
Irony and Character Foil to Expose the Characters Flaws in the Importance of Being Earnest

Oscar Wilde's, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, creates a trivial comedy which emphasizes the absurdity within Victorian society during the 19th century. The playwright uses characters Jack Worthing, Algernon Moncrieff, Cecily Cardew, Gwendolen Fairfax and Lady Bracknell to develop a sense of humor and comments on the absurd nature of Victorian morals and values. Wilde has used the techniques of irony and character foil to evolve and build characterization of characters in the play. A play created by Oscar Wilde, "The importance of Being Earnest" uses irony and character foil to expose characters flaws and how they are developed throughout the play.

Wilde the "Playwright" uses dramatic irony throughout the play to reflect characters emotions and to reveal their true character values. Wilde has used the false identity of both "Ernest and Bunbury" to reveal Jack's and Algernon's hypocritical character throughout the play. These fake identity's are unknown by any other characters except for Jack and Algernon, and the reader.

Jack: "It isn't Ernest; it's Jack."

Algernon: "I have invented an invaluable permanent invalid called Bunbury, in order that I may be able to go down into the country whenever I choose. Bunbury is perfectly invaluable. If it wasn't for Bunbury's extraordinary bad health, for instance, I wouldn't be able to dine with you at Willis's to-night, for I have been really engaged to Aunt Augusta for more than a week."

This technique was created by Wilde comments on the absurdity and hypocrisy these characters have on each other, especially Gwendolen and Cecily. The dramatic irony of this quote states that both Jack and Algernon did not know about each other's fake identity. This quote reflects the Irony in which develops Jack and Algernon's true character values and to give a sense of hypocrisy of Jack and Algernon to the reader.

Throughout the play, Wilde uses character foil to juxtapose two characters "Cecily and Gwendolen" creating highlights of their values and qualities of their character. Cecily and Gwendolen are two lead females in Wilde's play "The Importance of Being Earnest". The women are both deceived by protagonists Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff to fall in love with them by the fake identity of Ernest. Despite Cecily and Gwendolen thinking they are marrying the same guy, it seems that both these young ladies possess more similarities than differences after finding out how hypocritical their lovers have been.

Gwendolen: "this dignifies silence seems to produce an unpleasant effect."

Cecily: "A most distasteful one."

Gwendolen: "But we will not be the first to speak."

Cecily: "Certainly not."

Gwendolen: "Mr Worthing, I have something very particular to ask you. Much depends on your reply." Cecily: "Gwendolen, Your common sense is invaluable. Mr Moncrieff, kindly answer me the following question. Why did you pretend to be my guardian's brother ?" (Wilde, 2020, pp. 344)

In this play, Cecily and Gwendolen are in love with both Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff thought to be both Ernest. However, both Cecily and Gwendolen are unaware that their lovers are lying, hypocritical characters. Cecily and Gwendolen's anger and irritation are portrayed through Wilde's use of words and repetition of lines. Both Cecily's and Gwendolen's opinions on their lover's lying bring them closer together as mutual sisters and build more similarities than differences. The use of Character foil develops Cecily and Gwendolen's relationship and contrasts their values against each other and protagonists Jack and Algernon. Wilde uses character foil to develop and juxtapose both Cecily and Gwendolen's feelings and anger towards each other and their lovers. Wilde uses this technique to highlight and develop both Cecily and Gwendolen's feelings towards their lying lovers.

Verbal irony is used to reflect the social comments made by Lady Bracknell aimed at Jack for marrying her daughter " Gwendolen ." Wilde uses character Lady Bracknell to create the technique "verbal irony" in which allows Bracknell to express her feelings and to portray the truth by creating a sense of sarcasm. Bracknell uses verbal irony when Jack (Ernest) wants to marry her daughter " Gwendolen", Bracknell then uses sarcasm to get the point across to Jack that he is not traditional and independent enough for her daughter.

Jack: " Well yes, I must admit I smoke."

Lady Bracknell: "I'm glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. "(Wilde, 2020, pp. 308)

Lady Bracknell's authority and ability have extended over the play, she is able to make sarcastic comments on Jack (Ernest) marrying her daughter Gwendolen. Lady Bracknell's comment reflects her frustration and disappointment on Jack smoking. The play wright has used verbal irony to portray sarcasm, this allows the reader to connect with the comment and understand. Bracknell's characterisation throughout the play develops a sense of Victorian earnestness. Bracknell believes style and wealth are important for her daughter to be married into because she was married into the upper class of the Victorian times. Bracknell demonstrates such absurdity and sarcasm to Jack which reflects what type of character she is and her values as a mother in Victorian society. Overall Wilde uses verbal Irony to develop Lady Bracknell's thoughts on Jack marrying her daughter, the verbal irony allows the reader and the character to develop a sense of insult and mocking towards the character Jack.

The importance of Being Earnest a play created by Oscar Wilde, uses irony and character foil to expose the characters flaws and how they are developed throughout the play. Wilde has used dramatic Irony created by Jack and Algernon throughout the play to develop who they really are as a character and to reveal their true values when it comes to love. Wilde has also used character foil between Cecily and Gwendolen to contrast and juxtapose each other, which develops their values and feelings throughout the play towards their lying lovers. Wilde has used Verbal irony in which reflects the comments made by Lady Bracknell towards Jack marrying Gwendolen. Lady Bracknell uses sarcasm which is made to insult Jack, however, Wilde uses this to develop her own character and reveals how mocking and absurd she is.

Therefore, the playwright "Oscar Wilde" has successfully used the techniques irony and character foil to develop each character Jack, Algernon, Cecily, Gwendolen and Lady Bracknell throughout the play.

edubirdie.com