



**Bancroft Upper School
Required English Summer Reading
For All Incoming English IV Students
2010**

The Importance of Being Earnest
by Oscar Wilde

No one lives life in a vacuum. We all grow with the influences of peers, family, and society. For many the pressures and voices of society, in the form of expectations and restrictions, can seem more powerful and louder than other voices trying to shape us. Society's voice was loud and clear in Victorian England. Class structure, social status, and the pull between the appearance of one's actions and the desire to act freely led to many a conflicted soul. In Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, one witnesses the need to lead two lives: one for the public view and one for oneself, as in Algernon's "Bunburying" and Jack's creation of Earnest.

For your summer reading assignment, please read the entire three-act version of the play (available in the bookstore) and collect five quotations that reveal the messages Victorian society is relaying in this comedy of manners and expectations. What is expected and restricted for the characters? For each quote, write a few sentences explaining its significance. These quotes and interpretations should be typed, double spaced, in 12-pt Times New Roman font, with proper MLA citations. These are due the first day of class. Enjoy!

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