**The Importance of Being Ernest Quotes**

**Marriage:**

* Proposing is “business”
* When married the “whole excitement is over”
* “divorces are made in heaven”
* “The General was essentially a man of peace except in his domestic life”
* “Were you engaged, I or your father, should his health permit him would inform you of the fact”
* Gwendolyn says, “I never change except in my affections” – shows shallowness (surface)
* “I do not approve of mercenary marriages – when I married Lord Bracknell I had no fortune of any kind but I never dreamed of allowing that to stand in my way”
* “her hair has gone quite gold from grief”
* “she looks quite 20 years younger”
* “she seems to me to be living entirely for pleasure now”

**The Sexes**

* “noble natures” of men; equality of sexes can’t be true because of the ‘sacrifice’ of christening

**Love**

* those “much talked about are much admired”
* Is based on a name in this play
* Algy and Cecily have just met so don’t know each other
* “long engagements…give people opportunity of finding out each other’s characters before marriage”
* “no man is attractive after marriage except to his wife”; “and often…not even to her”

**Seriousness (earnestness):**

* “very nearly writing frantic letters to Scotland Yard about [the cigarette case]”
* “I hate people who are not serious about meals”
* “Ask Mr Bunbury not to have a relapse on Saturday”/total lack of sympathy at Bunbury’s death
* “we live in an age of ideals” (about marrying someone called Ernest)
* “Divine name” (Ernest)
* “I pity any woman married to a man called John”
* “Uncle Jack is so very serious. Sometimes he is so serious I think he cannot be quite well”
* “I don’t think I should care to catch a sensible man”
* “principles are at stake” – name Ernest

**Victorian Expectations/Ideals:**

**Manners**

* “absurd to have a hard and fast rule about what one should and shouldn’t read – more than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn’t read”
* “not the sort of thing one should talk of in private”

**Education**

* “[Education] produces no effect”
* “I am pleased to hear it” (knows nothing)
* “a man should have an occupation” (smoking)

**Character**

* “should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires” (about Jack’s wealth)
* “simplicity of character makes you exquisitely incomprehensible to me”
* “ I have never allowed my duty as a gentleman to interfere with my pleasures to the smallest degree”
* Cecily’s fascination with Ernest as he is wicked, only frightened he will look like everyone else.
* “I’m glad to hear it” (has been reckless)
* “I’m sure it must have been very pleasant” (of being bad)

**Pedigree**

* Lady Bracknell’s likening of Jack’s situation to the French Revolution and values position over the worth of the person

**Parent-Child Relationship**

* “Mama has a way of coming back suddenly into a room that I have often had to speak to her about”
* “Mama I must beg you to retire; this is no place for you”

**Honesty:**

* “my name is not Ernest, it’s Jack”
* Jack and Algy are Bunburyists
* “pray don’t talk to me about the weather … quite certain they mean something else”
* “the truth is not quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice sweet refined girl”
* “it’s perfectly phrased and quite as true as any observation in civilized society should be”
* “if you are not [wicked] you have been deceiving us in an inexcusable manner”
* “not leading a double life pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time; that would be hypocrisy”

**Appearances (keeping up appearances an important Victorian ideal):**

* “When one is in the position of guardian, one has to adopt a very high moral tone on all subjects”
* “it is one’s duty to do so and since a high moral tone is not…health or happiness”
* “German sounds a thoroughly respectable language” “vulgar… French”
* “shallow mask of manners”
* Talk in front of servants vs in private
* “Miss Cardew seems a most attractive young lady now that I look at her” (about her 130, 000 pounds). “So few girls have any really solid qualities that last and improve with time”
* “we live in an age of surfaces”
* “has nothing and looks everything; what more could one desire”
* Lying about age – London society full of women who are 35
* “exposed to comment” on the platform if miss any more trains

**Fantasy vs Reality:** – this can be linked to **Appearances** and **Honesty** too

* Both women keep diaries to enter the wonderful ‘secrets’ of their lives
* “memory chronicles” things that never happened
* 3 volume novels a ‘memory’ thing

**Religion:**

* Baptism relies on weather – not taken seriously