Two black silhouettes of men. The man on the left is wearing a top hat and holding a cane. The man on the right is carrying a large, round bag or suitcase.

OSCAR WILDE'S
The Importance of Being
EARNEST
Directed by Ted Pappas

STUDY GUIDE

Compiled by Angela Vincent

PITTSBURGH PUBLIC THEATER'S STUDY GUIDE TO

The Importance of Being Earnest

by Oscar Wilde

January 19 - February 19, 2006

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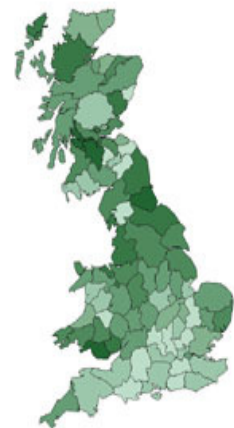
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Special thanks to The Huntington Theatre Company for allowing us to incorporate portions of their Study Guide for The Importance of Being Earnest.





Oscar Wilde

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Oscar Wilde was an extraordinary character, a coveted party guest whose witty, urbane, irreverent, wise, generous, and kind presence was sought by many. W.B. Yeats said, "...the dinner table was Wilde's event and made him the greatest talker of his time, and his plays and dialogues have what merit they possess from being an initiation, now a record, of his talk."

But Wilde was more than just a posturing aesthete. His nature was governed by an irreconcilable duality. He was the most of men yet frequently destitute, graceful while unusually muscular, whimsical though keenly observant, no one's fool and society's whipping boy. He sought refuge in his writings, in his art, but he repeatedly unmasked himself. Not uncharacteristically, his well-deserved fame was eclipsed only by his notoriety. Total ruin nipped at the heels of his most lauded success, *The Importance of Being Earnest*. "There is something vulgar in all success," he said. "The greatest men fail or seem to have failed."

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin in 1854 to notable parents. His father, Robert Wills Wilde, was a well-established surgeon (and womanizer) and his mother, Jane Francesca Elgee, wrote poetry under the name "Speranza." In this learned, if somewhat eccentric environment, Wilde was exposed to culture, drama and aesthetics. He shared this household with his elder brother Willie and younger sister Isola, who died at the age of nine.



Jane Francesca Elgee

An accomplished student, Wilde attended some of Dublin's finest educational institutions—the Protestant public school Portora Royal (1864) and Trinity College, to which he won a scholarship in 1871. He then embarked on a study of the classics at Magdalen College, Oxford in the autumn of 1874. There he began to carve out his niche. He traveled to Italy and Greece, published poetry, and won academic honors, the most prestigious of which was the Newdigate Prize for his poem "Ravenna."

Under the tutelage of such eminent fine arts scholars as John Ruskin and Walter Pater, Wilde developed his particular sense of aestheticism, which he refined to an art. He affected a languishing air, wore eccentric clothes, grew his hair long, and often carried lilies or sunflowers. He affected a precocious personality to fit the times and honed his wit, garnering both detractors (Gilbert and Sullivan satirized aestheticism in their opera *Patience* in 1881) and disciples. "It's extraordinary how soon one gets known in London," he said, after leaving Oxford.

Wilde established living quarters with artist Frank Miles. They sought the company of fellow artists (such as James McNeil Whistler and John Singer Sergeant) and prominent personalities, like the Prince of Wales and actress Lillie Langtry. His first published works, the play *Vera*; or, *The Nihilists* and a collection of poetry, called *Poems* received mixed reviews. But in 1882, due to the growing popularity of *Patience*, he was invited to visit the United States on a lecture tour of the "decorative arts," which was very successful.

Constance Lloyd



“There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written or badly written.”

Oscar Wilde

He observed that when “good Americans die, they go to Paris; when bad Americans die, they stay in America.” On his return he went to Paris and mixed with the decadent writers Paul Verlaine and Stephane Mallarme, while drafting poems and plays. Still his income was meager and always short of his extravagant spending. In 1884 he married Constance Lloyd, the beautiful young daughter of Dublin barrister, whose small fortune helped to rectify his financial difficulties. The couple took a house in London’s fashionable quarter of Chelsea and had two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan, in quick succession.

Settling into drawing room life, Wilde wrote only sporadically during the next few years. In 1887, perhaps tiring of his lifestyle, he planted his feet firmly in the literary field. He became editor of *The Woman’s World*, a progressive magazine, and held that position for two years. He published his first collection of sophisticated fairy tales, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. By 1891, he had written *Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime and Other Stories*, a collection of essays called *Intentions* and his only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).

In these murder, mystery and ghost stories, Wilde cast a wary eye to London’s darker sides. Many of the characters on these works vacillated between the actions they extolled and the feelings they concealed. Wilde continued to develop his aesthetic platform in these pieces, which was never more empathetically reasoned nor hotly contested than in *Dorian Gray*.

In direct opposition to its preface, which insists upon the separation of art from human judgment (“There is no such thing as a moral or immoral book. Books are well written or badly written”), *Dorian Gray* actually contends that life is not viable on purely aesthetic terms. But its covert homosexual suggestions and wanton protagonists galvanized readers and reviewers alike, and brought Wilde increased attention—and in particular a fateful meeting with the young Lord Alfred Douglas.



Lord Alfred Douglas

Wilde had been conscious of his homosexual tendencies for years, but apparently he did not act on them before 1886, and afterwards only with discretion. The young, spoiled, needy and very attractive Lord Alfred Douglas, also known as Bosie, was to become a great passion of his life.

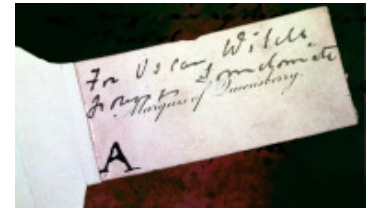
Wilde’s literary output continued with the publication of another collection of fairy tales, *A House of Pomegranates* and another play, *The Duchess of Padua*. Fortuitously, theater producer George Alexander decided to premiere plays by British authors at the St. James Theatre and offered Wilde 50 pounds to write one. The result was Wilde’s first dramatic coup, *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (1893). As Stanley Kunitz has written, “the play showed masterly stagecraft and its ebullient wit and daring paradox put it into a class of comedy that had not been seen on the English stage for a century.”

“I am dying as I have lived, beyond my means.”

Oscar Wilde

The success of this production paved the way for more theatrical endeavors. Two more comedies, *A Woman of No Importance* (1893) and *An Ideal Husband* (1895) were well received, but *Salome*, written in French for Sarah Bernhardt, was refused a license due to its Biblical themes. Wilde commissioned artist Aubrey Beardsley to render the drawings in the English edition, which were considered infamously “naughty.”

The debut of Wilde’s most brilliant comedy, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, on February 14, 1895, marked his greatest stage triumph. “It is delightful to see, it sends wave after wave of laughter, curling and foaming around the theater,” wrote critic William Archer. Enthusiastic audiences agreed. But *Earnest* also led to a nightmarish descent into disrepute and public scorn. The father of Alfred Douglas, the Marquess of Queensbury, outraged by his son’s relationship with Wilde, went to the theater on opening night. Denied entrance, he left a bouquet of vegetables and four days later followed it with an insulting card, sent to his club: “For Oscar Wilde, posing somdomite [sic].”



Card sent by Marquess of Queensbury

Wilde was advised by friends to be prudent and leave the country. “Prudent? How can I be that? It would mean going backward. I must go as far as possible,” he responded. Prodded by Douglas, he sued the Marquess for libel, but when his own homosexual activity came under scrutiny during the rigorous cross-examination, he was arrested on the lesser charge for committing indecent acts (homosexuality was illegal in England at the time). Two trials followed; the first ended in a hung jury and the second found Wilde guilty, as much for his aesthetic proclivities as his sexual activities. Wilde was sentenced to two years imprisonment with hard labor, the harshest sentence allowed.

Prison life broke Wilde’s spirit and his health. From prison he wrote a long letter to Douglas, later published as *De Profundis*, in which he attempted to reconcile his latent spirituality with the galling realities life had imposed upon him. Constance sought a legal separation, friends deserted him, and the press vilified his name.

After his release, Wilde left England forever and eventually settled in France. He saw Douglas intermittently. His last piece of writing, penned under the assumed name of Sebastian Melmouth, was *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), a moving account of a fellow convict’s hanging and a plea that all be forgiven. Wilde’s wife died later the same year, and the writer himself was stricken with cerebral meningitis. Though at the end of his life he was terribly unhappy, poor and chastened, Wilde is reported to have quipped on his deathbed, “I am dying as I have lived, beyond my means.” He converted at the last to Catholicism and died on November 30, 1990 at the age of 46. His tombstone reads “To my words they durst add nothing, and my speech dropped upon them,” an excerpt from the book of Job.

Principal Works of Oscar Wilde

Reprinted with permission from the Huntington Theatre Company Study Guide for *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Plays

	First Published
<i>Vera, or The Nihilists</i>	1880
<i>The Duchess of Padua</i>	1883
	First Produced
<i>Salome</i> (in French; translated to English, 1894)	1893
<i>Lady Windermere's Fan</i>	1892
<i>A Woman of No Importance</i>	1893
<i>An Ideal Husband</i>	1895
<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	1895

Poetry

	First Published
<i>Ravenna</i>	1848
<i>Poems</i>	1881
<i>The Sphinx</i>	1894
<i>The Ballad of Reading Gaol</i>	1898

Non-Theatrical Prose

<i>The Happy Prince and Other Tales</i>	1888
<i>The Portrait of Mr. W.H.</i>	1889
<i>The Soul of Man Under Socialism</i>	1891
<i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i>	1891
<i>Intentions</i>	1891
<i>Lord Arthur Savile's Crime and Other Stories</i>	1891
<i>A House of Pomegranates</i>	1891
<i>De Profundis</i>	1905

What's the Story?

Reprinted with permission from The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis Study Guide for *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

As Oscar Wilde stated, *The Importance of Being Earnest* is “A Trivial Comedy for Serious People.” The brilliance and wit of the play lie in the dialogue, however, and not the plot. This should be taken into account when reading any summary of the play.

The Importance of Being Earnest takes place in London and the countryside in 1895, the last few years of the period that would be termed Victorian England. The English aristocracy flourished during this time. It is this group on which Wilde's satire focuses, along with their view that marriage has nothing to do with love, but is rather a means for achieving social status.

Act I

Algernon Moncrieff, an upper-class English Bachelor, and his Manservant, Lane, are preparing for the arrival of Algernon's aunt, the Lady Bracknell. He is visited by his friend Jack Worthing—though Algernon knows Jack as “Ernest.” Jack reveals that he has come to town to propose to Gwendolyn Fairfax, the daughter of Lady Bracknell. Algernon jokingly tells him that, as Gwendolen's first cousin, he refuses to give consent for the marriage until Jack can explain why the name Cecily is inscribed in his cigarette case. After making up a story about Cecily being an old (but tiny) aunt, Jack finally admits that Cecily is his young, beautiful ward who lives in the country. This is precisely the information Algernon is seeking. Jack also admits that his name is not Ernest, but rather Jack; he goes by Jack in the country and Ernest in the city. Algernon confirms a suspicion he has long had by accusing Jack of “Bunburying,” or making up a situation in order to be able to escape unwanted social responsibilities. Algernon explains that he himself has an imaginary friend called Bunbury who frequently gets sick, giving Algernon an excuse to get out of social obligations such as family dinner parties.

“It is very romantic to be in love. But there is nothing romantic about a definite proposal.”
Algernon, Act I

“The truth is rarely pure and never simple.”
Algernon, Act I

The Honorable Gwendolen Fairfax and the Lady Bracknell arrive at Algernon's flat for tea. Algernon tells Lady Bracknell that, due to the illness of his friend Bunbury, he must leave London, and as a result will not be able to attend her dinner that night. Algy distracts her in another room so that Jack can make his marriage proposal to Gwendolen. Jack tells Gwendolen that he loves her, and she replies that she loves him too, particularly because he is named Ernest, a name that “seems to inspire absolute confidence.” Jack, knowing that his name is actually Jack, gets worried, and privately resolves to get baptized to change his name. Gwendolen meanwhile, accepts his proposal just as Lady Bracknell returns; Lady Bracknell announces that Gwendolen may not marry Jack until she gives her approval. Algernon and Gwendolen exit while Lady Bracknell interrogates Jack to determine how suitable a husband he is. She is pleased with his answers until she asks him about his parents. When Jack admits that he was abandoned by his parents and found in a handbag by a Mr. Thomas Cardew in Victoria Station, Lady

“No married man is ever attractive except to his wife.” Miss Prism, Act II

Bracknell is horrified. She refuses to let her daughter marry a man with no knowledge of his own parentage, and suggests to Jack that he “produce at least one parent before the season is over.”

Gwendolen returns, having heard of Lady Bracknell’s disapproval, and she asks Jack for his address in the country. Algernon overhears it and copies it down.

Act II

At Jack’s country estate, his ward, Cecily, is learning German and geography at the hands of Miss Prism, a tutor who once wrote a long novel that mysteriously disappeared. The house Rector, Dr. Chasuble, arrives and begins to flirt with Miss Prism. While she is taking a walk with him, Algernon, pretending to be Jack’s brother Ernest, arrives to meet Cecily. The two show an immediate romantic interest in one another. As they leave, Prism and Chasuble return and meet Jack as he arrives back home from the city. He is dressed in mourning clothes in order to keep up the ruse that his brother, who does not actually exist, has died. While Jack is speaking with Chasuble and Prism, Cecily comes out of the house and informs him that his brother has arrived. Jack is shocked and angered when his “brother” Algernon comes out of the house. As the others exit to allow the two reunited brothers time to resolve their differences, Jack tells Algernon that he must leave the house at once. Algernon replies insincerely that he will, but only if Jack changes out of his morbid mourning clothes. As Jack exits to do so, Cecily returns. Algernon proposes to her and she agrees, although she tells him that she particularly loves him because his name is Ernest, and that she pities any poor married woman whose husband is not called “Ernest.” Cecily, in fact has already been pretending in her journal to be engaged to “Ernest” ever since she first discovered that her guardian had an unsavory, dangerous brother by that name. Algernon begins to worry that he is not named Ernest, and he also resolves to get christened.

**“And of course a man who is much talked about is always very attractive. One feels there must be something in him after all.”
Cecily, Act II**

After Algernon exists, Gwendolen arrives to see Jack, but in the meantime she chats with Cecily, whom she has never before met. Gwendolen is surprised to hear that “Ernest” has a ward but has never told her about it. Cecily is confused when Gwendolen says that she is engaged to Ernest, and their relationship becomes very cold as they realize that they may be engaged to the same man. Both try to refute the engagement claims of the other until Algernon and Jack return. When the two young ladies begin to question the men in order to resolve their own engagement, the men confess they have lied and that neither of them is named Ernest. The two women are shocked and retreat together into the house. Meanwhile, Jack begins to panic while Algernon sits back and eats all the muffins.

Act III

Inside the Manor House, Algernon and Jack join Cecily and Gwendolen. Algernon tells Cecily that he lied to her only so that he could have a chance to see her, and Jack confesses to Gwendolen that he lied to her about having a brother so that he could spend more time in the city with her. The women are satisfied, although they still cannot accept the men because they are not named Ernest. When the men reply that they scheduled to be christened that afternoon, all seems well until Lady Bracknell arrives. She again refuses to give her consent regarding Gwendolen’s engagement.

Algernon tells her that he is engaged to Cecily, and when Lady Bracknell learns that Cecily is extremely wealthy thanks to her father's estate, she gives her consent. However, as Cecily's legal guardian, Jack will not give his consent to his marriage unless Lady Bracknell approves of his engagement to Gwendolen. Lady Bracknell refuses yet again and prepares to leave with Gwendolen. Dr. Chasuble enters and learns that the christenings will no longer be necessary, so he states that he will return to Miss Prism. Lady Bracknell, hearing the name Prism, asks to see this woman because she suspects she may be the same person that once took care of her sister's baby. When Miss Prism arrives, Lady Bracknell demands to know what happened to the baby that had disappeared twenty-eight years previously when Miss Prism was supposed to be taking it for a stroll in the perambulator. Miss Prism confesses that she accidentally put her three-volume novel in the perambulator and the baby in her handbag, which she mistakenly left in the cloakroom of Victoria Station. Jack suddenly realizing that he was that baby, fetches the briefcase in which he was found, which Miss Prism confirms as being hers. Lady Bracknell tells Jack that he is the son of her sister and the elder brother of Algernon. A search through the military periodicals of the time reveals that their father's first name was Ernest, and because first sons are always named after the father, they realize Jack's name has, indeed, all along been Ernest. Overjoyed, Jack realizes he has been telling the truth his whole life even though he thought he was lying.

***“In matters of grave importance, style, not sincerity, is the vital thing.”
Gwendolyn,
Act III***

In the end, he is permitted to marry Gwendolen, Algernon is permitted to marry Cecily, and although Lady Bracknell accuses Jack of triviality, he retorts that he has only just discovered “the vital Importance of Being Earnest.”

Who's Who

Reprinted with permission from The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis Study Guide for *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Lane is Algernon's manservant at his flat in London.

Algernon Moncrieff is a young bachelor who lives in London. He is a good friend of Jack, although at the start of the play he believes his name to be Ernst. Algy is a member of the Victorian upper class, but his primary pursuit in life—Burnburying—has left him with considerable debts. He falls in love with Jack's ward, Cecily, shortly after meeting her.

John Worthing, J.P. wishes to marry Lady Gwendolyn, but he cannot secure the approval of her mother, Lady Bracknell. When he is in the city, he goes by the name of Ernst; when he is in the country, he goes by the name of Jack, which he believes is his real name. As a baby, Jack was discovered in a handbag in a cloakroom at Victoria Station. Therefore, he does not know his own history or his true family. He is the legal guardian of Cecily Cardew.

Lady Bracknell is the mother of Gwendolyn and the aunt of Algernon. A member of the aristocracy, she has an overpowering, confident demeanor. She forbids Gwendolyn to marry Jack.

Hon. Gwendolyn Fairfax is the young, beautiful daughter of Lady Bracknell. She is in love with Jack, but a large part of her attraction comes from her belief that his name is Ernst.

Merriman is Jack's Butler at the Manor house.

Cecily Cardew is Jack's daydreaming niece and ward. Cecily falls in love with Algernon, believing him to be Jack's ne'r-do-well brother, Ernst. She will be given access to a large sum of money when she comes of age.

Miss Prism is Cecily's tutor, and a strong proponent of Victorian morality. She once wrote a three-volume novel and she enjoys flirting with Dr. Chasuble.

Rev. Canon Chasuble, D.D. is the Rector of the church in the country, and he has something of a crush on Miss Prism. Jack and Algy each ask him to rechristen them Ernst.

NOTE: In the 2006 production at the Pittsburgh Public Theater, there are three additional actors cast as *Servants*.



Photos from the 1895 original production at the St. James's Theatre.

Words to the Wise

Reprinted with permission from The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis Study Guide for *The Importance of Being Earnest*.



cucumber sandwich—This is one of many popular sandwiches intended to be served with tea.

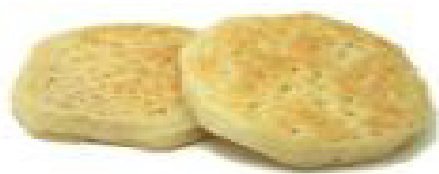
Recipes vary, but this will get you close: 8 oz. cream cheese, ½ cup mayo, 1 pkg. dry Italian salad dressing, 3 - 4 medium size cucumbers, 1 loaf of bread, any type. Mash mayo and cheese together. Mix in salad dressing. Peel and dice cucumber and add to mixture. Leaving the bread crust is optional. Spread mixture on bread and cut in fourths diagonally.

Shropshire—Shropshire is a county west of London known for its sheep.

Turnbridge Wells—This is a city in Kent in southeast England.

Bunburyist—Although not a real word, Bunburyist became often-used throughout English speaking countries because of the popularity of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. It refers to Algernon's made-up friend Bunbury, whom he uses as an excuse to get out of social responsibilities.

Wagnerian manner—This phrase implies a loud, demonstrative nature, like the music of German composer Richard Wagner.



crumpet—Also called an English muffin, a crumpet is flat, round, piece of bread, baked on a griddle and usually served toasted.

expurgation—This term refers to the act of removing erroneous or vulgar material from something (such as a book)

before it is exposed to the public.

purple of commerce—This is another phrase coined by Wilde. It implies money that comes through work or trade rather than from a privileged birth.

trivet—A trivet is a small, three legged table. Jack uses the term to imply that Gwendolyn is stable and agreeable.

Gorgon—In Greek mythology, the three sisters Stheno, Euryale and Medusa were known as the Gorgons. Each had snakes for hair, and anyone looking into their eyes turned to stone.

profligate—Profligate describes something or someone that is shamefully immoral.

vacillate—To vacillate is to swing from one side to the other. When describing a person, it means he or she cannot decide on a course of action and jumps from one activity to another without completing anything.

Egeria—Egeria is a female advisor or counselor. The word derives from the name of a goddess who served as advisor to a mythic Roman king.

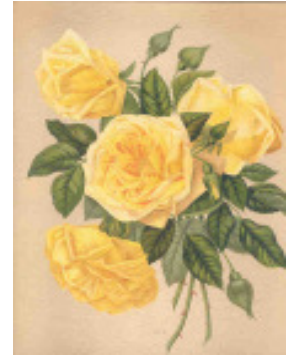


Evensong—Evensong is another word for a daily evening service in the Anglican Church.

rupee—The rupee is the basic monetary unit of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius.

quixotic—To be quixotic means to be caught up in the pursuit of unreachable, idealistic goals. It comes from the novel Don Quixote by Miguel De Cervantes, Thomas Shelton (translator).

buttonhole—Men in Victorian England often placed a flower through the buttonhole of their coat.



Marechal Niel—A Marechal Niel is a variety of rose, fragrant and soft yellow in color.

misanthrope—Someone who hates and mistrusts mankind is called a misanthrope.

womanthrope—Although not a real word, Miss Prism's meaning is clear: a womanthrope is one who does not trust women.

neologistic—This refers to a new word or a new meaning for a word.

interment—Interment is the act or ritual of interring or burying.

portmanteau—This is a large trunk that opens into two hinged compartments.

dog cart—A dog cart is a light, two-wheeled, horse-drawn vehicle.

equanimity—Equanimity is the quality of being calm and even-tempered.

philanthropic work—This refers to the practice of donating money, property or time to persons or groups in need.

terminus—A terminus is the end point of a transportation line.

Oxonian—An Oxonian is a graduate of Oxford University.



Anabaptists—The Anabaptists were a religious group that sprang from the 16th century Reformation. They did not ascribe to baptism.

perambulator—Perambulator is a British word for baby carriage.

MAP OF THE UNITED KINGDOM



Manor House in Hertfordshire County. Setting of The Importance of Being Earnest, Act II and Act III. About 30 miles north of London.

Algernon Moncrieff's Flat in at Half Moon St., W. London. Setting of The Importance of Being Earnest, Act I.

THE UNITED KINGDOM TODAY: GEOGRAPHY

Location: Western Europe and includes the Shetland Islands and the most northern part of Ireland.

Area: The UK is a total of 244,820 square kilometers and is only slightly smaller than Oregon, which is 251,418 kilometers or 97,060 square miles.

THE UNITED KINGDOM TODAY: THE PEOPLE

Population: 60,441,457. This is about one fifth the United States population of 295,734,134.

Nationality: *Adjective*, British; *Noun*, Briton (s), British (collective plural).

Ethnicity: 92.1% are white, 2% are black, 1.8% are Indian, 1.3% are Pakistani, and 2.8% are mixed and other.

Religions: 71.6% are Christian, 23.1% are unspecified or none, 2.7% are Muslim, and 1% are Hindu, and other is 1.6%.

The History of Tea

Reprinted from <<http://www.stashtea.com/facts.htm>>.

The Legendary Origins of Tea

The story of tea began in ancient China over 5,000 years ago. According to legend, Shen Nung, an early emperor was a skilled ruler, creative scientist and patron of the arts. His far-sighted edicts required, among other things, that all drinking water be boiled as a hygienic precaution. One summer day while visiting a distant region of his realm, he and the court stopped to rest. In accordance with his ruling, the servants began to boil water for the court to drink. **Dried leaves from the near by bush fell into the boiling water, and a brown liquid was infused into the water.** As a scientist, the Emperor was interested in the new liquid, drank some, and found it very refreshing. And so, according to legend, tea was created. (This myth maintains such a practical narrative, that many mythologists believe it may relate closely to the actual events, now lost in ancient history.)

The Chinese Influence

Tea consumption spread throughout the Chinese culture reaching into every aspect of the society. In 800 A.D. Lu Yu wrote the first definitive book on tea, the Ch'a Ching. This amazing man was orphaned as a child and raised by scholarly Buddhist monks in one of China's finest monasteries. However, as a young man, he rebelled against the discipline of priestly training which had made him a skilled observer. His fame as a performer increased with each year, but he felt his life lacked meaning. Finally, in mid-life, he retired for five years into seclusion. Drawing from his vast memory of observed events and places, he codified the various methods of tea cultivation and preparation in ancient China. The vast definitive nature of his work, projected him into near sainthood within his own lifetime. Patronized by the Emperor himself, his work clearly showed the Zen Buddhist philosophy to which he was exposed as a child. It was this form of tea service that Zen Buddhist missionaries would later introduce to imperial Japan.

The Japanese Influence

The first tea seeds were brought to Japan by the returning Buddhist priest Yeisei, who had seen the value of tea in China in enhancing religious mediation. As a result, he is known as the "Father of Tea" in Japan. Because of this early association, tea in Japan has always been associated with Zen Buddhism. Tea received almost instant imperial sponsorship and spread rapidly from the royal court and monasteries to the other sections of Japanese society. **Tea was elevated to an art form resulting in the creation of the Japanese Tea Ceremony ("Cha-no-yu" or "the hot water for tea").** The best description of this complex art form was probably written by the Irish-Greek journalist-historian Lafcadio Hearn, one of the few foreigners ever to be granted Japanese citizenship during this era. He wrote from personal observation, *"The Tea ceremony requires years of training and practice to graduate in art...yet the whole of this art, as to its detail, signifies no more than the making and serving of a cup of tea. The supremely important matter is that the act be performed in the most perfect, most polite, most graceful, most charming manner possible"*.

Such a purity of form, of expression prompted the creation of supportive arts and services. A special form of architecture (chaseki) developed for "tea houses", based on the duplication of the simplicity of a forest cottage. The cultural/artistic hostesses of Japan, the Geishi, began to specialize in the presentation of the tea ceremony. As more and more people became involved in the excitement surrounding tea, the purity of the original Zen concept was lost. The tea ceremony became corrupted, boisterous and highly embellished. "Tea Tournaments" were held among the wealthy where nobles competed among each other for rich prizes in naming various tea blends. Rewarding winners with gifts of silk, armor, and jewelry was totally alien to the original Zen attitude of the ceremony.

Three great Zen priests restored tea to its original place in Japanese society:

Ikkyu (1394-1481)-a prince who became a priest and was successful in guiding the nobles away from their corruption of the tea ceremony.

Murata Shuko (1422-1502)-the student of Ikkyu and very influential in re-introducing the Tea ceremony into Japanese society.

Sen-no Rikkyu (1521-1591)-priest who set the rigid standards for the ceremony, largely used intact today. Rikyo was successful in influencing the Shogun Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who became Japan's greatest patron of the "art of tea". A brilliant general, strategist, poet, and artist this unique leader facilitated the final and complete integration of tea into the pattern of Japanese life. So complete was this acceptance, that tea was viewed as the ultimate gift, and warlords paused for tea before battles.

Europe Learns of Tea

While tea was at this high level of development in both Japan and China, information concerning this then unknown beverage began to filter back to Europe. Earlier caravan leaders had mentioned it, but were unclear as to its service format or appearance. (One reference suggests the leaves be boiled, salted, buttered, and eaten!) **The first European to personally encounter tea and write about it was the Portuguese Jesuit Father Jasper de Cruz in 1560.** Portugal, with her technologically advanced navy, had been successful in gaining the first right of trade with China. It was as a missionary on that first commercial mission that Father de Cruz had tasted tea four years before. The Portuguese developed a trade route by which they shipped their tea to Lisbon, and then Dutch ships transported it to France, Holland, and the Baltic countries. (At that time Holland was politically affiliated with Portugal. When this alliance was altered in 1602, Holland, with her excellent navy, entered into full Pacific trade in her own right.)



Tea Comes to Europe

When tea finally arrived in Europe, Elizabeth I had more years to live, and Rembrandt was only six years old. **Because of the success of the Dutch navy in the Pacific, tea became very fashionable in the Dutch capital, the Hague.** This was due in part to the high cost of the tea (over \$100 per pound) which immediately made it the domain of the wealthy. Slowly, as the amount of tea imported increased, the price fell as the volume of sale expanded. Initially available to the public in apothecaries along with such rare and new spices as ginger and sugar, by 1675 it was available in common food shops throughout Holland.

As the consumption of tea increased dramatically in Dutch society, doctors and university authorities argued back and forth as to the negative and/or positive benefits of tea. Known as "tea heretics", the public largely ignored the scholarly debate and continued to enjoy their new beverage though the controversy lasted from 1635 to roughly 1657. Throughout this period France and Holland led Europe in the use of tea.

As the craze for things oriental swept Europe, tea became part of the way of life. The social critic Marie de Rabutin-Chantal, the Marquise de Seven makes the first mention in 1680 of adding milk to tea. During the same period, Dutch inns provided the first restaurant service of tea. Tavern owners would furnish guests with a portable tea set complete with a heating unit. The independent Dutchman would then prepare tea for himself and his friends outside in the tavern's garden. Tea remained popular in France for only about fifty years, being replaced by a stronger preference for wine, chocolate, and exotic coffees.

Tea Comes to America

By 1650 the Dutch were actively involved in trade throughout the Western world. Peter Stuyvesant brought the first tea to America to the colonists in the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam

(later re-named New York by the English). **Settlers here were confirmed tea drinkers.** And indeed, on acquiring the colony, the English found that the small settlement consumed more tea at that time than all of England put together.

Tea Arrives in England

Great Britain was the last of the three great sea-faring nations to break into the Chinese and East Indian trade routes. This was due in part to the unsteady ascension to the throne of the Stuarts and the Cromwellian Civil War. The first samples of tea reached England between 1652 and 1654. **Tea quickly proved popular enough to replace ale as the national drink of England.**

As in Holland, it was the nobility that provided the necessary stamp of approval and so insured its acceptance. King Charles II had married, while in exile, the Portuguese Infanta Catherine de Braganza (1662). Charles himself had grown up in the Dutch capital. As a result, both he and his Portuguese bride were confirmed tea drinkers. When the monarchy was re-established, the two rulers brought this foreign tea tradition to England with them. **As early as 1600 Elizabeth I had founded the John company for the purpose of promoting Asian trade.** When Catherine de Braganza married Charles she brought as part of her dowry the territories of Tangier and Bombay. Suddenly, the John Company had a base of operations.

The John Company

The John Company was granted the unbelievably wide monopoly of all trade east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of Cape Horn. Its powers were almost without limit and included among others the right to: Legally acquire territory and govern it. Coin money. Raise arms and build forts. Form foreign alliances. Declare war. Conclude peace. Pass laws. Try and punish law breakers.

It was the single largest, most powerful monopoly to ever exist in the world. And its power was based on the importation of tea. At the same time, the newer East India Company floundered against such competition. Appealing to Parliament for relief, the decision was made to merge the John Company and the East India Company (1773). Their re-drafted charts gave the new East India Company a complete and total trade monopoly on all commerce in China and India. As a result, the price of tea was kept artificially high, leading to later global difficulties for the British crown.

Afternoon Tea in England

Tea mania swept across England as it had earlier spread throughout France and Holland. Tea importation rose from 40,000 pounds in 1699 to an annual average of 240,000 pounds by 1708. Tea was drunk by all levels of society.

Prior to the introduction of tea into Britain, the English had two main meals-breakfast and dinner. Breakfast was ale, bread and beef. Dinner was a long, massive meal at the end of the day. It was no wonder that Anna, the Duchess of Bedford (1788-1861) experienced a “sinking feeling” in the late afternoon. Adopting the European tea service format, she invited friends to join her for an additional afternoon meal at five o’clock in her rooms at Belvoir Castle. The menu centered around small cakes, bread and butter sandwiches, assorted sweets, and, of course, tea.



Tea by James Tissot, 1872
(Metropolitan Museum Of Art, New York)

This summer practice proved so popular, the Duchess continued it when she returned to London, sending cards to her friends asking them to join her for “tea and a walking the fields.” (London at that time still contained large open meadows within the city.) The practice of inviting friends to come for tea in the afternoon was quickly picked up by other social hostesses.

A common pattern of service soon merged. The first pot of tea was made in the kitchen and carried to the lady of the house who waited with her invited guests, surrounded by fine porcelain from China. The first pot was warmed by the hostess from a second pot (usually silver) that was kept heated over a small flame. **Food and tea was then passed among the guests, the main purpose of the visiting being conversation.**

Tea Cuisine

Tea cuisine quickly expanded in range to quickly include wafer thin crustless sandwiches, shrimp or fish pates, toasted breads with jams, and regional British pastries such as scones (Scottish) and crumpets (English).

At this time two distinct forms of tea services evolved: "High" and "Low". "Low" Tea (served in the low part of the afternoon) was served in aristocratic homes of the wealthy and featured gourmet tidbits rather than solid meals. The emphasis was on presentation and conversation. "High" Tea or "Meat Tea" was the main or "High" meal of the day. It was the major meal of the middle and lower classes and consisted of mostly full dinner items such as roast beef, mashed potatoes, peas, and of course, tea.

Coffee Houses

Tea was the major beverage served in the coffee houses, but they were so named because coffee arrived in England some years before tea. Exclusively for men, they were called "Penny Universities" because for a penny any man could obtain a pot of tea, a copy of the newspaper, and engage in conversation with the sharpest wits of the day. The various houses specialized in selected areas of interest, some serving attorneys, some authors, others the military. They were the forerunner of the English gentlemen's private club. One such beverage house was owned by Edward Lloyd and was favored by shipowners, merchants and marine insurers. That simple shop was the origin of Lloyd's, the worldwide insurance firm. Attempts to close the coffee houses were made throughout the eighteenth century because of the free speech they encouraged, but such measures proved so unpopular they were always quickly revoked.

Tea Gardens

Experiencing the Dutch "tavern garden teas", the English developed the idea of Tea Gardens. Here ladies and gentlemen took their tea out of doors surrounded by entertainment such as orchestras, hidden arbors, flowered walks, bowling greens, concerts, gambling, or fireworks at night. It was at just such a Tea Garden that Lord Nelson, who defeated Napoleon by sea, met the great love of his life, Emma, later Lady Hamilton. Women were permitted to enter a mixed, public gathering for the first time without social criticism. As the gardens were public, British society mixed here freely for the first time, cutting across lines of class and birth.

Tipping as a response to proper service developed in the Tea Gardens of England. Small, locked wooden boxes were placed on the tables throughout the Garden. Inscribed on each were the letters "T.I.P.S." which stood for the sentence "To Insure Prompt Service". If a guest wished the waiter to hurry (and so insure the tea arrived hot from the often distant kitchen) he dropped a coin into the box on being seated "to insure prompt service". Hence, the custom of tipping servers was created.

Russian Tea Tradition

Imperial Russia was attempting to engage China and Japan in trade at the same time as the East Indian Company. The Russian interest in tea began as early as 1618 when the Chinese embassy in Moscow presented several chests of tea to Czar Alexis. By 1689 the Trade Treaty of Newchinsk established a common border between Russia and China, allowing caravans to then cross back

and forth freely. Still, the journey was not easy. The trip was 11,000 miles long and took over sixteen months to complete. The average caravan consisted of 200 to 300 camels. As a result of such factors, the cost of tea was initially prohibitive and available only to the wealthy. By the time Catherine the Great died (1796), the price had dropped some, and tea was spreading throughout Russian society. Tea was ideally suited to Russian life: hearty, warm, and sustaining.

The samovar, adopted from the Tibetan “hot pot”, is a combination bubbling hot water heater and tea pot. Placed in the center of the Russian home, it could run all day and serve up to forty cups of tea at a time. **Again showing the Asian influence in the Russian culture, guests sipped their tea from glasses in silver holders, very similar to Turkish coffee cups.** The Russians have always favored strong tea highly sweetened with sugar, honey, or jam.

With the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railroad in 1900, the overland caravans were abandoned. Although the Revolution intervened in the flow of the Russian society, tea remained a staple throughout. Tea (along with vodka) is the national drink of the Russians today.

Tea and America

It was not until 1670 that English colonists in Boston became aware of tea, and it was not publicly available for sale until twenty years later. Tea Gardens were first opened in New York City, already aware of tea as a former Dutch colony. The new Gardens were centered around the natural springs, which the city fathers now equipped with pumps to facilitate the “tea craze”. The most famous of these “tea springs” was at Roosevelt and Chatham (later Park Row Street).

By 1720 tea was a generally accepted staple of trade between the Colony and the Mother country. It was especially a favorite of colonial women, a factor England was to base a major political decision on later. Tea trade was centered in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, future centers of American rebellion. **As tea was heavily taxed, even at this early date, contraband tea was smuggled into the colonies by the independent minded American merchants from ports far away and adopted herbal teas from the Native Americans.** The directors of the then John Company (to merge later with the East India Company) fumed as they saw their profits diminish and they pressured Parliament to take action. It was not long in coming.

Tea and the American Revolution

England had recently completed the French and Indian War, fought, from England’s point of view, to free the colony from French influence and stabilize trade. It was the feeling of Parliament that as a result, it was not unreasonable that the colonists shoulder the majority of the cost. After all, the war had been fought for their benefit. Charles Townshend presented the first tax measures which today are known by his name. They imposed a higher tax on newspapers (which they considered far too outspoken in America), tavern licenses (too much free speech there), legal documents, marriage licenses, and docking papers. The colonists rebelled against taxes imposed upon them without their consent and which were so repressive. New, heavier taxes were leveled by Parliament for such rebellion. Among these was, in June 1767, the tea tax that was to become the watershed of America’s desire for freedom. (Townshend died three months later of a fever never to know his tax measures helped create a free nation.)

The colonists rebelled and openly purchased imported tea, largely Dutch in origin. The John company, already in deep financial trouble saw its profits fall even further. By 1773 the John Company merged with the East India Company for structural stability and pleaded with the Crown for assistance. The new Lord of the Treasury, Lord North, as a response to this pressure, granted to the new Company permission to sell directly to the colonists, by-passing the colonial merchants and pocketing the difference. In plotting this strategy, England was counting on the well known passion among American women for tea to force consumption. It was a major miscalculation. Throughout the colonies, women pledged publicly at meetings and in newspapers not to drink English sold tea until their free rights (and those of their merchant husbands) were restored.

America Enters the Tea Trade

The first three American millionaires, T. H. Perkins of Boston, Stephen Girard of Philadelphia, and John Jacob Astor of New York, all made their fortunes in the China trade. America began direct trade with China soon after the Revolution was over in 1789. **America's newer, faster clipper ships outsailed the slower, heavier English "tea wagons" that had until then dominated the trade.** This forced the English navy to update their fleet, a fact America would have to address in the War of 1812.

The new American ships established sailing records that still stand for speed and distance. John Jacob Astor began his tea trading in 1800. He required a minimum profit on each venture of 50% and often made 100%. Stephen Girard of Philadelphia was known as the "gentle tea merchant". His critical loans to the young (and still weak) American government enabled the nation to re-arm for the War of 1812. The orphanage founded by him still perpetuates his good name. Thomas Perkins was from one of Boston's oldest sailing families. The Chinese trust in him as a gentleman of his word enabled him to conduct enormous transactions half way around the world without a single written contract. His word and his handshake was enough so great was his honor in the eyes of the Chinese. It is to their everlasting credit that none of these men ever paid for tea with opium. America was able to break the English tea monopoly because its ships were faster and America paid in gold.

The Clipper Days

By the mid-1800's the world was involved in a global clipper race as nations competed with each other to claim the fastest ships. England and America were the leading rivals. Each year the tall ships would race from China to the Tea Exchange in London to bring in the first tea for auction. Though beginning half way around the world, the mastery of the crews was such that the great ships often raced up the Thames separated by only by minutes. But by 1871 the newer steamships began to replace these great ships.

The Scottish botanist/adventurer Robert Fortune, who spoke fluent Chinese, was able to sneak into mainland China the first year after the Opium War. He obtained some of the closely guarded tea seeds and made notes on tea cultivation. With support from the Crown, various experiments in growing tea in India were attempted. Many of these failed due to bad soil selection and incorrect planting techniques, ruining many a younger son of a noble family. Through each failure, however, the technology was perfected. Finally, after years of trial and error, fortunes made and lost, the English tea plantations in India and other parts of Asia flourished. The great English tea marketing companies were founded and production mechanized as the world industrialized in the late 1880's.

Tea Inventions in America: Iced Tea and Teabags

America stabilized her government, strengthened her economy, and expanded her borders and interests. By 1904 the United States was ready for the world to see her development at the St. Louis World's Fair. Trade exhibitors from around the world brought their products to America's first World's Fair. One such merchant was Richard Blechynden, a tea plantation owner. Originally, he had planned to give away free samples of hot tea to fair visitors. But when a heat wave hit, no one was interested. **To save his investment of time and travel, he dumped a load of ice into the brewed tea and served the first "iced tea".** It was (along with the Egyptian fan dancer) the hit of the Fair. Four years later, Thomas Sullivan of New York developed the concept of "bagged tea". As a tea merchant, he carefully wrapped each sample delivered to restaurants for their consideration. He recognized a natural marketing opportunity when he realized the restaurants were brewing the samples "in the bags" to avoid the mess of tea leaves in the kitchens.

Tea Rooms, Tea Courts, and Tea Dances

Beginning in the late 1880's in both America and England, fine hotels began to offer tea service in tea rooms and tea courts. **Served in the late afternoon, Victorian ladies (and their gentlemen friends) could meet for tea and conversation. Many of these tea services became the hallmark of the elegance of the hotel, such as the tea services at the Ritz (Boston) and the Plaza (New York).** By 1910 hotels began to host afternoon tea dances as dance craze after dance craze swept the United States and England. Often considered wasteful by older people they provided a place for the new "working girl" to meet men in a city, far from home and family. (Indeed, the editor of Vogue once fired a large number of female secretarial workers for "wasting their time at tea dances").

Victorian Ethics

Reprinted with permission from the Huntington Theatre Company Study Guide for *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

During the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901), Britannia ruled not just the waves but one quarter of the world's population and one quarter of the world's land. London, her mother city, was prosperous and proud. Wealthy Victorians relished their stability and sought to maintain it, no matter what the cost.

John Buchan, describing the London Society of his youth, wrote in 1989:



London at the turn of the century had not yet lost her Georgian air. Her ruling society was aristocratic till Queen Victoria's death and preserved the modes and rites of aristocracy. Her great houses had not disappeared or become blocks of flats. In the summer she was a true city of pleasure, every window-box gay with flowers, her streets full of splendid equipages, the Park a show ground for fine horses and handsome men and women. The ritual went far down, for frock-coats and top-hats were the common wear not only for the West End, but about the Law Courts and in the City. On Sunday afternoons we dutifully paid a round of calls. Conversation was not the casual thing it has now become, but was something of an art, in which competence conferred prestige. Also, clubs were still in their hey-day, their waiting lists were lengthy. Membership of the right ones was a stage in a career...Looking back, that time seems to me unbelievably secure and self-satisfied. The world was friendly and well-bred as I remember it, without vulgarity and the worship of wealth which appeared with the new century.

Many prominent Victorians wished to retain this milieu. But, in order to do so, strict adherence to the conventional attitudes of the time was necessary. Upsetting traditional respectability was feared as threatening chaos and a lack of control society could not tolerate.

This Victorian affinity for tradition, ritual and regularity, married to upper class wealth and pursuit of leisure activity, tended to breed a sterile morality. Attitudes proliferated defining and curbing behavior in all walks of life. Appearances were believed to be everything. Comedian Billy Crystal would parody the attitude one hundred years later: "You look marvelous! It is better to look good than feel good!" As long as one looked good, the façade of normalcy was protected. (A bandage, or crutches, conversely, always invites the question, "What happened?") Proper Victorians typically swam on the surface of life to avoid probing what lurked beneath the appearance of normalcy (e.g., the penchant for child pornography, prostitution and sexual indulgence.)

For many Victorians, the public self and the private self were separate. The private self at times went underground—primarily to London's East End red light district—while the public self adhered to routine. This dichotomy seemed to arouse Victorian extremes—society's sins were masked tightly by piety, priggishness and hypocrisy.

Author Lytton Strachey expounded this viewpoint in his book, *Eminent Victorians*: "When I hear people called 'Victorians' I suspect them. But when I hear them called 'Eminent Victorians,' I write their lives," Strachey remarked.

Gertrude Himmerlfarb, another chronicler of Victorian Society, says Strachey “wrote their lives to expose them, to reveal the private selves behind the public facades, the private vices that belied their public virtues.” But she disagrees with Strachey’s conclusions. She observes that eminent Victorians were precisely that due to their virtuous belief in morality, which they sought in “social conventions and illegal institutions.” She writes:

Mid-Victorian England was more moral, more proper, more law-abiding than any other society in recent history. What made morality problematic...was the breakdown of religious consensus...There is the clue to the Victorian obsession with morality. Feeling guilty about their religious faith...they were determined to make morality a substitute for religion – to make of it, indeed, a form of religion.

Other Victorians recognized the change in London and the ill effects wrought by the Industrial Revolution – poverty, homelessness, child exploitation, crime and pollution were growing social problems. Reformists such as Andrew Mearns demanded attention. (He wrote a pamphlet called, “The Bitter Cry of Outcast London.”) Art historians John Ruskin and William Morris decried the commercialization of labor, fearing man would lose the beauty and spiritual affinity associated with fine craftsmanship. Oscar Wilde noted the necessity for change when one of his fictional characters announces, “A man who can’t talk morality twice a week to a large, popular immoral audience is quite over as a serious politician.”

Queen Victoria died at the very beginning of a new century and the previous epoch ended with her death. Historians will continue to debate the ethics of the period that bore her name.

Manners: Then and Now

Reprinted from the Center Theatre Group, LA's Theatre Company, Discovery Guide for *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

THEN: VICTORIAN MANNERS

Etiquette for the ballroom.

A lady or gentleman should finish their toilet before entering the room for dancing, as it is indecorous in either to be drawing on their gloves, or brushing their hair.

If a gentleman, without proper introduction, should ask a lady with whom he is not acquainted to dance or promenade, the lady should positively refuse.

A lady should not attend a public ball without an escort, nor should she promenade the ballroom alone; in fact, no lady should be left unattended.

(The Universal Dancing Master by Lucien O. Carpenter, 1880)



Too Early by James Tissot, 1873 (Guildhall Art Gallery, London)

NOW: MISS MANNERS

Miss Manners: Responding to Things That Shouldn't Happen

BY JUDITH MARTIN

Dear Miss Manners,

Let's say that someone passes gas. They Say, "Excuse me." Do you say, "You are excused"? My wife does this...I find it strange.

Gentle Reader,

Miss Manners has something even stranger for you: Etiquette's way of dealing with things that shouldn't happen is to pretend that they didn't. So you—or, rather, that unfortunate "someone"—need not say, "Excuse me." And you are right that the response of "You are excused" has an unnecessarily imperious feel to it, as if you could equally well have refused. Admittedly, the definition of things that shouldn't happen is arbitrary. Passing gas meets the definition, although, oddly enough, burping does not—unless you are doing it on purpose, in which case stop that this very minute.

("Miss Manners" syndicated column, September 18, 2005)

RESOURCES AND SUGGESTED READING

Oscar Wilde

“The Official Website of Oscar Wilde.”

<<http://www.cmgww.com/historic/wilde/index.php>>

- *This site contains Oscar’s Wilde’s biography, interesting facts about his life, a handful of his famous quotes and numerous photos of Wilde. Wilde paraphernalia is available for purchase, ranging from novels to action figures.*

“The Oscar Wilde Collection.”

<<http://www.planetmonk.com/wilde/>>

- *Oscar Wilde’s plays, poems, and written works, including The Picture of Dorian Gray, are available for review or for print. This site also contains information on Oscar Wilde’s grave site and an “Eclectic Oscar Wilde Shopping List.”*

“Wilde: The Story of the First Modern Man.”

<<http://www.oscarwilde.com/>>

- *This site contains information on the 1997 biographical film about Oscar Wilde, entitled Wilde. Directed by Brian Gilbert, written by Julian Mitchell, starring Jude Law, Vanessa Redgrave, and Stephen Fry. This site contains links to a collection of Wilde’s written works.*

“A Life in Dates.”

<<http://home.arcor.de/oscar.wilde/biography/biography1.htm>>

- *Visit this site to view a concise biographical timeline of Oscar Wilde. By clicking on the names of persons and places, visitors are provided with images and further information.*

The Importance of Being Earnest

“The Importance of Being Earnest (film).”

<<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0278500/>>

- *This site contains information on the 2002 film, The Importance of Being Earnest, directed and written (screenplay) by Oliver Parker. Starring Colin Firth, Rupert Everett, Judi Dench and Reese Witherspoon. A complete cast list, photos, and plot outline are also available.*

“Fireblade Coffeehouse: Oscar Wilde.”

<<http://www.hoboes.com/html/FireBlade/Wilde/>>

- *View the script of The Importance of Being Earnest, the novel of The Picture of Dorian Gary, and many of Wilde’s poems - in their entirety!*

Victorian Era

“The Victorian Web: An Overview.”

<<http://www.victorianweb.org/>>

- *This site is an excellent resource for the Victorian era, offering detailed information on the following information: social history, political history, gender matters, the visual arts, entertainment, religion, science, technology, and much more!*

“History in Focus: The Victorian Era”

<<http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Victorians/>>

- *Visitors find a concise overview of the Victorian era. This site also contains a listing of Websites that provide historical information on poverty and death, the Irish Famine, the arts and crafts movement, and much more. It’s definitely worth a visit!*

“Victorian Recipes”

<<http://www.lexington1.net/lms/vicrecipe.html>>

- *Interested in making crumpets, cucumber tea sandwiches, or another Victorian treat, then visit this Website!*

“Victorian Lifestyle”

<http://www.uni-potsdam.de/u/anglistik/stud_pro/Vict-Life/>

- *This site gives a brief overview of what it would be like to live during the Victorian era. It contains information on the following topics: dining room etiquette, sports, weddings, taking tea, ballroom dancing, fashion, weddings, and more.*

United Kingdom

“Map Resources”

<<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/customs/questions/maps.html>>

- *This interactive website gives visitors a chance to explore England’s land and culture through activities, quizzes and live webcams. An excellent resource for today’s youth!*

“CIA: The World Fact Book.”

<<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/uk.html>>

- *A great resource on the United Kingdom! This site contains the most up-to-date and detailed information on the United Kingdom’s people, government, economy, transportation, military, etc. Visitors may also check out the remainder of the world, by clicking on the homepage and selecting a country or location of their choice.*