

'The *well-made play* was carefully organised to keep an audience attentive right up to the final denouement.' To what extent does Wilde's play conform to these expectations?

Brainstorm- not all ideas could be dealt with in the hour available for an exam essay- be selective!

Introduction: Identify features of 'well made play'- link to other writers such as Ibsen – idea of time bomb from the past waiting to explode- method of continual clues/ references, and question/ answer to reveal full story (**HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT**)

Act 1

- Jack/ Earnest (theatre programme/ cast list may intrigue audience from start)
- The cigarette case
- Cecily
- Jack's parentage and the 'handbag'
- Proposed marriage to Gwendolen
- Algernon and Bunburying

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES- KNOWLEDGE OF THE TEXT

- Snobbery of Victorian England/ 'good' society
- Hypocrisy
- Satire
- Wit

Purpose more than just planting clues- satirical purpose, entertainment, 'Art for Art's sake'

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES- TECHNICAL TERMS; AWARENESS OF HISTORICAL/ CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND; RESPONSE TO CRITICAL VIEWS

Act 2

- Cecily herself
- Miss Prism's 3-volume novel
- Arrival of Algernon/ Earnest- dramatic tension (**TECHNICAL TERMS**)
- Death of 'Earnest'- conventions of mourning (**HISTORICAL AWARENESS**)- dramatic irony (**USE OF TECHNICAL TERMS**)
- Revelations of 'engagement' between Cecily and Algernon- comedy/ satire- patterns of mutual interest
- Girls' reactions to neither man being Earnest- deflation of men's expectations- comedy
- Use of wit/ clever verbal patterning
- Define difference between major tensions in the play, dramatic irony
- Act depends particularly on interplay between characters, wit and engagement of audience through various means

ASSESSMENT: GENERAL EVIDENCE OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE TEXT

Act 3- unwinding of plot, major revelations

- Christenings as way to resolve problems of names- later proved unnecessary- cavalier attitude to religion (**HISTORICAL/ CULTURAL CONTEXT**)
- Miss Prism 'found out'- near melodrama- moral view point of Victorian Britain (**TECHNICAL TERMS AND HISTORICAL/ CONTEXTUAL AWARENESS**)
- Question of marriages depend on negotiations about money rather than love- Victorian values (**HISTORICAL AWARENESS**)
- Delay till true name found- dramatic tension- satire on snobbery (**TECHNICAL TERMS**)
- Explosion of Bunbury parallel to the 'time bomb' of birth-hypocrisy, secrecy and pretension (**HISTORICAL/ CULTURAL CONTEXT**)
- Rounded explanation of the end ignores 'problem' of Algernon's real name- is the play really 'well made' in this sense?

Conclusion

Assess how far Wilde 'conforms'- comment on running gags, repetition, use of patterns in language and action, wit- part of a crafted play rather than attempt at realism- artificiality in structure and style part of success- to delight, surprise and ultimately satisfy audience