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### Discussion Question

#### The Importance of Being Earnest

1. Why do both Jack and Algernon feel the need create a fake identity?

During the time this play was set, Victorian Era, there was a strict social expectation in the upper class. Both the male characters created the alter identity to escape from the constricted life of the upper classes men and free themselves from the judgmental eyes. Jack who has a “very high moral cue”, creates the identity of “Ernest”, who is his “brother” in London to escape and misbehave. In his town Jack has a strict demeanor, who according to Miss Prism has a “higher sense of duty and responsibility”. The identity Earnest allows to leave town and enjoy himself in London without tarnishing his reputation in his town. Algernon also invented a fake identity of his friend, “Bunbury” as a mechanism to escape his social obligations in his life. Both Jack and Algernon use the identities to escape from reality.

2. What attitudes toward marriage do Wilde’s characters explore?

The character in the play had different views on marriage and different ways that marriage is interpreted. In Act I, Algernon states that “the very essence of romance is uncertainty” and that marriage is rather business. He claims that some married women will even flirt another when her husband sits

across from them. He paints a picture of marriage being unfaithful, something that holds no value. Lady Bracknell, view of marriage differs in the sense that the older upper-class generation during this time cares more about the family background, wealth, and social standards. As evidenced by the questions asked by Lady Bracknell when Jack wishes to marry her daughter overall illustrates how she gives more importance on social status rather than love. Jack on the other hand portrays a character who is a true romantic. He wishes to marry the girl he loves.

### Citations

- Wilde, Oscar. *The Importance of Being Earnest*. New York: Samuel French, 1980. Print.
- SparkNotes Editors. *The Importance of Being Earnest*. SparkNotes.com, SparkNotes LLC, 2005, [www.sparknotes.com/lit/earnest/summary/](http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/earnest/summary/)