

# LITERATURE – 2A

Jack has just arrived at his friend Algernon's flat in London. Algernon has just discovered that Jack has two names ...

## START THINKING ...

### 1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- Is it important to have a best friend?
- Do you only have friends of your own age?
- Is it better to have just a few good friends or lots of friends?



## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST (1895) Oscar Wilde

- ALGERNON Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I have my **suspicions**. I think you're a Bunburyist, in fact I'm quite sure of it now.
- JACK Bunburyist? Whatever do you mean by a Bunburyist?
- ALGERNON Before I tell you what a Bunburyist is, answer my question: Why are you Ernest in town but Jack in  
5 the country?
- JACK It's **perfectly** simple, let me explain. As you know, my real name is Jack and when I'm in the country I'm a serious person because I'm responsible for my young niece Cecily. She lives with her **governess**, Miss Prism in my house in the country.
- ALGERNON Where is this place in the country?
- 10 JACK I'm not telling you – and it isn't near here.
- ALGERNON All right, go on with your **explanation**.
- JACK Well, I try to give Cecily a good example and I always **behave** very well when I'm with her in the country – but that's sometimes boring ...
- ALGERNON It certainly is!
- 15 JACK So, I **pretend** I've got a younger brother called Ernest.
- ALGERNON I see! You say Ernest lives in London, so you've got an **excuse** to come here when you like.
- JACK That's right. When I'm in London I pretend to be Ernest, Jack's younger brother. That means I can have fun, go to parties and do what I like. That, my dear Algy, is the whole **truth**, pure and simple.
- ALGERNON The truth is **rarely** pure and never simple – that's why life is so exciting! But I was quite right, you are a  
20 Bunburyist! In fact, you are an advanced Bunburyist!
- JACK What do you mean?
- ALGERNON You've invented a younger brother but I've invented a friend. His name is Bunbury and he lives in the country. He's always ill, poor man, so I often go to visit him.
- JACK I see, so you always have an excuse for going to the country to see your friends.
- 25 ALGERNON Exactly. Now that I know you're a Bunburyist, I want to talk about it and tell you the rules.
- JACK I'm not a Bunburyist at all! If I marry your cousin Gwendolen, Ernest will **disappear** forever ...
- ALGERNON You marry Gwendolen! That's not very likely!
- JACK She's a charming girl. I also think that your friend Mr ... with the silly name – needs to disappear too.
- ALGERNON Never! Bunbury is a very good friend to me.

## Glossary

<b>suspicion</b>	a belief or idea that something may be true
<b>perfectly</b>	completely
<b>governess</b>	a woman who lives with a family and teaches their children
<b>explanation</b>	the reasons someone gives to explain something
<b>behave</b>	to act in a particular way

<b>pretend</b>	to act as if something is true
<b>excuse</b>	a false reason that you use
<b>truth</b>	the real facts
<b>rarely</b>	not often
<b>disappear</b>	to not exist

2 **2A.1** Read the text and listen.

## 3 Read the text again. Answer the questions.

- 1 What is Jack's other name? Why has he got two names?
- 2 Why does Jack behave well with Cecily?
- 3 What is Ernest like?
- 4 Who is Mr Bunbury?
- 5 What is a Bunburyist?
- 6 What advice does Jack give Algernon?

4 **READ BETWEEN THE LINES** Answer the questions.

- 1 What is the relationship between Jack and Algernon?
- 2 Why won't Jack tell Algernon where he lives?
- 3 When and why will Ernest disappear?

5 **VOCABULARY** Complete the sentences with the correct words from the glossary in the correct form.

- 1 Queen Victoria's nine children had a \_\_\_\_\_ who taught them at home.
- 2 In Victorian society, there were harsh consequences for children who \_\_\_\_\_ badly.
- 3 There was a huge growth in population in Great Britain and Ireland between 1819 and 1901; the \_\_\_\_\_ is that it grew from 20 million to 41 million.
- 4 Poverty was a serious problem; homeless children \_\_\_\_\_ had enough to eat or drink.
- 5 Many rich people \_\_\_\_\_ that poverty didn't exist. They avoided areas where poor and homeless people lived.
- 6 There was a simple \_\_\_\_\_ for the bad living conditions. There were too many people and not enough houses.

6 **ROLE PLAY** Work in groups of three. Gwendolen is at a party in London with her friend, Toby. Toby introduces her to 'Ernest'. What happens? Student A is Gwendolen, Student B is Toby, Student C is Ernest. Read the beginning of the conversation and then continue with your own ideas.

TOBY Gwendolen! How lovely to see you. You must meet my friend Ernest. Ernest! This is my friend Gwendolen. She lives here in London too.

GWENDOLEN But this isn't Ernest. This is Jack!

7 **LISTENING 2A.2** Jack has asked Gwendolen to marry him. Listen to his conversation with Gwendolen's mother, Lady Bracknell. Complete the information.Name: Jack<sup>0</sup> WorthingAge: <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ years old.Annual income: <sup>2</sup>£ \_\_\_\_\_Address: <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ Belgrave Square, LondonNumber of relatives: <sup>4</sup> \_\_\_\_\_Found by: <sup>5</sup> \_\_\_\_\_Found in: <sup>6</sup> \_\_\_\_\_Permission to marry Gwendolen? <sup>7</sup> \_\_\_\_\_**WRITING** Summaries8 **WRITING** Write a summary of the conversation between Algernon and Jack in no more than 100 words.

- Read the dialogue and underline the key information. Try to think of answers to *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?*
- Don't copy the text. Try to use synonyms and your own words to give the same information.
- Don't include your own opinions. Only include the facts.
- When you have finished your summary read it again. Check your spelling and grammar. Delete anything that isn't important.

**THINK WIT**

Oscar Wilde is famous for his witty style of writing. An example of wit is the choice of name for one of the characters – *Ernest* is a man's name, but *Earnest* means serious. Wilde often uses words in clever ways in his writing.

## 9 Match the quotations with their meanings. Then discuss the quotations in pairs.

- 1 The truth is rarely pure and never simple. \_\_\_\_
- 2 The only good thing to do with good advice is to pass it on; it is never of any use to oneself. \_\_\_\_
- 3 I can resist everything but temptation. \_\_\_\_
  - a When people offer a suggestion, it isn't always relevant to this specific problem.
  - b I can't stop doing things I know I shouldn't.
  - c There are usually two sides to every story.