

STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS - *The Importance of Being Earnest*

**Assignment #1**

Act I

1. At the beginning of the play, who is Algernon expecting a visit from, and how does he prepare for the visit?
2. What reason does Jack give for why he has come to Algernon's flat for tea?
3. Why does Algernon believe marriage proposals are unromantic?
4. Why does Algernon think Jack and Gwendolen will not marry?
5. What is the inscription on the cigarette case?
6. Why does Algernon believe that the cigarette case does not belong to Jack?
7. What is a "Bunburyist," and how was that label created?
8. Who is Cecily Cardew, and how is she connected to Jack?
9. Why did Jack create Ernest, his alter ego?
10. Why does Gwendolen say she was "far from indifferent" to Jack before she met him?
11. Why, specifically, does Gwendolen like the name Ernest?
12. Why is Gwendolen critical of Jack's marriage proposal?
13. How do Lady Bracknell's views on marriage differ from Gwendolen's?
14. When Lady Bracknell interviews Jack as a potential fiancé for her daughter, what additional information is learned about his character?
15. How did Jack come to live with Mr. Thomas Cardew and his family?
16. How does Lady Bracknell respond to Jack's story of his adoption?
17. How does Jack plan to get rid of his fictitious brother Ernest?
18. When Gwendolen returns to Algernon's flat, what does she say regarding Jack's conversation with Lady Bracknell?
19. How does Algernon acquire Jack's country address?
20. At the end of Act I, where does Algernon say he is going?

## Assignment #2

### Act II

1. What is Cecily's opinion of her uncle at the beginning of Act II?
2. What does Cecily wish Jack would do about his brother Ernest, and why does Miss Prism think it is a bad idea?
3. According to Cecily, what is the main difference between events that are recorded in a diary and those recorded in memory?
4. Why was Miss Prism's novel never published?
5. Who arrives when Miss Prism goes for a walk with Dr. Chasuble? Why is Cecily frightened to meet him?
6. What reason does Miss Prism give for why unmarried men lead "weaker vessels astray"?
7. Why does Jack arrive at his country house dressed in all black?
8. What favor does Jack ask of Dr. Chasuble?
9. How long does Algernon plan to stay at Jack's country house?
10. Why does Cecily keep a diary?
11. What does Cecily mean when she says that she and Ernest have been engaged for three months?
12. What does Cecily say that is similar to an idea expressed by Gwendolen in Act I?
13. Who arrives when Ernest leaves to speak to Dr. Chasuble?
14. How does Gwendolen respond when she learns that Cecily is Jack's ward?
15. What is the cause of the confusion between Gwendolen and Cecily?
16. How do Gwendolen and Cecily attempt to prove who is engaged to Ernest?
17. How do Cecily and Gwendolen show their resentment toward each other?
18. How is the conflict between Gwendolen and Cecily resolved?
19. What do Algernon and Jack do after the women leave the room?
20. What reasons do Algernon and Jack present for why the other person should not be christened Ernest?

### **Assignment #3**

#### Act III

1. How do Cecily and Gwendolen come to forgive their fiancés?
2. How did Lady Bracknell discover her daughter's location? Where did Gwendolen tell her father she was going?
3. How does Lady Bracknell respond to Algernon's news of Bunbury's death?
4. What does Jack say that prompts Lady Bracknell to approve of Algernon's engagement to Cecily?
5. Why does Lady Bracknell disapprove of long engagements?
6. Why does Jack disapprove of the engagement between Algernon and Cecily? What examples does he present that justify the reason for his disapproval?
7. How does Lady Bracknell know Miss Prism? What is their history?
8. What was the unfortunate switch that Miss Prism made? What was the result?
9. Who is the baby that Miss Prism lost? How is this fact proven?
10. What is revealed to be the relationship between Algernon and Jack?
11. What is Jack's real name, and how is that fact revealed?