## Tasks for Act 3

Task 1. In the battle of the sexes, which side, if any, do you consider 'wins'? Give evidence.

Task 2. How is humour enhanced through comic timing and patterns in this Act?

Task 3. Continue notes on the use of inflated language when used for trivialities (ref. Sub-title of play)

Task 4. What links are there between social attitudes, money and marriage?

Task 5. How does the third act fulfil the needs of the 'well-made play'?

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## **Essay Questions**

- 1. 'In *The Importance of Being Earnest* there is a tension between the artificial behaviour dictated by society and the natural way in which people wish to behave.' How far do you find this a valid comment on the play?
- 2. For what dramatic purposes does Wilde use a) food and b) concern for property in *The Importance of Being Earnest?*
- 3. *The Importance of Being Earnest* has been described as a 'timeless play'. How do you account for its continuing success?
- 4. For Wilde's original audiences, the overturning of gender roles within *The Importance of Being Earnest* was funny because it seemed so unlikely. What sources of humour might a modern audience find?
- 5. Discuss the implications of class differences in the success of *The Importance of Being Earnest* as a comedy.
- 6. How are Victorian attitudes to marriage and respectability explored in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
- 7. How do the 'country characters' cast light on the pretensions of society as exposed in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
- 8. What does the hidden character of Lord Bracknell add to our understanding and enjoyment of the play?
- 9. How does Wilde use satire to 'explode' the social world he writes about in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
- 10. How far would you agree with the view that *The Importance of Being Earnest* is 'a play without a moral, existing for its own sake, for its own perfection, communicating no message'?
- 11. What is your response to Wilde's description of *The Importance of Being Earnest* as being 'a trivial comedy for serious people'?
- 12. How far do you agree with Wilde's description of *The Importance of Being Earnest:* 'The first act is ingenious, the second beautiful and the third abominably clever'?
- 13. 'Humour, like drama, arises from conflict.' How far is this true in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?
- 14. How far do you agree that the characters in *The Importance of Being Earnest* wear masks that cover real feelings, so preventing the audience's engagement with them on an emotional level?
- 15. How important are ideas of parentage and family in *The Importance of Being Earnest*?