

The importance of being earnest: overview

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



Social class and public reputation are two of the most common things that influence a person in their decision making. In “ The Importance of Being Earnest”, Oscar Wilde mocks a society for their reasons of choosing who to marry. Oscar Wilde expresses an ironic and satiric perspective on a society that builds a marriage upon a foundation of money, power, and deceit. The play “ The Importance of Being Earnest,” is one of the most perfect examples of satire in our culture. Although it is set in England, it makes fun of the upper class.

The play uses dramatic irony to show how Oscar Wilde sees the upper class as too formal and snobbish. It is dramatic irony because the characters in the play obviously think that they are high class with their multiple houses and butlers even though the author thinks that the upper class is too snobbish. The play also uses hyperbole to make its point. Every character in it is exaggerated. The characters Jack and Algernon are both willing to change their names to Earnest just because the women they love say that they will only love a man named Earnest.

This is an example of how much emphasis Wilde believes that society places on love and how important it is to us. In the play, Wealth is a desirable aspect in life that many people crave. Many people will venture to extreme limits to acquire riches. In “ The Importance of Being Earnest”, prosperity is wanted so much that women will consider wealth as their rationale to get married. In the book, when Jack Worthing proposed to Gwendolen Fairfax, Gwendolen’s mother refused to let her marry him. Her reasoning was since Jack didn’t know who his parents were; he would not receive an inheritance.

Lady Bracknell refused to let her daughter marry someone who was not exceptionally wealthy. In this society, a person who descends from wealth is forbidden to marry someone from a lower class. It is considered disrespectful towards the family and it would degrade their self image. Power, in Wilde's society, is also greatly commendable for a man who wants to marry. When Lady Bracknell questions Jack about his social status within the city, she is disappointed to hear that he is not of high class.

Without money in the society, it is impossible to be a part of the high-class society; which is where power is attained. In this society, people marry inside of their own social and economic class. Since Jack does not have any power within the city, and does not have a lot of money to his name, he is not qualified to marry a woman of upper class. In addition to power and wealth being two ludicrous factors being heavily weighted for marriage, a man's name also decides eligibility for matrimony. Jack lies to Gwendolen and tells her that his name is Ernest.

When she learns that his name is not in fact Ernest, she refuses to marry him. Oscar Wilde used humor and irony when titling the play, "The Importance of Being Earnest." Earnest describes a person who is honest and sincere, which does not describe anybody within the play. All of the relationships in the play are built upon lies and deceit. Jack Worthing's friend also deceives the woman that he loves, Cecily. Algernon also lies about his name and creates an imaginary friend so that he can avoid spending time with people that he does not want to see. Algernon and Jack come to call it bunburying. When a social event is occurring that Jack or Algernon does not want to attend, they fake a visit with an extremely sick friend or relative.

Eventually, Cecily and Gwendolen learn of all the secrets that Jack and Algernon are keeping. At first they are justifiably outraged. But after they all have talk, all is forgiven. This is another example that shows absurdity towards marriage. Cecily and Gwendolen realize that the men that they are supposed to marry have lied to them about everything. They don't even really know who Jack and Algernon truly are.

Even though Algernon and Jack have lied about everything, Gwendolen and Cecily both agree to carry on with the wedding. "The Importance of Being Earnest" provides many ironic and satiric views in a society where marriage is built upon all of the wrong foundations. Marriage, in this society, is built upon wealth, power, lies, and deceit. The characters in the story are very scandalous and indecent. Men lie to their fiancés and women marry them for money and power. In today's society, this would be considered a huge disgrace and would be intolerable?