***The Importance of Being Earnest***

Literary Elements and Character List

**Paradox**: seems contradictory but presents truth

**Inverted logic**: words/phrases turned upside down reversing our expectations

**Pun**: play on words using word or phrase that has two meanings

**Epigram**: brief, witty, cleverly-expressed statement

**Parody**: humorous mocking imitation of literary work

**Satire**: ridicules through humor

**Irony**: something you don’t expect to happen

**Foreshadowing**: creates suspense through hints to the ending

*Character List*

**John "Jack" Worthing**: Jack is the play's protagonist and the play's most sympathetic character. He was found in a handbag on a railway line, and feels less at home in aristocratic society than does Algernon. He lives in the country but has invented a wicked brother named "Ernest" whose scrapes require Jack's attendance in the city.

**Algernon Moncrieff**: Algernon, the foil to Jack, is a hedonist who has created a friend named Bunbury whose status as a permanent invalid allows Algernon to leave the city whenever he pleases. He believes this activity, "Bunburying," is necessary, especially if one is going to get married-something he vows never to do.

**Lady Bracknell**: Lady Bracknell is the antagonist of the play, blocking both potential marriages. She embodies typical Victorian classism; she does not allow Gwendolen to marry Jack when she finds out he is an orphan, and she dislikes Cecily as a mate for her nephew Algernon until she learns that Cecily is wealthy.

**Gwendolen Fairfax**: Gwendolen is Lady Bracknell's daughter, and is the object of Jack's romantic attention. Though she returns his love, Gwendolen appears self-centered and flighty. Like Cecily, she desires nothing but to marry someone named Ernest.

**Cecily Cardew**: Cecily is Jack's ward and lives with him in the country. Young and pretty, she is favored by Algernon, who pretends to be Jack's brother Ernest. Cecily has heard about this brother, and has written correspondences between the two of them for months by the time she meets Algernon/Ernest. Like Gwendolen, she is only interested in marrying a man named Ernest.

**Miss Prism**: Miss Prism is the Cecily's governess. She obviously loves Chasuble, though the fact that he is a priest prohibits her from telling him so directly.

**Lane**: Algernon's butler delivers a number of droll lines which show that he is far from a passive servant.

**Chasuble**: A rector, Chasuble frequently visits Jack's country house to see Miss Prism. Though he is celibate, he seems well matched for the educated Miss Prism.

**Merriman**: Jack's butler, Merriman has a less significant role than Lane has, but in one scene he and another servant force the bickering Gwendolen and Cecily to maintain supposedly polite conversation.