



The Importance of Being Earnest and Five Other Plays

Oscar Wilde

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Witty playwright Oscar Wilde is most famous for his 1895 play "The Importance of Being Earnest." The two protagonists use a false identity, Earnest, as a way to escape from unwanted social obligations. However, they encounter difficulties keeping up their personas as their social circles draw closer together. Wilde drew upon what he thought were outrageous social conventions of the Victorian Era and used satire to show the absurdity of its beliefs, like how marriage was more of a boring burden than a joyous commitment. "The Importance of Being Earnest" is one of the best known plays of the Victorian Era and has endured many revivals over the past one-hundred years. It is also a prime example of many Victorian gaffes, though they have to be viewed through the lens of Wilde's sardonic humor. Gathered in the collection "The Importance of Being Earnest and Five Other Plays" are "Lady Windermere's Fan," "A Woman of No Importance," and "An Ideal Husband", all of which speak to Wilde's satirical tone and attitude toward the Victorian Era. Also included are the fragmentary play, "A Florentine Tragedy" and "Salome," a retelling of the Biblical story where Salome asks for John the Baptist's head on a platter. Its tone is much darker and tragic than most of Wilde's other works, but its ability to portray such a gruesome event in a respectful way only proves that Oscar Wilde is one of the most important writers of the nineteenth century.

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