The Importance of Being Earnest – Oscar Wilde
Act II

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. What is Miss Prism’s attitude toward the practices of the Primitive Church? What does her attitude reveal about her relationship with Dr. Chasuble?
9. Why does Jack appear at his estate wearing the “garb of woe”?
10. At what stereotype about the church is Wilde poking fun in Chasuble’s response to the news that Ernest will be buried in Paris?
11. Why does Dr. Chasuble accuse the lower classes of not being thrifty? What is Jack’s motivation for wanting to be christened by Dr. Chasuble?
12. How is Algernon’s insistence that his “duty as a gentleman has never interfered with [his] pleasures in the smallest degree” ambiguous?
13. How do descriptions of Algernon qualify him as a “dandy” in the tradition of the Aesthetic Movement?
14. How can Cecily’s diary be considered a lighthearted attack on Victorian morality?
15. How does Cecily’s diary mirror Jack’s brother and Algernon’s invalid friend?
16. According to Cecily, why was it necessary for her to break her engagement with Ernest?
17. Why does Algernon decide to get christened?
18. How does Gwendolen’s assessment of her father’s status within his family stand in contrast to conventional Victorian notions of gender?
19. What does Gwendolen imply about Cecily when she states that their “social spheres have been widely different”?
20. What is the significance of eating? When else has food figured into the play?