

HOW DOES *THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST* PRESENT CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT REPRESENTATION/IDENTITY/CULTURE? Rehaan

"The importance of being earnest" is one of Oscar Wilde's most pervasive works for its highly witty and extravagant characters, that act more so as caricatures. Throughout the play, Wilde uses his plethora of aristocratic characters to mock the very Victorian high society he himself was a part of. Through extensive use of highly satirical language connotations, dramatic irony, hyperbolic epigrams and rhetoric statements, Wilde comments on the superficial, pompous and ridiculous nature of the high class. Furthermore, the relationships between the cast are absurd, and used as further representation of the cartoonish manner of aristocracy.

In act I this self righteous behaviour is arguably seen most prominently, due to the act's expository intention. Oscar Wilde uses pompous language, prideful tones, symbolization and most importantly, narrative to build a strong fundamental understanding of his characters identity and culture through . These techniques are most effectively used in the character of Algernon. When first seen conversing with Lane, Algernon speaks very highly of himself. Stating that his residence is a "Bachelor's establishment" implying both an exclusivity and wealthiness to his name, furthering the notion of his self worth. Secondly, Wilde represents Algernon's identity through a narrative with the cucumber sandwiches, using narrative representation and humor. The cucumber sandwiches initially act as a means of humor through irony, as such menial things coming up so often trivialises the objectives of the high class. And in doing so, the narrative element comes into play. More specifically, we see how Algernon reacts to supposed importance of the cucumber sandwiches, his reaction being one of nonchalance. Stating that his hunger is "customary in good society" even though he explicitly stated they were "cut for lady Bracknell" it is this childish greed of both his, and henceforth, the high class that is so well represented through narrative elements, as his hunger surpasses his customary duty to appease aunt August.

Wilde's satire isn't relegated to the aforementioned techniques and how the Victorian high class act pompous, but he also uses the lower class. This is seen exceptionally well, in the narrative function of Lane. Wilde's use of Lane not only works to mock the high class, but also gauges an accommodating response from the lower class, who would most likely be predisposed to support him in his mocking of the high class. Wilde has Lane conduct this role by characterizing him as loyal, patient and still witty through a passive tone and narrative position. We see this in the first interaction between him and Algernon. Wilde has Lane take a very calm and respective tone. So much so, that the first statement he makes is concerning his politeness in regards to Algernon; stating "I didn't think it polite to listen sir" Furthermore when Lady Bracknell confronts Algernon, Wilde has Lane take the full brunt of Lady Bracknell's retort. Even going so far as to improvise a scenario favorable for Algernon, one where "There were no cucumbers in the market" not "even for ready money". This clearly demonstrates the compassion of Lane, and through the satirical thinking Wilde encourages, and therefore the compassion of the lower class. All while Lane is still able to maintain his wit, as seen also in the first interaction when asked why the servants drink, attributing it sarcastically "to the superior quality of the wine" and its rarity in married households. This compassionate, yet clever representation encourages a much more fond relationship for Lane, and therefore the play as a whole, from the poorer classes.

Lastly, throughout the entirety of the play, Wilde uses identity as a core narrative function, having it drive the story. Yet both throughout and at the end of the play, Wilde uses danyish diction and dramatic irony to convey that identity isn't such a key part of one's life. This can be garnered from Wilde's extensive satirical mockery of the high class and their superficial attraction to identity, as best seen in the real world's aesthetic movement. This is most strongly seen in the interrogation scene between Lady Bracknell and Jack. Such as when Lady Bracknell asserts that age "is no guarantee of respectability"

a little but warty approach good

idle dandy life

I write simply

too much

of Victorian aristocracy
could you say this was surely

avoid numbers & quotes

in a way

avoid

simply -
It is about the name, Emma

also show their wit

even though her only merit we know of so far is her maternal position, furthermore, the irony of her unawareness of Jack's whole second identity is exemplified by her becoming "bewildered" by his unusual upcomings. This use of dramatic irony especially throughout the entirety of this specific conversation conveys a strong satirical mockery of the very superficial nature of the high class.

In conclusion Wilde uses a plethora of dramatic techniques and strong narrative relationships to convey an array of classes and representations in Victorian society. This is used in purpose to mock the superficial and pompous nature of Victorian high society, and relieve the undermining pressure the lower class receives from their ridiculous "masters"

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Perhaps - you have a
terrific understanding of
the play - 😊 but you
need communicate your
great ideas in a less
wordy way -
write succinctly.
Less is more.
Content 8
Expression 7-