these directions and quite another to see these details in person on the stage.

The stage directions in *The Importance of Being Earnest* are much less specific. Act II opens in a garden, with roses and stone steps, around a table and chairs (Wilde, p. 355). There are no specific visual cues designed to send rhetorical messages. The comedy of Wilde’s play centers around mistaken

identity, which is communicated more easily through words. The political anger in Reed's play, in contrast, comes through in the nuances and symbols just as powerfully, if not more so, than the words that the characters utter.

## **Works Cited**

Reed, Ishmael. *The C Above High C*. E-book.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest*. E-book.