



**The Grammar Dog Guide to  
The Importance of  
Being Earnest  
by Oscar Wilde**

**All quizzes use sentences from the play.  
Includes over 250 multiple choice questions.**

## About Gramwardog

Gramwardog was founded in 2001 by Mary Jane McKinney, a high school English teacher and dedicated grammarian. She and other experienced English teachers in both high school and college regard grammar and style as the key to unlocking the essence of an author.

Their philosophy, that grammar and literature are best understood when learned together, led to the formation of Gramwardog.com, a means of sharing knowledge about the structure and patterns of language unique to specific authors. These patterns are what make a great book *a great book*. The arduous task of analyzing works for grammar and style has yielded a unique product, guaranteed to enlighten the reader of literary classics.

Gramwardog's strategy is to put the author's words under the microscope. The result yields an increased appreciation of the art of writing and awareness of the importance and power of language.



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**EXERCISE 5            COMPLEMENTS**

Identify the complements in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:

*d.o.* = direct object

*i.o.* = indirect object

*p.n.* = predicate nominative

*o.p.* = object of preposition

*p.a.* = predicate adjective

**ACT I**

- \_\_\_1.        The very essence of romance is uncertainty.
- \_\_\_2.        Please don't touch the cucumber sandwiches.
- \_\_\_3.        Bring me that cigarette case Mr. Worthing left in the smoking room the last time he dined here.

**EXERCISE 6            PHRASES**

Identify the phrases in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:

*par* = participial

*ger* = gerund

*inf* = infinitive

*appos* = appositive

*prep* = prepositional

**ACT I**

- \_\_\_1.        I believe it is customary in good society to take some slight refreshment at five o'clock.
- \_\_\_2.        Where have you been since last Thursday?
- \_\_\_3.        You are absurdly careless about sending out invitations.

**EXERCISE 9            STYLE: FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE**

Identify the figurative language in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:

*s* = simile

*m* = metaphor

*h* = hyperbole

*o* = onomatopoeia

*oxy* = oxymoron

**ACT I**

- \_\_\_1.        You have seen me with it a hundred times, and you have no right whatsoever to read what is written inside.
- \_\_\_2.        Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it, and the bloom is gone.
- \_\_\_3.        Oh, Gwendolen is right as a trivet.

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**EXERCISE 12      STYLE: ALLUSIONS AND SYMBOLS**

Identify the allusions and symbols in the following sentences. Label the underlined words:

*a. integrity/moral virtue      b. religion      c. social class      d. love/ courtship/marriage      e. gender equality*

**ACT I**

- \_\_\_1.      It is very romantic to be in love.
- \_\_\_2.      The Divorce Court was specially invented for people whose memories are so curiously constituted.
- \_\_\_3.      Well, in the first place girls never marry the men they flirt with.

**EXERCISE 13      STYLE: LITERARY ANALYSIS – SELECTED PASSAGE 1**

Read the following passage the first time through for meaning.

ALGERNON: Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

JACK: Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

ALGERNON: Your aunt!

JACK: Yes. Charming old lady she is, too. Lives at Tunbridge Wells. Just give it back to me, Algy.

ALGERNON: But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells? "From little Cecily with her fondest love."

JACK: My dear fellow, what on earth is there in that? Some aunts are tall, some aunts are not tall. That is a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd. For heaven's sake, give me back my cigarette case.

ALGERNON: Yes, But why does your aunt call you her uncle? "From little Cecily, with her fondest love to her dear Uncle Jack." There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can't quite make out. Besides, your name isn't Jack at all; it is Ernest.

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

ALGERNON: You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn't Ernest. It's on your cards. Here is one of them. "Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany." I'll keep this as a proof that your name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else.

JACK: Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me in the country.

Read the passage a second time, marking figurative language, sensory imagery, poetic devices, and any other patterns of diction and rhetoric, then answer the questions below.

- 1 ALGERNON: Yes; but this isn't your cigarette case. This cigarette case is a present from someone of
- 2 the name of Cecily, and you said you didn't know anyone of that name.

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3 JACK: Well, if you want to know, Cecily happens to be my aunt.

4 ALGERNON: Your aunt!

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6 ALGERNON: But why does she call herself little Cecily if she is your aunt and lives at Tunbridge Wells?

7 “From little Cecily with her fondest love.”

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9 a matter that surely an aunt may be allowed to decide for herself. You seem to think that every aunt should

10 be exactly like your aunt! That is absurd. For heaven’s sake, give me back my cigarette case.

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12 to her dear Uncle Jack.” There is no objection, I admit, to an aunt being a small aunt, but why an aunt, no

13 matter what her size may be, should call her own nephew her uncle, I can’t quite make out. Besides, your

14 name isn’t Jack at all; it is Ernest.

15 JACK: It isn’t Ernest; it’s Jack.

16 ALGERNON: You have always told me it was Ernest. I have introduced you to everyone as Ernest. You

17 answer to the name of Ernest. You look as if your name was Ernest. You are the most earnest-looking

18 person I ever saw in my life. It is perfectly absurd your saying that your name isn’t Ernest. It’s on your

19 cards. Here is one of them. “Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany.” I’ll keep this as a proof that your

20 name is Ernest if ever you attempt to deny it to me, or to Gwendolen, or to anyone else.

21 JACK: Well, my name is Ernest in town and Jack in the country, and the cigarette case was given to me

22 in the country.

\_\_\_ 1. The author uses ALL of the following devices to create wordplay EXCEPT . . .

- a. synonyms
- b. antonyms
- c. oxymorons
- d. homophones

\_\_\_ 2. The use of the word *You* in Lines 16 and 17 is an example of . . .

- a. anaphora
- b. analogy
- c. antiphrasis
- d. anadiplosis

\_\_\_ 3. The underlined words in Line 15 are an example of . . .

- a. assonance
- b. consonance
- c. alliteration
- d. rhyme

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