

Directions for AP Lit- *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

1. Read the background for *The Importance of Being Earnest*
2. Read the literary elements handout for *The Importance of Being Earnest*
3. Read *The Importance of Being Earnest* (entire play can be found at <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/844/844-h/844-h.htm>)
4. Answer the questions over the play.

AP Lit.

Dr. Chambers

## Background Information

### ENGLAND DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA

The Victorian Era was a time in British history marked by drastic social and economic changes, conflicts, and contradictions. Named in honor of the long reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), the Victorian Age defined most of the nineteenth century. During Victoria's reign, England became the wealthiest country in the world, and British expansion under Colonialism turned England into a mighty and influential world power. The widespread notion of the "White Man's Burden" determined that it was Britain's duty to spread western culture and order throughout the world. Victorians witnessed the rapid progress of the Industrial Revolution, which changed England from a rural society into a fully industrialized, modern, urban state. The city of London became a multicultural metropolis.

### MODERNIZATION AND INDUSTRIALIZATION

The Victorian Era was marked by a number of significant inventions and innovations that changed the face of England's social and geographical landscape forever. The expansion of the railroad system enabled Britain to develop an infrastructure that could promote the swift and efficient distribution of goods, ideas, and services. The world's first subway system was built in London, turning the city into the first truly modern urban center. The Colonial system brought a wealth of commodities and exotic wares into the kingdom, and the Victorian middle and upper classes quickly developed an obsession with luxury articles that could be imported from the British colonies. Advancements in industry and modernization came at a high price, however: urbanization led to overcrowding in cities, and the living conditions of the working poor were often deplorable. Child labor was a common practice, and common workers had no voice in the political process. It was not until 1838 that the Chartist Movement began to unite factory workers and tradesmen and encourage them to call for reforms and political participation. A number of public health and factory reforms followed and continued through the end of the century.

### VICTORIAN SOCIETY AND GENDER ROLES

Victorian society was marked by strict class distinctions. The nineteenth century witnessed the "rise of the middle class," and the middle class quickly became the most influential segment in British society. Middle- and upper-class society was characterized by a strict and conservative moral code that dictated rigid formal manners and an unwavering adherence to duty, family, and propriety. Gender roles were firmly defined. Men dominated the public sphere in politics and industry, while women were relegated to the private sphere where they were to oversee the household and supervise the educations of their children. The ideal Victorian woman was a domestic "angel"—always quiet and demure. She had no business participating in public life or politics.

### AGE OF CONTRADICTIONS AND UNCERTAINTY

The Victorian age was also a time of great uncertainty. The theories of Charles Darwin challenged people's belief in the literal truth of the Bible. At the same time, the harsh working

conditions of the lower classes posed a threat to British law and order. Karl Marx, who described the Victorians' fascination with exotic goods and luxury items as "commodity fetishism," predicted that an uprising of the working classes was inevitable and imminent. The age also saw the birth of modern psychology and psychoanalysis. In order to confront some of these innovations and uncertainties that jeopardized the status quo, middle- and upper-class Victorians turned toward philanthropy in order to ease their fears and feelings of guilt about the injustices inherent in the British class system. Consequently, charities for poor children, unwed mothers, and repentant prostitutes sprang up throughout the Empire.

## THE SHIFT FROM VICTORIANISM TO MODERNISM

The closing decade of the Victorian Age is frequently referred to as the *fin de siècle*, a French term meaning "the end of the age." The term denotes the closing decades of the nineteenth century, when England transitioned from Victorianism into twentieth-century modernism. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, Victorians realized that there was a sharp disconnect between the conservative rules of Victorian culture and the new world marked by post-Darwinism, science, and social injustice. The contradictions of the Victorian Age could no longer be denied, and the discrepancy between a conservative social code on the one hand and the unsettling realities of social, cultural, and economic everyday life on the other resulted in a sense of disillusionment and a tendency toward escapism. Consequently, the closing decade of the nineteenth century saw a turn toward new artistic styles, modern attitudes, and shifting gender notions. The atmosphere of the *fin de siècle* most significantly found its expression in the artistic and literary movements known as Aestheticism and Decadence.

## AESTHETICISM AND DECADENCE

As a reaction to the conservatism and restrictive moral and social code of the Victorian Age, the Aesthetic and Decadent Movements championed artistic excess and rejected morality as a measure for the value of artistic expression. The Aesthetes considered art as a means to obtain unbounded pleasure, and they promoted the creation of "art for art's sake." Writers and artists of the Aesthetic Movement (or Decadent Movement, as it was often referred to in France) believed that art should not be judged on moral grounds but, instead, should be valued for pure beauty, sophistication and refinement, and the pleasure derived from its design and composition. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Gwendolen accurately expresses the credo of the Aesthetic Movement when she declares that "in matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing" (Act III). Aestheticism and Decadence also influenced notions of sex and gender. The idea of the effeminate man (often referred to as a "dandy") and the manly woman became popular. Furthermore, terms such as "homosexual" or "lesbian" were coined to describe the complex range of human sexuality. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde ridicules conservative notions of gender and the division between the public sphere as the realm of men and the private or domestic sphere as the realm of women. His play turns notions of gender upside down and upsets the clear division between the sexes. The following exchange between Cecily and Gwendolen from Act II wonderfully portrays Wilde's ridicule of rigid gender relations:

GWENDOLEN: 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 entirely unknown. I think that is quite as it should be. The home seems to me to be the proper

sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate, does he not? And I don't like that. It makes men so very attractive. Oscar Wilde himself can be considered a quintessential representative figure of the Aesthetic Movement. He dressed flamboyantly and made the enjoyment of "art for art's sake" the focus of his writing. Wilde, although married, was engaged in homosexual relationships with younger men, most notably Lord Alfred Douglas. When Wilde was arrested for sodomy and put on trial in 1895, the conservative backlash against the Aesthetes brought about the end of the movement. Nonetheless, many literary and artistic ideas as well as the notion of fluid gender identities carried on into the twentieth century and became cornerstones of the age of modernism.

## VICTORIAN ENGLAND AND SOCIAL CLASS

Between approximately 1750 and 1830, the Industrial Revolution had transformed England and Europe from an agricultural society to an industrial, capitalist economy. The Industrial Revolution had far-reaching effects on social class and family structures. England witnessed the rise of a middle class that could develop wealth and status independent of aristocratic origins. Many of these "new-money" middle-class families aspired to become members of the upper class. They purchased land, settled in elaborate and luxurious country mansions, and became known as the landed gentry. Because boundaries between social classes became increasingly less defined throughout the nineteenth century, class awareness became more pronounced—members of the growing middle class, for example, coined the phrase "working class" in order to set themselves clearly apart from the lower class. In fact, the nineteenth century witnessed the "rise of the middle class," as members of the middle class gained political and social power. The social class system consisted of three distinctive groups: The working class consisted of agricultural workers, factory workers, mine workers, maids, servants, housekeepers, soldiers, etc. The status of the working class slowly improved throughout the nineteenth century as health reforms and factory laws were implemented to improve working conditions for the poor. The middle class became the most influential segment of British society. Middle-class men gained the right to vote and generally received a sound education at one of Britain's elite boarding schools. The middle class consisted of administrators, merchants, professionals, and business owners. The upper class consisted of the hereditary aristocracy and the landed gentry who had come into money through commercial enterprise and ascended from the middle class. Members of the upper class were unquestionably considered to be ladies and gentlemen, even if their conduct was less than honorable. Members of the upper class did not work.

## THE THEME OF EARNESTNESS VS. TRIVIALITY

Wilde's play eradicates any clear distinction between earnestness and seriousness on the one hand and triviality on the other hand. Clearly, Wilde ridicules the proper, "earnest," but often hypocritical behavior of the Victorian upper classes, who advocated a rigid adherence to a strict moral code and notions of duty and propriety while, at the same time, engaging in dishonorable conduct and exploiting women and the working poor. Moreover, *The Importance of Being Earnest* exposes the obsession with trivial matters often exhibited by the Victorian upper class. Still, Wilde simultaneously claims that deliberate attention to the trivial matters of life—rather than a false observance of empty social rules—can indeed pave the path toward genuine sincerity.

## EARNESTNESS

In the play, earnestness becomes a character trait that embodies haughtiness and affectation rather than true seriousness. The complex and contradictory notion of being “earnest” is exemplified through the invention of Jack’s imaginary wicked brother Ernest on the one hand and the serious and respectable expectations Cecily and Gwendolen associate with the name Ernest on the other hand. Jack’s imaginary brother Ernest is a shady character who gets himself into trouble constantly. Jack explains: In order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in Albany, and gets himself into the most dreadful scrapes. (Act I) Ernest’s reputation indicates that he does not possess any of the “desirable” characteristics of a proper, “earnest” Victorian gentleman. Both Cecily and Gwendolen, on the other hand, are attracted to the name Ernest based on very different criteria. Gwendolen states, “My ideal has always been to love some one of the name of Ernest. There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence” (Act I). Gwendolen’s expectations of a man named Ernest are entirely different from the character Ernest invented by Jack, who clearly is not a man who could “inspire confidence”; notions of earnestness are twisted and escape any definite meaning. Wilde uses the contradictory meanings embedded in the notion of being earnest/Ernest in order to reveal the superficial, fake, and fabricated moral fabric of Victorian upper class society. Wilde exposes the hypocrisy of the upper classes further when Algernon meets Cecily and pretends to be Jack’s rowdy younger brother Ernest: CECILY: You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack’s brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest. ALGERNON: Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn’t think that I am wicked. CECILY: If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy. Wilde lightheartedly suggests that people should never judge others’ behaviors based on the way they adhere to social norms or present themselves in public. Identity is a complex matter that cannot easily be explained or discerned on a superficial level.

## TRIVIALITY

Much like the idea of being “earnest,” the notion of triviality is treated ambiguously throughout the play. References to food, in particular, serve to highlight Wilde’s suggestion that attention to trivial matters often reveals more sincerity than a conceited and affected earnestness. When Cecily and Gwendolen find out that neither Jack nor Algernon is, in fact, Ernest (or earnest, for that matter), they leave the men to ponder their mistakes. Instead of lamenting the errors they have committed that estranged (if only temporarily) Gwendolen and Cecily, Jack and Algernon enter into a discussion about the propriety of eating muffins: JACK: How can you sit there, calmly eating muffins when we are in this horrible trouble, I can’t make out. 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 quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them. JACK: I say it’s perfectly heartless you eating muffins at all, under the circumstances. ALGERNON: When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Indeed, when I am in really great trouble, as anyone who knows me intimately will tell you, I refuse everything except food and drink. At the present moment I am eating muffins because I am unhappy. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins. The exchange between Jack and

Algernon suggests a preoccupation with trivial matters displayed by the upper classes. At the same time, it shows that an attention to trivialities is more sincere than pretentious seriousness and false morality.

#### THE THEME OF "BUNBURYING"

In order to escape the rigid expectations of upper-class Victorian society, both Jack and Algernon invent imaginary characters that allow them to take on an alternative identity. Algernon explains that he has "invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose" (Act I). For Algernon, the character Bunbury allows him to escape undesirable social obligations and gives him a way to avoid being held accountable for his mounting debts. Jack has likewise invented an alter ego, a younger brother Ernest: In order to get up to town I have always pretended to have a younger brother of the name of Ernest, who lives in Albany, and gets himself into the most dreadful scrapes. (Act I) The notion of "coming up to town" is associated with visiting clubs, enjoying London's nightlife, associating with disreputable women, and gambling. Jack would be unable to pursue these activities as Jack Worthing, since doing so would jeopardize his reputation as a gentleman and a fit guardian for his ward, Cecily Cardew. Jack states, "When one is placed in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects" (Act I). Since this "high moral tone" does not allow Jack to participate in the pleasures offered by city life, he is forced to invent—and then occasionally become—his younger brother Ernest. The false morality beneath the surface of Victorian culture is the target of Wilde's blatant criticism of proper behavior. Wilde's characters complicate the idea of personal identity or character and call into question whether or not any moral standards can or should ever be applied to judge an individual.

#### THE THEME OF MARRIAGE

Throughout *The Importance of Being Earnest*, marriage is described as an institution that highlights both the superficial sense of moral decorum and class consciousness so widespread in Victorian society as well as the tendency to engage in trivialities displayed by Wilde's characters. When Jack and Algernon discuss marriage, it becomes clear that Algernon views marriage as a social requirement that usually hinders true happiness: JACK: I am in love with Gwendolen. I have come up to town expressly to propose to her. ALGERNON: I thought you had come up for pleasure?...I call that business. JACK: How utterly unromantic you are! ALGERNON: I really don't see anything romantic in proposing. It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal. Why, one may be accepted. One usually is, I believe. Then the excitement is all over. The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If I ever get married, I'll certainly try to forget the fact. To Algernon, marriage is a social convention entirely separate from emotion. It represents the Victorian desire to fit into a preconceived societal "role" and behave appropriately. Hence, Algernon does not believe that marriage is compatible with love or romance in any way. In fact, Algernon later ridicules the possibility that a husband and wife could possibly be truly in love when he states that "the amount of women in London who flirt with their own husbands is perfectly scandalous" (Act I). Algernon believes that marriages are usually based on financial gains and advancements in social rank. Consequently, he is convinced that a man can only be happy in marriage if he reserves the right

to invent an alter ego who allows him to pursue "true" happiness. He explains, "A man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it" (Act I).

## Literary and Narrative Techniques

### ELEMENTS OF IRONY

Oscar Wilde uses irony throughout *The Importance of Being Earnest* in order to expose the ridiculousness and pretension of Victorian society. The title of his play itself is an ironic pun on the word “earnest”: While it is important to Cecily and Gwendolen that they each marry a man named Ernest, such an aspiration is not important at all. Irony is a literary device that involves a breach between what a writer, speaker, or narrator says in a text and what is understood by the reader or by other characters. There are three major types of irony used in fiction, poetry, and drama: situational irony, verbal irony, and dramatic or tragic irony.

**Situational Irony** – Situational irony occurs when an event that takes place (in a novel, poem, or on stage in a play) produces a completely unexpected outcome.

**Verbal Irony** – Verbal irony occurs when a writer, speaker, or narrator uses words to say one thing when he really means the opposite of what he says. One popular form of verbal irony is sarcasm.

**Dramatic or Tragic Irony** – Dramatic irony occurs when the words or actions of a character reveal his ignorance toward a particular situation, while the reader correctly understands the situation.

Wilde incorporates a combination of different ironic elements throughout his entire play. For example, Lady Bracknell’s reaction to the death of Lady Harbury’s husband is built on an ironic twist of expectations: LADY BRACKNELL: I’m sorry if we are a little late, Algernon, but I was obliged to call on dear Lady Harbury. I hadn’t been there since her poor husband’s death. I never saw a woman so altered; she looks quite twenty years younger. Readers would expect that Lady Harbury has suffered after her husband’s death and looks ill, but Lady Bracknell ironically informs readers that the “poor” woman never looked better. Later, Wilde ridicules expectations of courtship when Jack proposes to Gwendolen. Gwendolen criticizes Jack’s hesitation when he makes his offer of marriage and states, “I am afraid you have had very little experience in how to propose.” Since Jack is not married, he, obviously, has not “practiced” proposing.

### ELEMENTS OF SATIRE

Satire is a literary practice closely related to irony. In a satirical text, the writer uses humor and wit in order to criticize or ridicule a particular person or group of people. Satires cleverly disguise criticism of an intended target by clothing it in humorous language, funny characterizations, and sarcasm.

### LITERARY AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

For example, Wilde uses sarcasm to ridicule the pretentious superficiality of the Victorians’ philanthropic spirit. When discussing acts of charity, Lady Bracknell explains, “Nor do I in any



way approve of the modern sympathy with invalids. I consider it morbid. Illness of any kind is hardly a thing to be encouraged in others.”

### COMEDY OF MANNERS

The Comedy of Manners is a literary genre that became particularly popular in England during the Restoration period of the seventeenth century. It usually uses elements of Satire in order to ridicule or expose the behaviors, manners, flaws, and morals of members of the middle or upper classes. Frequently, Comedies of Manners incorporate love affairs, witty and comical exchanges between characters, and the humorous revelation of societal scandals and intrigues. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Algernon’s practice of “bunburying” and Jack’s invention of his brother Ernest mock the superficial manners of Victorian upper classes. The witty dialogue and Wilde’s superior use of irony qualify the play as a fine example of the Comedy of Manners genre. With its excessive use of irony and its focus on triviality, ambiguity, and absurd situations, *The Importance of Being Earnest* can be considered one of the most significant forerunners of the Theater of the Absurd which prospered in the 1950s and 1960s.

## The Importance of Being Earnest

### First Act

1. How does Algernon's statement that he does not play the piano "accurately" but "with wonderful expression" exemplify the principles of the Aesthetic Movement?

---

---

---

---

2. What does Wilde suggest is going to be one of the primary sources of humor when Algernon asks Lane about the champagne?

---

---

---

---

3. Where is the humor in Algernon's comments on the lack of "moral responsibility" among the lower classes?

---

---

---

---

4. What does Algernon's comment on marriage as a "business" reveal about his attitude toward married life?

---

---

---

---

5. Why does Jack praise the bread and butter Algernon offers him? What does his praise reveal about Jack?

---

---

---

---

6. According to Algernon, why is it unlikely that Jack will ever be married to Gwendolen?

---

---

---

---

7. Why does Jack initially lie about Cecily's identity? What does his decision to lie reveal about his attitude toward Algernon?

---

---

---

---

8. What do notions of "town" and "country" stand for? What do the two concepts reveal about the hypocrisy of Victorian upper-class culture?

---

---

---

---

9. How does Cecily Cardew function as a motivating factor for Jack to invent his younger brother Ernest?

---

---

---

---

10. How does Algernon use Bunbury as a tool to maintain a respectable social image?

---

---

---

---

11. What reasons does Jack give for wanting to "kill" Ernest?

---

---

---

---

12. What does Algernon's statement that "a man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it" reveal about his attitude toward marriage?

---

---

---

---

13. What is ironic about Algernon's statement, "I hate people who are not serious about meals. It is so shallow of them"?

---

---

---

---

14. What does Algernon's statement that he is "feeling very well" in response to Aunt Augusta's questions whether or not he is "behaving very well" reveal about the superficial nature of Victorian upper-class culture?

---

---

---

---

15. What is ironic about Lady Bracknell's statement that Lady Harbury "looks quite twenty years younger"?

---

---

---

---

16. Analyze the several layers of humor in Lady Bracknell's reaction to Algernon's breaking his dinner engagement with her. At what is Wilde most likely poking fun?

---

---

---

---

17. What is ironic about Gwendolen's wanting to marry a man named Ernest?

---

---

---

---

18. What does Lady Bracknell's reaction to hearing about Gwendolen's engagement reveal?

---

---

---

---

19. How realistic a character is Lady Bracknell?

---

---

---

---

20. How does Lady Bracknell's question whether Jack was born in the "purple of commerce" or "the ranks of the aristocracy" reflect on the social make-up of the upper class in Victorian England?

---

---

---

---

21. Why do Jack's origins in the "cloak-room at Victoria station" make him an ineligible match for Gwendolen in Lady Bracknell's eyes?

---

---

---

---

22. What comic convention does Lady Bracknell's insistence that Jack produce some relations and at least one parent illustrate?

---

---

---

---

23. How does Gwendolen react when she realizes that her mother will not allow a marriage with Jack? Why is this comic?

---

---

---

---

### Second Act

1. What is Cecily implying in her reason for disliking her German lesson?

---

---

---

---

2. What is ironic about Miss Prism's expressing concern for Jack and admiration for his devotion to his brother? What kind of irony is this?

---

---

---

---

3. How does Cecily's concept of "memory" differ from Miss Prism's idea of "memory"? What stereotype is Wilde comically reinforcing?

---

---

---

---

4. Why does Dr. Chasuble explain that he was speaking metaphorically when he expresses a desire to "hang upon" Miss Prism's lips?

---

---

---

---

5. What can readers infer about Miss Prism when she corrects Dr. Chasuble upon being called "Egeria" and reminds him that her name is Laetitia?

---

---

---

---

6. What are Cecily's expectations upon hearing that Mr. Ernest Worthing has arrived? What do her expectations reveal about her character?

---

---

---

---

7. How does Cecily's fear that Ernest might have been leading a double life reverse Jack's and Algernon's reasons for creating an alternative identity?

---

---

---

---

8. Why does Algernon—as Ernest—claim that he must be back in London on Monday?

---

---

---

---

9. According to Cecily, what plans does Jack have in store for his brother Ernest?

---

---

---

---

10. What is Miss Prism's attitude toward the practices of the Primitive Church? What does her attitude reveal about her relationship with Dr. Chasuble?

---

---

---

---

11. Why does Jack appear at his estate wearing the "garb of woe"?

---

---

---

---

12. What does Miss Prism's reaction to the news of Ernest's death suggest about Victorian morality?

---

---

---

---

13. At what stereotype about the church is Wilde poking fun in Chasuble's response to the news that Ernest will be buried in Paris?

---

---

---

---

14. Why does Dr. Chasuble accuse the lower classes of not being thrifty?

---

---

---

---

15. What is Jack's motivation for wanting to be christened by Dr. Chasuble?

---

---

---

---

16. How is Algernon's insistence that his "duty as a gentleman has never interfered with [his] pleasures in the smallest degree" ambiguous?

---

---

---

---

17. How do descriptions of Algernon qualify him as a “dandy” in the tradition of the Aesthetic Movement?

---

---

---

---

18. How can Cecily’s diary be considered a lighthearted attack on Victorian morality?

---

---

---

---

19. How does Cecily’s diary mirror Jack’s brother and Algernon’s invalid friend?

---

---

---

---

20. According to Cecily, why was it necessary for her to break her engagement with Ernest?

---

---

---

---

21. Why does Algernon decide to get christened?

---

---

---

---

22. How does Gwendolen’s assessment of her father’s status within his family stand in contrast to conventional Victorian notions of gender?

---

---

---

---

23. What does Gwendolen imply about Cecily when she states that their “social spheres have been widely different”?

---

---

---

---



24. How does Wilde maintain an atmosphere of light humor in the disagreement between Gwendolen and Cecily?

---

---

---

---

25. What is the significance of eating ? When else has food figured into the play?

---

---

---

---

### Third Act

1. What contradictions can be found in the conversation between Cecily and Gwendolen as they observe Jack and Algernon eating muffins in the garden? What is the primary purpose of these contradictions?

---

---

---

---

2. How does Wilde continue a bit of humor he began in the previous act concerning Gwendolen and Cecily's friendship? What might Wilde be poking fun at?

---

---

---

---

3. What artistic viewpoint does Gwendolen's statement that "in matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity is the vital thing" reflect?

---

---

---

---

4. What is Lady Bracknell worried about when she learns that Algernon is engaged to Cecily?

---

---

---

---

5. How does hyperbole contribute to the humor in the discussion of Algernon's engagement to Cecily?

---

---

---

---

6. On what grounds does Lady Bracknell recognize "distinct social possibilities" in Cecily's profile?

---

---

---

---

7. Why is Lady Bracknell's claim that she does not "approve of mercenary marriages" ironic?

---

---

---

---

8. How does Jack's refusal to consent to Cecily's marriage with Algernon poke fun at Victorian propriety?

---

---

---

---

9. Why is Dr. Chasuble insulted when Lady Bracknell asks him what "position" Miss Prism occupies in his household?

---

---

---

---

10. What is humorous about Jack's calling Miss Prism "mother" when he hears about her losing the handbag?

---

---

---

---

11. What common humorous convention does Wilde employ in Jack's discovery that he is Algernon's elder brother?

---

---

---

---

12. How did Miss Prism "lose" Jack? Aside from the absurdity of losing a baby, where is the humor in this story?

---

---

---

---

13. What is significant about the fact that no one apparently remembers Algernon and Jack's father's first name?

---

---

---

---

14. What is ironic about Gwendolen's statement that Jack has "become someone else"?

---

---

