

The Importance of Being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

Part 6 (final 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. learn vocabulary around snacks and cakes and practise hosting a tea party;
2. listen for gist and detail, using prediction to aid listening;
3. listen closely for language;
4. explore the character, interests and habits of the main characters;
5. play a phonology game focusing on sentence stress.

Materials: one copy of the worksheet per student; Track 1 (first part of Part 6); Track 2 (second part of Part 6); Track 3 (third part of Part 6); Track 4 (rest of Part 6); Track 5 (extract), downloaded from onestopenglish; one copy of full script per student

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 6, the Worthing house receives another guest from London, this time Algernon's cousin, Gwendolen. Merriman the servant announces her arrival to Cecily. How will the women in our protagonists' lives get on? Will they 'be calling each other sister', as Jack has predicted?

Activity 1

Aims: to familiarize the students with the vocabulary and culture of afternoon tea; to start the lesson with an engaging warmer

1. Before the lesson, arrange the board like this, with short lines for each letter of a word or phrase (the words in brackets are the answers – don't write these on the board yet!)

1 letter = 1 point

1 word = 5 points

title = 10 points

(AFTERNOON TEA)

(MUFFINS)

(TEACAKES)

(A SLICE OF CAKE)

(A LUMP OF SUGAR)

(TONGS)

(BREAD AND BUTTER)

Explain to the class that this is a game similar to hangman (draw the hangman if this clarifies) but that it works on points. Put students into about four or five teams and invite the first team to suggest a letter. Any time their letter appears on the board (e.g. 'E' appears seven times, 'L' twice) award that team a point for each occurrence of the letter. So, if a team guesses 'E' they will receive seven points. If a team wants to guess a word, they can and if that word appears, award five points. Finally, if a team guesses the title phrase (afternoon tea) they get ten points.

2. When the game is finished, congratulate the winners. Check the understanding of the words and how they relate to one another. You will probably need to explain that:

- *Afternoon tea* is a small meal consisting of sandwiches and other things. It takes place in the afternoon with tea. It is an old-fashioned custom associated with upper-class English people.
- There are two types of *muffin*. They will most likely be familiar with *American muffins*, small sweet cakes that often contain fruit or chocolate, but these refer to *English muffins*, which are a flat round

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type of bread, usually cut in half and eaten hot with butter.

- *Teacakes* are a type of small round sweet bread with raisins.
- *A lump of sugar* is a solid piece of sugar in a square shape.
- *Tongs* are a metal object that consists of two connected arms that you push together in order to pick sugar up.

3. Keeping students in their teams, ask them to imagine that it is 5 o'clock and time for afternoon tea. Nominate one person in each group to be the 'host' and the others the guests. Have the hosts serve their guests afternoon tea!

To get the students started, write some ways of offering and requesting politely on the board, such as:

Would you like some / a piece of / a slice of ...?

Can I get you any more ...?

Would it be rude of me to ask for another ...?

Do you think I could have ...?

Activity 2

Aim: to make predictions about the conversation they are going to listen to

1. Invite students to remind the rest of the class what happened in the last part of the play. (*Algernon and Cecily have just got engaged to be married; Algernon has gone to Canon Chasuble's house to get baptized, following on from Jack, who has also gone to the Canon's house; Cecily is alone in the garden*) Ask the class to listen and find out who arrives and what is going to happen next. Play Track 1, which is very short. While the class is listening, write the following on the board:

What is the problem, from Jack and Algernon's point of view, with these two people meeting?

2. When the track has finished, put students into pairs and get them to discuss the question on the board. After a minute, elicit some ideas from pairs around the room. If few people have any ideas, prompt them with questions such as:

- *Who is Cecily marrying?*
- *Who is Gwendolen marrying?*
- *What does she think her fiancé's name is?*

Make sure that the class is aware of the fact that both women believe they are marrying men called Ernest Worthing.

Activity 3

Aim: to listen for gist

1. Hand out the worksheets, one per student. Point to Activity 2 on the worksheet and explain that the class is now going to listen to the conversation between the two women. As they listen, they should decide which topics are discussed and the order that they are mentioned. Give them a minute to read the topics on the worksheet and prepare to listen. Play Track 2.

2. Hand out the script for students to check their answers. They should only read the script for Track 2, so you may prefer to just hand out the pages of the script that they need at this stage. They will need time to check, and if you have them do this in pairs, it will encourage discussion.

3. Go through the answers carefully, writing them on the board if necessary to ensure clarity and to reach a consensus. For each topic, ask the class to talk about any relevant details they heard or read.

Key:

1. *Gwendolen's opinion of Cecily*
2. *Gwendolen's family*
3. *Cecily's reason for being there*
4. *Cecily's family*
5. *Cecily's appearance*
6. *the name of Gwendolen's fiancé*
7. *the name of Cecily's guardian*
8. *Cecily's news*
9. *Gwendolen's news*
10. *the city and the country*
11. *food fashions*
12. *Gwendolen's opinion of Cecily (again)*

Activity 4

Aims: to prepare to listen to the rest of Part 6; to predict the content of the conversation between the women and men

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1. Tell the class that just at that moment Jack walks in. Ask the class to imagine what they will talk about and how the characters are feeling. Invite suggestions of things that might be said in the conversation. Put their ideas on the board. They might include things such as:

*Are you engaged to this woman?
What is your real name?
'Sorry for lying to you', etc.*

2. Put the students into groups of three. Explain that they are going to improvise the scene with one as Gwendolen, one as Cecily and one as Jack. If you have to do any groups of four, the fourth can be Algernon. To get them started, you could give them the first line, which is Gwendolen saying: 'Ernest! My own Ernest!'

3. Give the groups a few minutes to try out their dialogues. As they do, go around the room making a note of any interesting ideas and phrases that you hear. When they have finished, nominate individuals to tell the class what happened in their conversations.

Activity 5

Aim: to listen for gist and check predictions

1. Tell the class to listen and find out how close their conversations were to the actual one. Play Track 3.

2. After listening, invite comments about the similarities and differences in the subject matter, emotions and outcomes between their improvisations and the actual conversation.

Activity 6

Aim: listening for detail and language

1. Tell the class that they are going to listen to the rest of the Act, which is an argument between the two men. As they listen the first time, they should note down the different reasons that each man is angry with the other. Play Track 4.

2. Give the students time after listening to compare their answers with a partner. Go through the answers, eliciting the reasons why each man is angry from the students. Round

up by asking the class for the real reason they are angry with one another (*that they have both spoilt their chances of marrying the women they love*).

Key:

Jack is angry with Algernon because: he has been Bunburying at Jack's home; he has behaved badly to Cecily; he is eating muffins during this terrible time; he is eating all the muffins; he won't leave and is determined to get baptized (which is Jack's plan); he is always talking nonsense.

Algernon is angry with Jack because: he is so serious; he deceived his cousin Gwendolen; Jack keeps eating the muffins.

3. Tell the students that they are going to listen to the argument again. Show them the extract in Activity 6 on the worksheet and point out that they will be listening to fill in the gaps in the conversation. Explain that the gaps are phrases that both men use, so they will hear each twice.

4. Give them time to read through the extract before playing Track 4 again. Remember that if you have already given out the full script of Part 6 in Activity 3, you will need to make sure that they don't cheat by looking at the answers!

5. After they have listened, nominate students to read out the missing parts. Once the answers have been discussed, play the relevant extract of Track 4 again for the class to check.

Key:

Jack: Well, the only satisfaction I get from this awful business is that you won't be able to Bunbury anymore. Your friend, Bunbury, is quite finished. *You won't be able to run away from town to the country quite so often now, Algy. And that's a very good thing.*

Algernon: Your brother isn't very well, is he, Jack? Dead, in fact. *You won't be able to run away to town from the country quite so often now. And that's a very good thing too.*

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Jack: And you have behaved very badly towards Miss Cardew. I must say that deceiving a sweet, simple girl like Cecily *is very wicked of you*. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

Algernon: I must say that deceiving a brilliant, clever young lady like Miss Fairfax *is very wicked of you*. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

Jack: I *wanted to be engaged* to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

Algernon: Well, I simply *wanted to be engaged* to Cecily. I adore her.

Jack: There is certainly no *chance of you marrying* Miss Cardew.

Algernon: I don't think there is much *chance of you marrying* Miss Fairfax, Jack.

the following words and phrases, instructing the students to copy them down under the appropriate stress pattern according to their pronunciation:

afternoon
business
by the way
Cecily
cousin
deviousness
education
engaged
serious
importance
mistaken
proposed
understanding
visiting card

When you have finished, explain that they should have two words in each column. Invite students to come to the board and fill in the columns with a word or two. Check answers, confirm and drill the words in their columns, paying attention to stress.

1 Oo	2 oO	3 Ooo	4 oOo
cousin business	proposed engaged	Cecily serious	importance mistaken

5 ooO	6 Oooo	7 ooOo
afternoon by the way	deviousness visiting card	education understanding

6. Ask the class a few summarizing questions:

- *What does the argument achieve, if anything?*
- *What does it tell you about Algernon and Jack?*
- *Do you ever have similar arguments with anyone? Who? What about?*

Activity 7

Aim: to practise stress in short spoken phrases; to finish with a game!

1. Draw the following table and stress patterns on the board:

1 Oo	2 oO	3 Ooo	4 oOo	5 ooO	6 Oooo	7 ooOo

Drill the stresses with a noise, such as 'mmm'. So the first would be '**MM** mm' (as in 'Ernest', the seventh mm mm **MM** mm (as in 'Lady Bracknell').

2. Ask the students to copy the seven patterns from the board into their notebooks. Dictate

3. Direct them to Activity 7 on the worksheet. Ask them to read the extract from the conversation between Gwendolen and Cecily, and match the phrases in italics to the stress patterns a) to e). When they have done so, play Track 5 for them to check their answers.

Key:

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------|
| a) Oo | <i>won't you?</i> |
| b) oO | <i>Of course</i> |
| c) oOo | <i>I hope so</i> |
| d) ooO | <i>If you wish</i> |
| e) ooOo | <i>I don't think so</i> |

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4. Have them read the dialogue aloud in pairs, focusing their attention on word and sentence stress.

5. Now tell them that they are going to play a game in groups which practises stress in words and phrases. First of all, each group has to decide on two movements or actions, one which represents the strong stress (MM) and the other which represents the weak stress (mm). This could be a clap, a slap of the legs, standing up and sitting down or whatever they like. When they have done that, each student must then search in the script for two words or phrases of two or more syllables to practise. Here are some suggestions from Part 6:

Not at all (ooO), candidly (Ooo), delighted (oOo), I beg your pardon (oOoOo), disappointment (ooOo)

6. In their groups, they sit in a circle. They should go around the circle, introducing themselves with their name and one of the words they have chosen from Part 6. As they speak they must mark the stress with the actions that have decided on to represent stressed and unstressed syllables. So, for example, I might say: *DANiel* (clapping, then tapping my knees once) ... *not at ALL* (tapping my knees twice, then clapping). The best way to instruct here is to demonstrate.

7. Let them do this at least once all around the group. Then introduce the game element. Explain that they are going to pass the turn on to someone else in the group by saying their name and phrase (with the actions), then saying the name and phrases of someone else in the group: *DANiel ... not at ALL ... michELLE ... deLIGHTed*. So here, I passed to Michelle, who will then pass on to someone else, etc. If the person gets the stress pattern wrong, they are eliminated. The winner is the last person to be eliminated.

Follow-up tasks

1. Give students the following extract from Part 6 and ask them to write a short essay about the play's themes:

Algernon: One has a right to Bunbury wherever one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.

Jack: What are you saying? Serious Bunburyist? Good heavens!

Algernon: Well, one must be serious about something if one wants to enjoy one's life.

Teacher's notes

What does this extract tell us about Algernon's character and the meaning of the play as a whole?

2. Make a note of 20 words and phrases that they have learnt from the play so far and record them with their stress patterns.

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Activity 3

Listen and number the topics as you hear them.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Gwendolen's opinion of Cecily | <input type="checkbox"/> | the name of Cecily's guardian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Gwendolen's family | <input type="checkbox"/> | Gwendolen's news |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cecily's family | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cecily's news |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cecily's reason for being there | <input type="checkbox"/> | the city and the country |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Cecily's appearance | <input type="checkbox"/> | food fashions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | the name of Gwendolen's fiancé | | |

Worksheet

Activity 6

Fill the gaps with the missing phrases. Each phrase is used twice in the conversation.

Jack: Well, the only satisfaction I get from this awful business is that you won't be able to Bunbury anymore. Your friend, Bunbury, is quite finished.
_____ run away from town to the country quite so often now, Algy. And that's _____.

Algernon: Your brother isn't very well, is he, Jack? Dead, in fact.
_____ run away to town from the country quite so often now. And that's _____ too.

Jack: And you have behaved very badly towards Miss Cardew. I must say that deceiving a sweet, simple girl like Cecily _____.
To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.

Algernon: I must say that deceiving a brilliant, clever young lady like Miss Fairfax _____.
To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.

Jack: I _____ to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.

Algernon: Well, I simply _____ to Cecily. I adore her.

Jack: There is certainly no _____ Miss Cardew.

Algernon: I don't think there is much _____ Miss Fairfax, Jack.

Listen and check.

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Activity 7

Match the phrases in *italics* to the following stress patterns:

- a) **Oo** b) **oO** c) **oOo** d) **ooO** e) **ooOo**

Gwendolen: [Still standing up] I may call you Cecily, may I not?

Cecily: *Of course,* with pleasure.

Gwendolen: And you will always call me Gwendolen, *won't you?*

Cecily: *If you wish.*

Gwendolen: Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

Cecily: *I hope so.*

[A pause. Then they both sit down together]

Gwendolen: Perhaps this is a good opportunity to tell you who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of Papa, I suppose?

Cecily: *I don't think so.*

Listen to check.

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Script

- [Merriman enters]*
- Merriman:** A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr Worthing. She says it is on very important business.
- Cecily:** Isn't Mr Worthing in his library?
- Merriman:** Mr Worthing went to Canon Chasuble's house some time ago.
- Cecily:** Please ask the lady to come out into the garden and join me. Mr Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.
- Merriman:** Yes, miss. *[Merriman goes off]*
- Cecily:** *[To herself]* Miss Fairfax! I suppose she is one of the many good women who help Uncle Jack with his charitable work in London. I don't really like women who are interested in charitable work. I think it is so **presumptuous** of them. *[Merriman enters]*
- Merriman:** Miss Fairfax. *[Gwendolen enters. Merriman goes off]*
- Cecily:** *[Standing up and going to meet her]* Let me introduce myself to you. My name is Cecily Cardew. Track 1 end
- Gwendolen:** Cecily Cardew? *[Moving to her and shaking hands]* What a very sweet name! I think we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say. My first impressions of people are never wrong.
- Cecily:** How nice of you to like me so much when we have known each other for such a short time. Please sit down.
- Gwendolen:** *[Still standing up]* I may call you Cecily, may I not?
- Cecily:** Of course, with pleasure.
- Gwendolen:** And you will always call me Gwendolen, won't you?
- Cecily:** If you wish.
- Gwendolen:** Then that is all quite settled, is it not?
- Cecily:** I hope so. *[A pause. Then they both sit down together]*
- Gwendolen:** Perhaps this is a good opportunity to tell you who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You have never heard of Papa, I suppose?
- Cecily:** I don't think so.
- Gwendolen:** Outside the family circle, Papa, I am glad to say, is completely unknown. I think that is quite right. The home seems to me to be the proper place for a man. Certainly once a man begins to neglect his duties at home, it makes him very attractive. Cecily, Mama, whose views on education are very strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; it is part of her system. So do you mind me looking at you through my glasses?
- Cecily:** Oh! Not at all, Gwendolen. I like being looked at.
- Gwendolen:** *[After looking at Cecily carefully through a lorgnette]* You are here on a short visit, I suppose?
- Cecily:** Oh no! I live here.
- Gwendolen:** *[Severely]* Really? Your mother, or an elderly female relation, lives here also?
- Cecily:** Oh no! I have no mother, nor, in fact, any relations.
- Gwendolen:** Indeed?

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Script

Cecily: My dear guardian, with the help of Miss Prism, has the difficult task of looking after me.

Gwendolen: Your guardian?

Cecily: Yes, I am Mr Worthing's ward.

Gwendolen: Oh! It is strange that he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. How secretive of him! He is becoming more interesting every hour. However, I am not sure that I am delighted by this news. [*Standing up and going to Cecily*] I have liked you ever since I met you, Cecily. But, now that I know you are Mr Worthing's ward, I must say that I wish you were – well – a bit older than you seem to be – and not quite so pretty. In fact, if I may speak **candidly**...

Cecily: Please do! I think that when one has anything unpleasant to say, one should always be quite candid.

Gwendolen: Well, to be quite candid, Cecily, I wish that you were at least forty-two years old and extremely plain. Ernest has an honourable, truthful nature. He would never be deceitful. But the most honourable men can be influenced by the beauty of others. Modern history, and indeed ancient history, give us many painful examples of what I refer to. Indeed, history would be quite unreadable if it were not so.

Cecily: I beg your pardon, Gwendolen, did you say 'Ernest'?

Gwendolen: Yes.

Cecily: Oh, but it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother – his elder brother.

Gwendolen: [*Sitting down again*] Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother.

Cecily: I am sorry to say that they have not got on well with each other for a long time.

Gwendolen: Ah! I see. And now I think about it, I have never heard any man mention his brother. Most men don't seem to like the subject. Cecily, you have lifted a weight from my mind. I was becoming almost anxious. It would have been awful if any cloud had come across such a special friendship, would it not? Are you quite, quite sure that it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

Cecily: Quite sure. [*A pause*] In fact, I am going to be his guardian.

Gwendolen: I beg your pardon?

Cecily: [*Shyly*] Dearest Gwendolen, there is no reason why I should keep it a secret from you. It will be in the local newspaper next week. Mr Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

Gwendolen: [*Politely, standing up*] My darling Cecily, I think that there must be some small mistake. Mr Ernest Worthing is engaged to me. The announcement will appear in the newspapers on Saturday at the latest.

Cecily: [*Very politely, standing up*] I am afraid that you are mistaken. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago. [*Showing her diary to Gwendolen*]

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Script

Gwendolen: *[Looking at the diary very carefully through her lorgnette]* It is very strange because he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at half-past five. Please check for yourself. *[Producing a diary of her own]* I never travel without my diary. One should always have something exciting to read on the train. I am so sorry, dear Cecily, if it is any disappointment to you, but I am afraid that I was his first choice.

Cecily: It would make me very sad, dear Gwendolen, to cause you any pain, but I feel I must point out that since Ernest proposed to you he has clearly changed his mind.

Gwendolen: *[Thoughtfully]* If the poor fellow has been trapped into making a foolish promise, it is my duty to rescue him at once – and firmly.

Cecily: *[Thoughtfully and sadly]* If my dear boy has got into an unfortunate **entanglement**, I will never **reproach** him for it when we are married.

Gwendolen: Are you calling me an entanglement, Miss Cardew? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind, it becomes more than a duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

Cecily: Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I trapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you! This is no time to pretend to have good manners. When I see a spade, I call it a spade.

Gwendolen: I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade. It is obvious we do not live in the same social circle. *[Merriman enters, pushing a small trolley. It holds a tablecloth, a teapot, some milk, sugar, plates of cakes, muffins, teacake, bread and butter, and some plates. Cecily is about to reply but doesn't while the servant is there]*

Merriman: Shall I set the table for afternoon tea here as usual, miss?

Cecily: *[Sternly, in a calm voice]* Yes, as usual. *[Merriman begins to lay the cloth on the table. There is a long pause. Cecily and Gwendolen look angrily at each other]*

Gwendolen: Are there many interesting walks near here, Miss Cardew?

Cecily: Oh, yes, a great many. From the top of one of the hills one can see five counties.

Gwendolen: Five counties! I don't think I should like that; I hate crowds.

Cecily: *[Sweetly]* I suppose that is why you live in town. *[Gwendolen doesn't answer and taps her foot nervously on the ground]*

Gwendolen: *[Looking around]* This is quite a well-kept garden, Miss Cardew.

Cecily: I'm glad you like it, Miss Fairfax.

Gwendolen: I had no idea there were any flowers in the country.

Cecily: Oh, flowers are as common here, Miss Fairfax, as people are in London.

Gwendolen: Personally, I cannot imagine how anyone manages to live in the country – if anybody who is anybody does. The country always bores me to death.

Cecily: Would you like some tea, Miss Fairfax?

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Script

- Gwendolen:** *[Extremely politely]* Yes, thank you. *[To herself]* **Hateful** girl! But I want some tea!
- Cecily:** *[Sweetly]* Sugar?
- Gwendolen:** No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable anymore. *[Cecily looks angrily at her, picks up the **sugar tongs** and puts four lumps of sugar into the cup]*
- Cecily:** *[Severely]* Cake or bread and butter?
- Gwendolen:** *[In a bored way]* Bread and butter, please. Cake is not seen in the best houses nowadays.
- Cecily:** *[Cutting a very large slice of cake and putting it on the tray which Merriman is holding]* Give that to Miss Fairfax. *[Merriman gives Gwendolen the cake and goes off. Gwendolen drinks some tea and makes a face. She puts down her cup, reaches out her hand for the bread and butter, looks at it and finds that it is cake. She stands up angrily]*
- Gwendolen:** You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar. And, though I asked for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I am known to be sweet-tempered, but I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far.
- Cecily:** *[Standing up]* I would go any distance to save my poor, innocent, trusting boy from being trapped by a girl like you.
- Gwendolen:** I have distrusted you from the moment I saw you. I felt you were false and deceitful. I am never wrong in such matters. My first impressions of people are always right.
- Cecily:** It seems to me that I am keeping you from other appointments. No doubt you have many other similar calls to make in the area.
[Jack enters]
-
- Gwendolen:** *[Seeing him]* Ernest! My own Ernest!
- Jack:** Gwendolen! Darling! *[Offering to kiss her]*
- Gwendolen:** *[Drawing away from Jack]* Wait a moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady? *[Pointing to Cecily]*
- Jack:** *[Laughing]* To dear little Cecily? Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?
- Gwendolen:** Thank you. You may kiss me. *[Offering her cheek]*
- Cecily:** *[Very sweetly]* I knew there must be some kind of misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my guardian, Mr Jack Worthing.
- Gwendolen:** I beg your pardon?
- Cecily:** This is Uncle Jack.
- Gwendolen:** *[Pulling away from Jack]* Jack! Oh! *[Algernon enters]*
- Cecily:** Here is Ernest.
- Algernon:** *[Going straight to Cecily without noticing anyone else]* My own love! *[Offering to kiss her]*
- Cecily:** *[Drawing away from Algernon]* Wait a moment, Ernest! May I ask you – are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

Track 2 end

Track 3

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Script

Algernon: *[Looking around]* To what young lady? Good heavens! Gwendolen! Of course not! What could have put such an idea into your pretty little head?

Cecily: Thank you. *[Offering her cheek]* You may kiss me. *[Algernon kisses her]*

Gwendolen: I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. The gentleman whose arm is at present around your waist is my cousin, Mr Algernon Moncrieff.

Cecily: *[Breaking away from Algernon]* Algernon Moncrieff! Oh! *[The two girls move towards each other and put their arms around each other's waists as if for protection]* Are you called Algernon?

Algernon: I cannot deny it.

Cecily: Oh!

Gwendolen: Is your name really Jack?

Jack: *[Standing rather proudly]* I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is Jack. It has been Jack for years.

Cecily: We have both been terribly deceived.

Gwendolen: My poor wounded Cecily!

Cecily: My poor wronged Gwendolen!

Gwendolen: *[Slowly and seriously]* Please will you call me 'sister'. *[They embrace. Jack and Algernon groan and walk up and down]* Are you called Algernon?

Cecily: *[Rather brightly]* There is just one question I would like to ask my guardian.

Gwendolen: A very good idea! Mr Worthing, there is just one question I would like permission to ask you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest so it is important for us to know where he is at present.

Jack: *[Slowly and hesitantly]* Gwendolen – Cecily – it is very painful for me but I must speak the truth. It is the first time in my life that I have been in such a painful position and I am quite inexperienced at doing this. However, I will tell you honestly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I have never had a brother in my life and I don't intend ever to have a brother in the future.

Cecily: *[Surprised]* No brother at all?

Jack: *[Cheerfully]* None!

Gwendolen: *[Severely]* Did you ever have a brother of any kind?

Jack: *[Pleasantly]* Never. Not of any kind.

Gwendolen: I am afraid, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone.

Cecily: It is not a very pleasant position for a young girl suddenly to find herself in, is it?

Gwendolen: Let us go into the house. They will not follow us into the house, will they?

Cecily: No, men are so **cowardly**, aren't they? *[They go into the house, after looking scornfully at the men]*

The Importance of Being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

Part 6 (final part of Act 2)

Script

Track 4

- Jack:** I suppose that this awful business is what you call Bunburying, is it?
- Algernon:** *[Laughing]* Yes, and it's the best Bunburying I have ever done in my life.
- Jack:** Well, you have no right to Bunbury here.
- Algernon:** That is **absurd**. One has a right to Bunbury wherever one chooses. Every serious Bunburyist knows that.
- Jack:** What are you saying? Serious Bunburyist? Good heavens!
- Algernon:** Well, one must be serious about something if one wants to enjoy one's life. I am serious about Bunburying. I have no idea what you are serious about – I suppose you are serious about everything.
- Jack:** Well, the only satisfaction I get from this awful business is that you won't be able to Bunbury anymore. Your friend, Bunbury, is quite finished. You won't be able to run away from town to the country quite so often now, Algy. And that's a very good thing.
- Algernon:** Your brother isn't very well, is he, Jack? Dead, in fact. You won't be able to run away to town from the country quite so often now. And that's a very good thing too.
- Jack:** And you have behaved very badly towards Miss Cardew. I must say that deceiving a sweet, simple girl like Cecily is very wicked of you. To say nothing of the fact that she is my ward.
- Algernon:** I must say that deceiving a brilliant, clever young lady like Miss Fairfax is very wicked of you. To say nothing of the fact that she is my cousin.
- Jack:** I wanted to be engaged to Gwendolen, that is all. I love her.
- Algernon:** Well, I simply wanted to be engaged to Cecily. I adore her.
- Jack:** There is certainly no chance of you marrying Miss Cardew.
- Algernon:** I don't think there is much chance of you marrying Miss Fairfax, Jack. *[Sitting at the table and beginning to eat muffins]*
- Jack:** I can't understand how you can sit there calmly eating muffins when we are in this awful trouble. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.
- Algernon:** Well, I can't eat muffins in an **agitated** manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins calmly. It is the only way to eat them.
- Jack:** I think that it is perfectly heartless to be eating muffins at all in the circumstances.
- Algernon:** When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing which makes me feel better. Indeed, when I am in very great trouble, I refuse everything except food and drink. At present, I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I like muffins. *[Standing up]*
- Jack:** *[Standing up]* Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all. *[Taking the plate of muffins from Algernon]*
- Algernon:** *[Offering Jack teacake]* Please will you have teacake instead. I don't like teacake.
- Jack:** Good heavens! I think a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

The Importance of Being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

Part 6 (final part of Act 2)

Script

- Algernon:** But you just said that it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.
- Jack:** I said it was perfectly heartless of you to eat muffins. That is very different.
- Algernon:** Maybe. But the muffins are the same. *[Taking the plate of muffins from Jack]*
- Jack:** Algy, I wish you would go.
- Algernon:** You can't ask me to go without giving me some dinner. I never go without my dinner. Besides I have just arranged with Canon Chasuble to be baptized at a quarter to six. I am going to be baptized with the name of Ernest.
- Jack:** My dear fellow, no you aren't. That is nonsense. I arranged with Canon Chasuble to be baptized myself at half-past five. I will, of course, take the name Ernest. Gwendolen would want me to. We cannot both be baptized with the name Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a right to be baptized if I like. There is no evidence that I have ever been baptized. I think it very likely that I never was and so does Canon Chasuble. It is different for you. You have been baptized already.
- Algernon:** Yes, but that was years ago.
- Jack:** Yes, but you have been baptized. That is the important thing.
- Algernon:** Yes indeed. So I know my health can bear it. I must say I think that it is rather dangerous for you to be baptized now. It might make you very unwell. You can't have forgotten that a close relative very nearly died in Paris this week of a bad cold.
- Jack:** Yes, but you said yourself that a bad cold was not hereditary.
- Algernon:** I know it didn't use to be – but it probably is now. Science is always making wonderful improvements.
- Jack:** *[Picking up the muffin plate]* Oh that is nonsense. You always talk nonsense.
- Algernon:** Jack – muffins again! I wish you wouldn't. There are only two left. *[Taking them]* I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.
- Jack:** But I hate teacake.
- Algernon:** Then why on earth do you serve teacake to your guests? I don't like your ideas of hospitality.
- Jack:** Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go?
- Algernon:** Because I haven't finished my tea yet! I have one muffin left. *[Jack groans and sits down. Algernon continues eating]*

The Importance of Being Earnest

By Oscar Wilde

Part 6 (final part of Act 2)

Glossary

presumptuous showing too much confidence and not enough respect

lorgnette old-fashioned glasses with a long handle that you hold in front of your eyes

candidly speaking in an honest and direct way, even when the truth is not pleasant

entanglement a complicated situation or relationship

reproach – to reproach someone for (doing) something to criticize someone and feel disappointed with them for something they have done

hateful extremely bad, unpleasant or cruel

sugar tongs a metal or plastic object that consists of two connected arms that you push together in order to pick up lumps of sugar

cowardly a cowardly person is not brave enough to fight or do something difficult or dangerous that they should do

scornfully in a way that shows you do not think someone or something is good enough to deserve your approval or respect

absurd completely stupid, unreasonable, or impossible to believe

agitated worried or upset