

The Importance of Being Earnest - First Impressions

Pre-Show Activity for Grades 6-12

Goals

- Students will analyze character descriptions from *The Importance of Being Earnest*.
- Students will identify personal connections and points of interest within these characters.
- Students will engage in [Artful Thinking](#) routines to deepen perspective-taking.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding through multiple means of expression.

NOTE: This activity has been aligned with TEKS and [Universal Design for Learning](#). TEKS can be found at the end of this document.

Materials Needed

- Character descriptions from Alley Re-Sourced (printable handout included)
- Pencils or pens
- Optional: digital tools for audio-visual presentation options

Introduction- Meet the Characters

- Using Alley Re-Sourced, begin with a brief overview of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, including the time period and setting.
- Review the cast of characters and what information students can find in the “Who’s Who” section.
 - On the “Who’s Who” section of the Re-Sourced guide, we can see a picture of the actor, the character(s) they play, basic traits of that character, and a summary of what’s going on with them in world of the play.
- Offer multiple ways to access this information: review the material digitally, provide printed copies, read aloud descriptions or have students review the information in pairs.
- Encourage students to choose one character to focus on.

Same, Different, Connect, Engage

- This activity allows students to explore the characters in the show. Using the character descriptions and inferences students make, have students answer the following questions.
- Read the character description and discuss the traits and circumstances connected to the character.
 - **Same-** What traits, experiences, or qualities do you and this person share?
 - **Different-** What important differences do you notice between you and this person?
 - **Connect-** How do the values or tensions in this character’s life connect to how you think about your own life?

- **Engage-** What would like to ask, say, or do with the person if you had the chance?

Creating a Response

- Students may respond in a way that matches their strengths and preferences:
 - **Write:** A journal entry, poem, or short script excerpt.
 - **Visualize:** A sketch, storyboard, collage, or symbolic representation.
 - **Perform:** A pose, tableau, mime, or short scene.
 - **Record/Produce:** An audio podcast reflection, video response, or digital graphic.
- Encourage students to capture how they see themselves in relation to the character through similarities, differences, and points of connection.

Sharing and Feedback

- Offer varied ways for students to share:
 - Pair-share or small group discussion.
 - Gallery walk (physical or digital wall of responses).
 - Anonymous posting (teacher reads aloud or shares highlights).
 - Whole-class presentations (optional, not required).
- Conclude with a reflection using **Connect–Extend–Challenge**:
 - How did you connect with this character?
 - How did this activity extend your thinking about them or about yourself?
 - What challenged or surprised you?
- Students can reflect through a quick-write, sketch-note, pair-share, or digital submission.

TEKS

Fine Arts- Theatre, Middle School 6-8

- Level 1- 2(B) imagine and clearly describe characters, their relationships, and their surroundings
- Level 2- 2(B) define characters by what they do, what they say, and what others say about them
- Level 3- 1(A) evaluate characterization using emotional and sensory recall

High School Levels I-IV

- Level I- 1(E) analyze characters by describing attributes such as physical, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions through reading scripts of published plays;
- Level II- 3 (C) analyze characters, themes, duties, and elements of a script to determine artistic roles and technical assignments;
- Levels III-IV- 2(C) analyze and interpret characters from various genres and styles, describing physical, intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions;

English Language Arts and Reading, Middle School 6-8

- 5(E): make connections to personal experiences, ideas in other texts, and society;

English Language Arts and Reading, High School- English I-IV

- English I- 6(B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters in works of fiction through a range of literary devices, including character foils
- English II- 6(B) analyze how authors develop complex yet believable characters, including archetypes, through historical and cultural settings and events
- English III- 6(B) analyze how characters' behaviors and underlying motivations contribute to moral dilemmas that influence the plot and theme;
- English IV- 6(B) analyze how characters' behaviors and underlying motivations contribute to moral dilemmas that influence the plot and theme;

Who's Who: The Cast and Character Descriptions of Alley Theatre's *The Importance of Being Earnest*



Christopher Salazar
Jack Worthing

Jack Worthing (a.k.a. Ernest)

A respectable gentleman with a secret double life. In the country, Jack is serious, responsible, and Cecily's strict guardian. But in the city, he becomes "Ernest": a charming bachelor free to have fun. He wants to be honest but finds lying much easier than facing society's expectations.

Key Traits:

- Respectable
- Anxious
- Secretive

"I have now realized for the first time in my life the vital Importance of Being Earnest."



Dylan Godwin
Algernon Moncrieff

Algernon Moncrieff

A witty, lazy aristocrat who avoids responsibility whenever possible. Algernon invents fake emergencies—and even fake people—to escape boredom. He values pleasure over honesty and believes life should never be taken too seriously.

Key Traits:

- Witty
- Indulgent
- Irresponsible

"The truth is rarely pure and never simple."



Amelia Pedlow
Gwendolen Fairfax

Gwendolen Fairfax

A fashionable, confident young woman who believes deeply in appearances and ideals. Gwendolen is romantic, dramatic, and absolutely convinced she knows what she wants—especially when it comes to names, manners, and love.

Key Traits:

- Confident
- Romantic
- Strong-willed

"I could not love you were you the only man left."



Melissa Molano
Cecily Cardew

Cecily Cardew

A bright, imaginative teenager who lives in the countryside. Cecily romanticizes life, love, and rebellion—creating entire stories in her diary. Though she appears innocent, she is clever, bold, and quietly in control.

Key Traits:

- Imaginative
- Playful
- Independent

“I keep a diary in order to enter the wonderful secrets of my life.”



Candy Buckley
Lady Bracknell

Lady Bracknell

A powerful, judgmental matriarch obsessed with wealth, status, and social rules. Lady Bracknell believes marriage is a business arrangement and sees love as far less important than income, family name, and respectability.

Key Traits:

- Authoritative
- Snobbish
- Controlling

“To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.”



Elizabeth Bunch
Miss Prism

Miss Prism

Cecily’s strict but well-meaning governess. Miss Prism believes deeply in education, morality, and discipline, though her past mistakes suggest she is not as perfect as she appears. She represents Victorian ideas about propriety and self-improvement.

Key Traits:

- Moralistic
- Anxious
- Old-fashioned

“The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what fiction means.”



Spencer Plachy
Dr. Chasuble

Dr. Chasuble

A polite, mild-mannered clergyman who enjoys giving sermons and offering moral advice. Though serious on the surface, he is easily flustered and clearly fond of Miss Prism.

Key Traits:

- Gentle
- Formal
- Awkward

“Charity, dear Miss Prism, charity!”



Spencer Plachy
Lane

Lane

Algernon’s servant, who quietly observes his employer’s behavior with dry humor. Lane speaks politely but often reveals sharp insight into marriage and class through his calm responses.

Key Traits:

- Observant
- Reserved
- Dryly humorous

“I have only been married once.”



Chris Hutchison
Merriman

Merriman

Jack’s loyal and professional servant in the country. Merriman is efficient, polite, and unbothered by the chaos around him—maintaining order while everyone else behaves absurdly.

Key Traits:

- Proper
- Efficient
- Unflappable

“Yes, sir.”