

LITERATURE – 2B

Jack has just arrived at his friend Algernon's flat in London. Algernon has just discovered that Jack has two names ...

START THINKING ...

1 Work in pairs. Discuss the questions.

- Is it important to have a best friend?
- Do you only have friends of your own age?
- Is it better to have just a few good friends or lots of friends?



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST (1895) Oscar Wilde

ALGERNON Now, go on! Tell me the whole thing. I think I can **guess**. I think you're a Bunburyist, in fact I'm quite sure of it now.

JACK Bunburyist? What is a Bunburyist?

5 ALGERNON Before I tell you what a Bunburyist is, answer my question: Why are you called Ernest in town but Jack in the country?

JACK It's very simple, let me explain. As you know, my real name is Jack. When I'm in the country I'm a serious person because I'm responsible for my young niece Cecily. She lives with Miss Prism in my house in the country.

ALGERNON Where is this place in the country?

10 JACK I'm not telling you – and it isn't near here.

ALGERNON All right, go on with your **explanation**.

JACK Well, I try to set Cecily a good example and I always **behave** very well when I'm with her in the country – but that's sometimes boring ...

ALGERNON It certainly is!

15 JACK So, I say I've got a younger brother called Ernest.

ALGERNON I see! You say Ernest lives in London, so you've got an **excuse** to come here when you like.

JACK That's right. When I'm in London I say I'm Ernest, Jack's younger brother. Then I can have fun, go to parties and do what I like. That, Algy, is the whole **truth**, pure and simple.

20 ALGERNON The truth is never simple – that's why life is so exciting! But I was quite right, you are a Bunburyist! In fact, you are an advanced Bunburyist!

JACK What do you mean?

ALGERNON You've **created** a younger brother but I've created a friend. His name is Bunbury and he lives in the country. He's always ill, poor man, so I often go to visit him.

JACK I see, so you always have an excuse for going to the country to see your friends.

25 ALGERNON Exactly. Now that I know you're a Bunburyist, I want to talk about it and tell you the rules.

JACK I'm not a Bunburyist at all! If I **marry** your cousin Gwendolen, Ernest will **go away** forever ...

ALGERNON You marry Gwendolen! That's not very likely!

JACK She's a **charming** girl. I also think that your friend Mr ... with the **silly** name – needs to go away too.

ALGERNON Never! Bunbury is a very good friend to me.

Glossary

guess to try to answer a question when you don't know the answer
explanation the reasons someone gives to explain something
behave to act in a particular way
excuse a false reason that you use
truth the real facts

create to make something new
marry to become husband or wife
go away to leave
charming pleasant and attractive
silly not serious

- 2 **▶▶ 2B.1** Read the text and listen.
- 3 Read the text again. Complete the sentences with the names in the list.

Algernon | Jack | Gwendolen | Bunbury
Ernest | Miss-Prism

- 0 *Miss Prism* lives with Jack's niece.
- 1 _____ is bored in the country.
- 2 _____ is Jack's younger brother.
- 3 _____ is always sick.
- 4 _____ goes to the country to see his friends.
- 5 _____ is Algernon's cousin.
- 4 **READ BETWEEN THE LINES** Circle the correct answer.
- 1 Jack and Algernon are *brothers* / *friends*.
- 2 Cecily *knows* / *doesn't know* about Ernest.
- 3 Gwendolen knows *Jack* / *Ernest*.
- 5 **VOCABULARY** Complete the sentences with the correct words from the glossary.
- 1 What have I got in my pocket? Go on, _____!
- 2 I'm sorry, I just don't understand the _____.
- 3 My little sister doesn't _____ badly when she's at school.
- 4 Why are you late again? Tell me the truth, not an _____.
- 5 The _____ is that I don't like her.
- 6 Don't be _____! Ghosts don't exist.
- 6 **ROLE PLAY** Work in pairs. Student A is Gwendolen, Student B is Toby, a friend of 'Ernest' and Gwendolen's. Put the sentences in the correct order. Then act it out.

___ Gwendolen But, Jack, tell him!

___ Gwendolen No, this is Jack. He lives in the country.

___ Gwendolen But this isn't Ernest. This is Jack!

___ Toby The country? Ernest doesn't live in the country. He hates the country! We're always at parties together here, in London.

___ Toby Jack? Who's Jack? No, this is definitely Ernest.

1 Toby Gwendolen! How nice to see you. You must meet my friend Ernest. Ernest! This is my friend Gwendolen. She lives here in London too.

- 7 **LISTENING** **▶▶ 2B.2** Jack has asked Gwendolen to marry him. Listen to his conversation with Gwendolen's mother, Lady Bracknell. Circle the correct answer.

Name: Jack⁰ Worthing / Withing.

Age: ¹ 29 / 39 years old.

Income: ² £8,000 / £18,000

Address: ³ 139 / 149 Belgrave Square, London
(⁴ poor / rich side!)

Number of relatives: ⁵ 0 / 2

- 8 **▶▶ 2B.2** Listen again. Mark the sentences true (T) or false (F).
- 1 Lady Bracknell wants to choose a husband for Gwendolen. ___
- 2 Jack asks Lady Bracknell about Gwendolen. ___
- 3 Jack hasn't got any parents. ___
- 4 An old man put Jack in a handbag. ___
- 5 Lady Bracknell gives Jack permission to marry her daughter. ___

WRITING Summaries

- 9 **WRITING** Answer the questions. Then write a summary of the conversation between Algernon and Jack in no more than 75 words.

- Who are talking to each other?
- Why does Jack have two names?
- Where do Jack and Ernest live?
- Who is Bunbury?
- What is a Bunburyist?
- How does the conversation end?

- Read the dialogue and underline the key information. Try to think of answers to *Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?*
- Don't copy the text. Try to use your own words.
- Don't include your own opinions.
- When you have finished your summary read it again. Check your spelling and grammar.

DID YOU KNOW?

Oscar Wilde is famous for his witty writing. An example of wit is the name of one of his characters – *Ernest* is a man's name, but *Earnest* means serious. Oscar Wilde often uses words in clever ways in his writing.