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This one jumps off the page with not an word. Such a fun paper for a honors play film

The Importance of Being ERNEST

Oscar Wilde's laugh-out-loud-funny absurdist play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, traces two men, each of whom pretend to be a man called Ernest in order to gain the affections of a woman. The hilarious irony in this concept is that the dictionary definition of the homophone is "showing depth and sincerity of feeling," which neither of our characters seem to be able to do, since they are both lying about their true identity. It is furthered when, as he is calling Ernest out on his lying about his identity, Algernon insists, "You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life," which implies that simply having the name of Ernest makes one seem earnest and desirable. And apparently women love men named Ernest, because of the subconscious connotations behind the name. "There is something in that name that inspires absolute confidence," both Gwendolen and Cecily assert throughout, insisting they could never love a man called something other than Ernest. The whole play is absurd, as Wilde intended it to be, and it is perfection, as Wilde viewed art to be. It is written brilliantly, littered with word games and verbal ingenuity.

Excellent opening

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The absurdist quality of the play allows the structure to reach perfection. Wilde believed that life ultimately culminates to be a mess and a failure, but that art had potential to reach perfection. He took this concept and ran with in in *The*

Importance of Being Earnest, allowing the paradox he created within the play to be fulfilled. While the two main characters pretend to be Ernest, John actually turns out to have been christened with the name of Ernest, much to everyone's surprise and to Gwendolen's benefit. "I always told you, Gwendolen, my name was Ernest, didn't I? Well, it is Ernest, after all. I mean it naturally is Ernest," he ironically describes, retaining his confident air at discovering who he really is.

We wish! This impeccable wordplay that is present in *Earnest* appeals to intellectual audiences. Wilde wrote a play about people speaking brilliantly to each other, in ways that may not necessarily happen in real life, which supports the absurdist qualities of the play. He controls the characters so that they have the most witty and comedic responses to each other, which somehow seem organic, despite the ridiculousness of the play. *Earnest* is filled with elegant jokes, leaving audience members thinking about each and every line. It takes a moment for audience members to process exactly what was said, leaving them with a, "Hey, wait, that was a hilarious line!" type of feeling. Always running to keep up with the wit, I found myself laughing almost the entire film through. "A Trivial Comedy for Serious People," as Wilde describes it, and he definitely delivers. *me too*

Anthony Asquith's 1952 film adaptation of this play, starring Michael Redgrave, Michael Denison, Edith Evans, and Joan Greenwood, is incredible, sticking almost completely to the script and starring actors that just have it all; they completely understand the nuances of the play and its characters and perform it perfectly, with the right inflections in the right places, the most appropriate facial expressions, and perfect comedic timing. Michael Denison's portrayal of Algernon

was the performance that stuck out to me most; he always seemed to be one step ahead of the other characters, having it all figured out before the others. The delivery of his line, "I may mention that I have always suspected you of being a confirmed and secret Bunburyist; and I am quite sure of it now," is just so smug and funny; he's always sure he's getting away with his deceptions. Here, Wilde has literally made up a verb and a noun: Bunburying and Bunburyist, around which the entire play revolves. Wilde's overt silliness is just so ridiculous that it is funny.

Furthermore, Asquith had the ability to use the cinematic techniques to enhance the film adaptation. He was able to utilize camera close ups to highlight facial expressions, allowing for more subtleties to emerge within the action of the play. Yet he stayed very true to the theatrical background. He didn't add any scenes that were not in the play, and only added one cut scene of a train, to signify the transition from the city to the country, that would not have existed in a stage production. He was also able to control the comedic timing of the actors in order to gain the best possible reaction from any audiences that may watch the film. Having never read the play or seen the film, I found myself an avid fan, this play shooting to the top of my list of favorites. Everything about it is brilliant, from the language to the film adaptation, and it is guaranteed to woo audiences everywhere. From casting an all-star lineup of actors to employing cinematic techniques to his benefit, Asquith made a stellar film adaptation of a classic play, leaving audiences in stitches.

Anna: love this!
 you might mention
 Dame Edith as Judy
 Drakenell: hilarious!