

The Importance of Being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

Part 5 (second part of Act 2)

Author: Daniel Barber

Level: Upper intermediate

Age: Young adults / Adults

Duration: Approx. 90 minutes

Aims: In this lesson, the students will:

1. listen for gist and check predictions;
2. listen for detail;
3. compare two parallel scenes from the play;
4. practise intonation in question tags;
5. complete a dictation activity.

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; one copy of the dictation text per pair of students; one copy of extract from Act 1 for every three students; Track 1 (first half of Part 5); Track 2 (second half of Part 5); Track 3 (extracts) downloaded from onestopenglish

Summary: Two young gentlemen friends use false names to live double lives. These convenient secret identities become a problem, however, when they both fall in love at the same time. As the situation develops, it becomes more and more complicated for these fun-loving men. The story is told in eight parts. In Part 5, Jack expresses his anger at Algernon's arrival to the country house by telling him to leave. Algernon, in love with Cecily, wants to spend more time with her before he goes.

Activity 1

Aims: to listen for gist; to check predictions from the last lesson

1. Remind the students that in the last lesson they improvised a private conversation between Jack and Algernon. Ask them to get back into the same pairs they were in for that activity, if possible, and have them write a three-sentence summary of that conversation. It should be in the following format:

- In the first sentence they should describe the emotions of the men and why they were feeling that way.
- In the second sentence they should provide one or two details about what was said.
- In the third sentence they should explain the outcome or conclusion of the conversation.

While they are doing this, monitor the pairs and check their language and ideas.

2. Now explain that in the next part of the play they will hear a conversation between Jack and Algernon, and they should listen to find out whether their predictions were correct or similar in any way. Play Track 1.

3. In their original pairs, get them to discuss the parallels (or lack of parallels) between

their predicted conversation and what really happens. Then invite students to tell the class of any similarities they noticed.

Activity 2

Aim: to listen for detail

1. Hand out the worksheet, one per student, and ask them to look at Activity 2. Tell them to read the sentences and decide which name is correct according to what they remember. Give them a minute to do this.

2. Ask them to check their answers by listening again. Play Track 1. Check answers as a whole class and ask them to provide details. For example, for sentence 2, find out whether they have understood that the friend, Bunbury, is imaginary and that Algernon tells the story to be more sympathetic towards Cecily.

Key:

1. Jack; 2. Algernon (about Bunbury); 3. Jack (has to shake Algernon's hand); 4. Algernon (wants to stay for a week) 5. Jack; 6. Algernon and Jack (Algernon says Jack looks 'ridiculous' and Jack calls Algernon 'overdressed'); 7. Algernon; 8. Algernon (thinks his visit has been a success)

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Activity 3

Aims: to listen for gist; to focus on the parallels between Algernon and Cecily's engagement, and Jack and Gwendolen's.

1. Ask the class what they think is going to happen next in the play after Jack goes into the house to change his clothes. They have heard that Cecily is arriving at the end of Track 1, so someone should remember this and the class will be able to suggest that Algernon and Cecily will declare their feelings for one another. Mention that there is a ring in the next section and elicit that this may be because Algernon will propose to Cecily.

2. Find out what the class remembers about Jack's proposal to Gwendolen in Act 1. Ask prompting questions such as:

- *Where were they?*
- *Who else was in the room?*
- *Who proposed, Jack or Gwendolen?*
- *What did they talk about?*
- *What do they give as their reasons for loving one another?*

3. Now explain that they are going to listen to the next part of the play and need to answer the question:

In what ways is the scene between Algernon and Cecily similar to the one between Jack and Gwendolen in the first act?

Tell the class to listen to the next part of the play and make notes on that question. Play Track 2.

4. After listening, give students a minute to confer, in groups of three or four, to compare and share their answers. Ask them how many similarities they have found. Congratulate the group that has the most similarities and ask them to tell the class. Note their answers on the board. You could start each with *both ... or neither ...*, as is indicated in the key below. Now see if other groups can add more similarities to the list.

5. Finally, hand out one copy of the script from Act 1 to every three students. Ask them to read it and find the remaining similarities. Ask the class to add any more similarities to

the list on the board. You could end up with eight and possibly more.

Key:

Similarities between the two scenes:

1. *Both men propose.*
2. *Neither proposal is conventional. The first because Gwendolen gives her answer before Jack asks the question and the second because Cecily has imagined that she and Algernon have been engaged for three months already.*
3. *Both women claim to have had affection for their men before they even met them.*
4. *Both conversations take place under the pressure of time, Jack and Gwendolen's because Lady Bracknell is coming back soon, and Algernon and Cecily's because there is a carriage waiting.*
5. *Both women say that one reason they love their respective man is because he is called Ernest.*
6. *Neither man is called Ernest.*
7. *Both men claim that their real names are nice names (neither woman agrees).*
8. *Both men accidentally mention a sudden need to get baptized.*

Activity 4

Aim: to practise intonation in question tags

1. Write the following extract on the board:

*You will marry me, won't you?
You silly boy! Of course.*

Ask who said these lines and ask why Cecily calls Algernon 'silly'. Make sure the students understand that it is because Algernon is unsure of her answer when he should be confident that she will accept his proposal.

2. Invite two volunteers to play the parts of Cecily and Algernon and have them read out these lines in the class. As they do, listen to how the student playing Algernon says the question tag. Does he go up on 'you' or down? Thank the volunteers and ask the class whether Algernon sounded uncertain. If he went up on 'you' (i.e. a fall-rise pattern) he will have sounded uncertain. Ask him to say it again the same way. If he went down on 'you' (i.e. a rise-fall), he will have sounded too confident, so suggest he says it like this (you could mark it on the board):

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...won't you?

and model it for him. Have the whole class repeat after you. Drill both ways: rise-fall, then fall-rise. Put the tag back in the sentence and drill the whole sentence with the uncertain intonation.

3. Point to Activity 4a on the worksheet. Tell the students to work in pairs and decide which character said each of the four lines (they have already looked at line 3, but they can listen again). Play Track 3 so that they can check their answers.

Key:

1. Algernon; 2. Jack; 3. Cecily; 4. Algernon

4. Now direct them to 4b. Explain that number 1 in 4b corresponds to number 1 in 4a. They must decide what the meaning is behind each line 1-4 in 4a and choose the correct option a. or b. Check they understand the activity by asking what the answer to 1 is. As they have already discussed the meaning of Algernon's question, they should have no problem choosing b. Have them work in pairs to decide for 2-4.

5. For feedback, ask students for their answers, but for each, ask them to say the line with the correct intonation. So if they say a. for number 2, they should say the line with a rising intonation at the end. At this stage, don't tell them the answers but praise them if their intonation matches the answer that they give.

Key:

1. a; 2. a; 3. b; 4. b

6. Finally, play Track 3 so that the students can check. You will need to pause after each one and ask:

Did the question tag at the end go up or down? So is it a. or b?

Then get the whole class to repeat the line, copying the intonation.

Activity 5

Aims: to end the lesson with a fun activity; become more familiar with a monologue from

the play; do a dictation (dictation is mentioned in the play); encourage peer listening, active negotiation of meaning and teamwork

1. Before the lesson, pin up the text to be dictated on the wall some distance from where the students sit (at the back of the room, for example, or just outside the classroom). Explain that the students are going to do a dictation, which if they are not accustomed to is an activity where one person speaks and another person writes what they say. In this case, the students work in pairs and one student in each team dictates while the other writes. Ask if anyone can remember Cecily's advice about dictating. Write it on the board:

When one is dictating, one should speak clearly and not cough.

2. Explain that there is a problem: the text to be dictated is some distance from the writers (show them where it is), so their partners will have to walk to the text, remember some of it, walk back to their writer and dictate what they remember. They can make as many journeys as they need to complete the whole dictation, but they must not run, not do any writing themselves and only speak English during the whole activity. The writers can ask for repetition, help spelling words and so on but they must not give the pen to their walkers and must speak English the whole time.

3. Put the students into pairs. Allocate walkers and writers yourself if necessary. Start the activity.

Note: Commonly this is called a 'running dictation'. You may decide to make it a race by saying: *ready ... steady ... GO!* but do be aware – running dictations bring out the competitive side in some students and can get too active for the classroom!

4. Monitor carefully to make sure no one is cheating and that there are no major breakdowns in communication. There may be some pronunciation errors that make it hard to understand, for example. Make a note of any interesting or significant errors for later. If you have made it a race, you will

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need to check any winners' final dictated text for substantial errors, omissions, etc. and to congratulate them.

5. When most groups have finished, stop the activity and have the walkers return to their chairs and elicit the text line by line, discussing any differences of opinion. If you have a projector, you may prefer to put the text on the screen so that students can compare their versions to the original. Focus on any errors you noticed during the activity. For example, did the students correctly pronounce the '-ed' in *existed*, *decided*, *promised* and *engaged*?

Follow-up tasks

1. Students write one of the letters Cecily wrote to herself as if she were Algernon.
2. Give students a copy of the script for Part 5. The students find five new words they would like to learn. In the following lesson, they compare words with a partner and talk about why they chose those words.

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Activity 2

Circle the correct name.

1. *Jack / Algernon* is surprised to see the other man.
2. *Jack / Algernon* has been telling stories about a friend.
3. *Jack / Algernon* is forced to do something he doesn't want to.
4. *Jack / Algernon* is planning on staying at the country house for several days.
5. *Jack / Algernon* tells the servant to call for a carriage.
6. *Jack / Algernon* is rude about the other man's clothes.
7. *Jack / Algernon* must catch the train at 4 o'clock.
8. *Jack / Algernon* disagrees with the other's conclusion.

Now listen to check your answers.

Activity 4a

Who said the following lines?

1. You will marry me, won't you?
2. Oh! He has been talking about Bunbury, has he?
3. Hopelessly doesn't make much sense, does it?
4. Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

Now listen to check your answers.

Activity 4b

Decide if speakers 1-4 in Activity 4a express meaning a. or b.

1.
 - a. I am unsure you will say yes
 - b. I am confident you will say yes
2.
 - a. I am pretending I am surprised
 - b. I am asking a genuine question.
3.
 - a. I am asking your opinion
 - b. I am stating a fact
4.
 - a. I am asking your opinion
 - b. I am paying a compliment

Now listen to check your answers.

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Dictation

Cecily: On the fourteenth of February. I was unhappy that you didn't know I existed, so I made up my mind to decide the matter, one way or the other. After thinking about it for a long time, I decided to accept your proposal of marriage. I decided that we were engaged. And so the next day I bought this little ring for you to give me and I promised you that I would always wear it.



Cecily: On the fourteenth of February. I was unhappy that you didn't know I existed, so I made up my mind to decide the matter, one way or the other. After thinking about it for a long time, I decided to accept your proposal of marriage. I decided that we were engaged. And so the next day I bought this little ring for you to give me and I promised you that I would always wear it.

Cecily: On the fourteenth of February. I was unhappy that you didn't know I existed, so I made up my mind to decide the matter, one way or the other. After thinking about it for a long time, I decided to accept your proposal of marriage. I decided that we were engaged. And so the next day I bought this little ring for you to give me and I promised you that I would always wear it.

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Extract from Act 1

- Jack:** It's been a charming day, Miss Fairfax.
- Gwendolen:** Please don't talk about the weather, Mr Worthing. When people talk to me about the weather, I always feel quite certain they mean something else and I get nervous.
- Jack:** I do mean something else.
- Gwendolen:** I thought so. In fact, I am never wrong.
- Jack:** I would like to talk to you about the 'something else' while Lady Bracknell is out of the room.
- Gwendolen:** Then talk about it quickly. Mama often comes back into a room suddenly.
- Jack:** *[Nervously]* Miss Fairfax, ever since I met you, I have admired you more than any girl ... I have met ever since ... I met you.
- Gwendolen:** Yes, I am quite well aware of that. I was always fascinated by you – even before I met you. *[Jack looks at her in amazement]* We live in an age of ideals – any expensive monthly magazine will tell you that – and my ideal has always been to love someone called Ernest. When Algernon mentioned he had a friend called Ernest, I knew I would love you.
- Jack:** Do you really love me, Gwendolen?
- Gwendolen:** Very much!
- Jack:** Darling! You don't know how happy you have made me.
- Gwendolen:** My own Ernest!
- Jack:** But could you love me if my name wasn't Ernest?
- Gwendolen:** But your name is Ernest.
- Jack:** Yes, I know it is. But what if it was something else? Couldn't you love me then?
- Gwendolen:** *[Cleverly]* Ah! But you are called Ernest, so there is no reason to think about you not being called Ernest.
- Jack:** Personally, darling, I don't really like the name Ernest ... I don't think the name suits me.
- Gwendolen:** It suits you perfectly. It is a wonderful name. It is musical.
- Jack:** Well, really, Gwendolen, I think there are a lot of nicer names. I think that Jack, for instance, is a charming name.
- Gwendolen:** Jack? ... No, there is very little music in the name Jack. It does not excite me. I have known several Jacks and they all were very ordinary. I feel pity for any woman who is married to a man called Jack. I think the only really good name is Ernest.
- Jack:** Gwendolen, I must get baptized at once ... I mean we must get married at once. There is no time to lose.
- Gwendolen:** *[Shocked]* Married, Mr Worthing?
- Jack:** Well ... you know that I love you and you told me, Miss Fairfax, that you love me.
- Gwendolen:** I do love you. But you haven't proposed to me yet. Nothing has been said about marriage.
- Jack:** Well ... may I propose to you now?

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Gwendolen: think that this would be an excellent time to propose to me. And I will tell you now that I will accept you so that you aren't worried.

Jack: Gwendolen!

Gwendolen: Yes, Mr Worthing? What are you going to say to me?

Jack: You know what I am going to say to you.

Gwendolen: Yes, but you haven't said it.

Jack: Gwendolen, will you marry me? *[Going down on his knees]*

Gwendolen: Yes, of course I will. You have taken a long time to ask. I am afraid you have had very little experience of proposing.

Jack: My dear, I have never loved anyone in the world but you.

Gwendolen: Yes, but men often practise proposing. My brother, Gerald, often proposes to people. All my friends tell me. What wonderful blue eyes you have, Ernest! They are quite, quite blue. I hope you will always look at me like that, especially when there are other people in the room.
[Lady Bracknell enters]

Lady Bracknell: Mr Worthing! Get up from that position. It is not respectable to behave like that.

Extract from Act 1

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Script

- Cecily:** Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.
- Jack:** What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.
- Cecily:** Oh, don't say that. He is still your brother even though he has behaved badly in the past. You mustn't be so heartless. I'll tell him to come out. And you will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack? *[Cecily runs back into the house]*
- Chasuble:** This is very happy news.
- Miss Prism:** Since we were just getting used to his departure, his sudden return seems very distressing.
- Jack:** My brother is in the dining room? I don't know what it means. I think it is perfectly ridiculous. *[Algernon and Cecily enter holding hands. They come slowly towards Jack]* Good heavens! *[He waves his hand to try to make Algernon go away]*
- Algernon:** *[Holding his hand out to Jack]* Brother Jack, I have come from town to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you and that I will behave myself better in future. *[Jack glares at him and doesn't take his hand]*
- Cecily:** Uncle Jack, are you going to refuse to shake your brother's hand?
- Jack:** Nothing will make me shake his hand. I think it is disgraceful that he has come here. He knows perfectly well why.
- Cecily:** Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. Ernest has just been telling me about his poor invalid friend, Mr Bunbury, whom he goes to visit very often. There must be much good in Ernest if he leaves London to sit by the bed of an invalid.
- Jack:** Oh! He has been talking about Bunbury, has he?
- Cecily:** Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr Bunbury and his very bad health.
- Jack:** Bunbury! Well, I don't want him to talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else. It makes me furious.
- Algernon:** Of course, I agree that I used to behave very badly. But I must say that I think Brother Jack's coldness towards me is very unkind. I expected a better welcome, especially since it is the first time I have come here.
- Cecily:** Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you.
- Jack:** You will never forgive me?
- Cecily:** Never, never, never!
- Jack:** Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it. *[Shaking hands with Algernon and glaring at him]*
- Chasuble:** It is pleasant to see a perfect **reconciliation**, is it not? I think we should leave the brothers together.
- Miss Prism:** Cecily, you will come with us.
- Cecily:** Certainly, Miss Prism. My task of reconciliation is over.
- Chasuble:** You have done something beautiful today, dear child.
- Miss Prism:** We must not say these things too soon.
- Cecily:** I feel very happy. *[They all go off except Jack and Algernon]*

Track 1

Track 3 ii

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Script

- Jack:** You young **scoundrel**, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible. I don't allow any Bunburying here. *[Merriman enters]*
- Merriman:** I have put Mr Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir.
- Jack:** What?
- Merriman:** Mr Ernest's luggage, sir. I have unpacked it and put it in the room next to your own.
- Jack:** His luggage?
- Merriman:** Yes, sir. Three large suitcases, a small suitcase, two hat boxes and a large picnic basket.
- Algernon:** I'm afraid I can only stay for a week this time.
- Jack:** Merriman, order the carriage at once. Mr Ernest has suddenly been called back to town.
- Merriman:** Yes, sir. *[Merriman goes off]*
- Algernon:** What a liar you are, Jack. I have not been called back to town at all.
- Jack:** Yes, you have.
- Algernon:** I haven't heard anyone call me.
- Jack:** Your duty as a gentleman calls you back.
- Algernon:** My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasure at all.
- Jack:** Yes, I quite understand that!
- Algernon:** Well, Cecily is a darling.
- Jack:** You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.
- Algernon:** Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why don't you go upstairs and change? It is perfectly childish to be wearing black clothes for a man who is going to stay in your house for a whole week as a guest.
- Jack:** You are certainly not staying with me for a whole week. You have got to leave ... by the four o'clock train.
- Algernon:** I certainly won't leave you while you are in black clothes. That would be very unfriendly.
- Jack:** Well, will you go if I change my clothes?
- Algernon:** Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody else who took so long to get dressed, and with such uninteresting results.
- Jack:** Well, at least that is better than always being overdressed like you.
- Algernon:** If I am occasionally overdressed, I make up for it by being extremely overeducated.
- Jack:** Your vanity is silly, your behaviour is outrageous and your presence in my garden is ridiculous. However, you have got to catch the four o'clock train and I hope you will have a pleasant journey back to town. This Bunburying has not been a success for you. *[Jack goes into the house]*
- Algernon:** *[To himself]* I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily and that is wonderful. *[Cecily enters at the back of the garden. She picks up a can and starts watering the flowers]* But I must see her before I go and make arrangements for some more Bunburying. Ah, there she is.

Track 2

Track 1 end

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Script

- Cecily:** Oh, I came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.
- Algernon:** He's gone to order the carriage for me.
- Cecily:** Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?
- Algernon:** He's going to send me away.
- Cecily:** Then we have to part?
- Algernon:** I am afraid so. It's a very painful parting.
- Cecily:** It is always painful to part with new friends. It is easy to bear the absence of old friends, but even a short parting from someone whom one has just met is extremely painful.
- Algernon:** Thank you. *[Merriman enters]*
- Merriman:** The carriage is at the door, sir. *[Algernon looks sadly at Cecily]*
- Cecily:** It can wait, Merriman ... for ... five minutes.
- Merriman:** Yes, miss. *[Merriman goes off]*
- Algernon:** I hope, Cecily, I shall not offend you if I tell you that you seem to me to be perfect in every way.
- Cecily:** I think that it is very good that you are so honest. If you will allow me, I will copy your words into my diary. *[Going over to a table and starting to write in her diary]*
- Algernon:** Do you really keep a diary? I'd love to look at it. May I look at it?
- Cecily:** Oh, no. *[Putting her hand over it]* You see, it is just a young girl's record of her thoughts and impressions, and of course, it is going to be published. When it appears in the form of a book, I hope you will buy a copy. But please don't stop, Ernest. I enjoy writing things down from dictation. I have got to 'perfect in every way'. You can go on. I am quite ready to write down more.
- Algernon:** *[Rather surprised, coughing]* Ahem! Ahem!
- Cecily:** Oh, don't cough, Ernest. When one is dictating, one should speak clearly and not cough. Besides, I can't spell a cough. *[Writing as Algernon speaks]*
- Algernon:** *[Speaking very quickly]* Cecily, ever since I first looked at your wonderful beauty, I have loved you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly.
- Cecily:** I don't think that you should tell me you love me wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't make much sense, does it?
- Algernon:** Cecily. *[Merriman enters]*
- Merriman:** The carriage is waiting at the door, sir.
- Algernon:** Tell it to come to the door next week at the same time.
- Merriman:** *[Looking at Cecily, who doesn't say anything]* Yes, sir. *[Merriman goes off]*
- Cecily:** Uncle Jack would be very annoyed if he knew you were staying till next week at the same time.
- Algernon:** Oh, I don't care about Jack. I don't care about anybody in the whole world except you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?
- Cecily:** You silly boy! Of course. We have been engaged for the last three months.
- Algernon:** For the last three months?
- Cecily:** Yes, it will have been three months on Thursday.

Track 3 iii

Track 3 i

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Script

Algernon: But how did we become engaged?

Cecily: Well, ever since Uncle Jack told us he had a very wicked younger brother, you, of course, have been the main topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And a man who is talked about all the time is very attractive. And I fell in love with you, which is probably a bit silly of me.

Algernon: Darling! And when did we become engaged?

Cecily: On the fourteenth of February. I was unhappy that you didn't know I existed, so I made up my mind to decide the matter, one way or the other. After thinking about it for a long time, I decided to accept your proposal of marriage. I decided that we were engaged. And so the next day I bought this little ring for you to give me and I promised you that I would always wear it.

Algernon: Did I give you this? It's very pretty, isn't it?

Cecily: Yes, you've got wonderfully good taste, Ernest. It's the excuse I've given you for leading such a bad life. And this is the box in which I keep all your dear letters. *[Putting a box on the table. Opening the box and bringing out a bundle of letters tied up with a blue ribbon]*

Algernon: *[Sitting beside her]* My letters! But, my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

Cecily: You needn't remind me, Ernest. I remember very well that I had to write your letters for you. I always wrote three times a week and sometimes more often.

Algernon: Oh, do let me read them, Cecily.

Cecily: Oh, I couldn't possibly let you do that. They would make you far too **conceited**. *[Replacing the box]* The three that you wrote me after I had broken off the engagement are so beautiful and so badly spelt that even now they make me cry a little when I read them.

Algernon: But was our engagement ever broken off?

Cecily: Of course it was. On the twenty-second of March. You can see the diary entry if you like. *[Showing her diary]* 'Today I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I feel it is better to do so. The weather continues to be very pleasant.'

Algernon: But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very hurt indeed to hear that you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so pleasant.

Cecily: It wouldn't have been a very serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you before the end of the week.

Algernon: What a perfect angel you are, Cecily.

Cecily: You dear romantic boy. *[He kisses her]*

Algernon: Do you promise that you'll never break off our engagement again, Cecily?

Cecily: I don't think I could break it off now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is your name.

Algernon: *[Sounding nervous]* Yes, of course.

Track 3 IV

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Part 5 (second part of Act 2)

Script

- Cecily:** You must not laugh at me, darling, but it had always been a dream of mine to love someone called Ernest. *[Algernon stands up and then Cecily does also]* There is something about that name which inspires confidence. I pity any poor married woman whose husband is not called Ernest.
- Algernon:** But, my dear child, couldn't you love me if I had another name?
- Cecily:** But what name?
- Algernon:** Oh, any name you like – Algernon – for instance ...
- Cecily:** But I don't like the name Algernon.
- Algernon:** Well, my own dear, sweet, loving little darling, I can't see why you don't like the name Algernon. It is not a bad name. In fact, it is rather an aristocratic name. Half the fellows who get into the **Bankruptcy Court** are called Algernon. But seriously, Cecily ... *[Moving to her and making her sit down with him]* if my name was Algy, couldn't you love me?
- Cecily:** *[Standing up]* I might respect you, Ernest. I might admire your character, but I would not really want to spend very much time with you.
- Algernon:** Ahem! Cecily! *[Picking up his hat]* The clergyman here is, I suppose, a very experienced man?
- Cecily:** Oh, yes. Canon Chasuble is a very learned man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.
- Algernon:** I must see him at once about an important baptism ... I mean ... on important business.
- Cecily:** Oh!
- Algernon:** I shan't be away for more than half an hour.
- Cecily:** We have been engaged since the fourteenth of February and I only met you today for the first time, so I think it is rather hard that you should leave me for as long as half an hour. Couldn't you make it twenty minutes?
- Algernon:** I'll be back in no time. *[He kisses her and runs down the garden]*
- Cecily:** What an impetuous boy he is! I must write about his proposal in my diary. *[She sits down and writes in her diary]*

The Importance of Being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

Part 5 (second part of Act 2)

Glossary

glares *to glare at someone or something* to look at someone or something in a very angry way

reconciliation a new and friendly relationship with someone who you argued with or fought with

scoundrel an old-fashioned word for a man who behaves in an unfair or dishonest way

conceited someone who is *conceited* behaves in a way that shows they think they are very intelligent, skilful or attractive

Bankruptcy Court a person or business that is *bankrupt* has officially admitted that they have no money and cannot pay what they owe. The situation of being *bankrupt* is called *bankruptcy*. People who are *bankrupt* must attend a *court* – a place where trials take place and legal cases are decided. Algernon is saying that a lot of people who owe money and cannot pay are called Algernon.