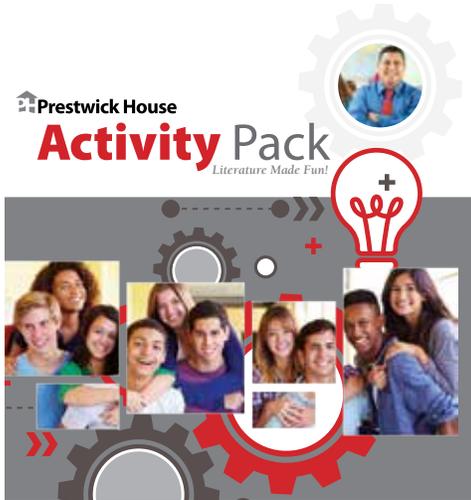




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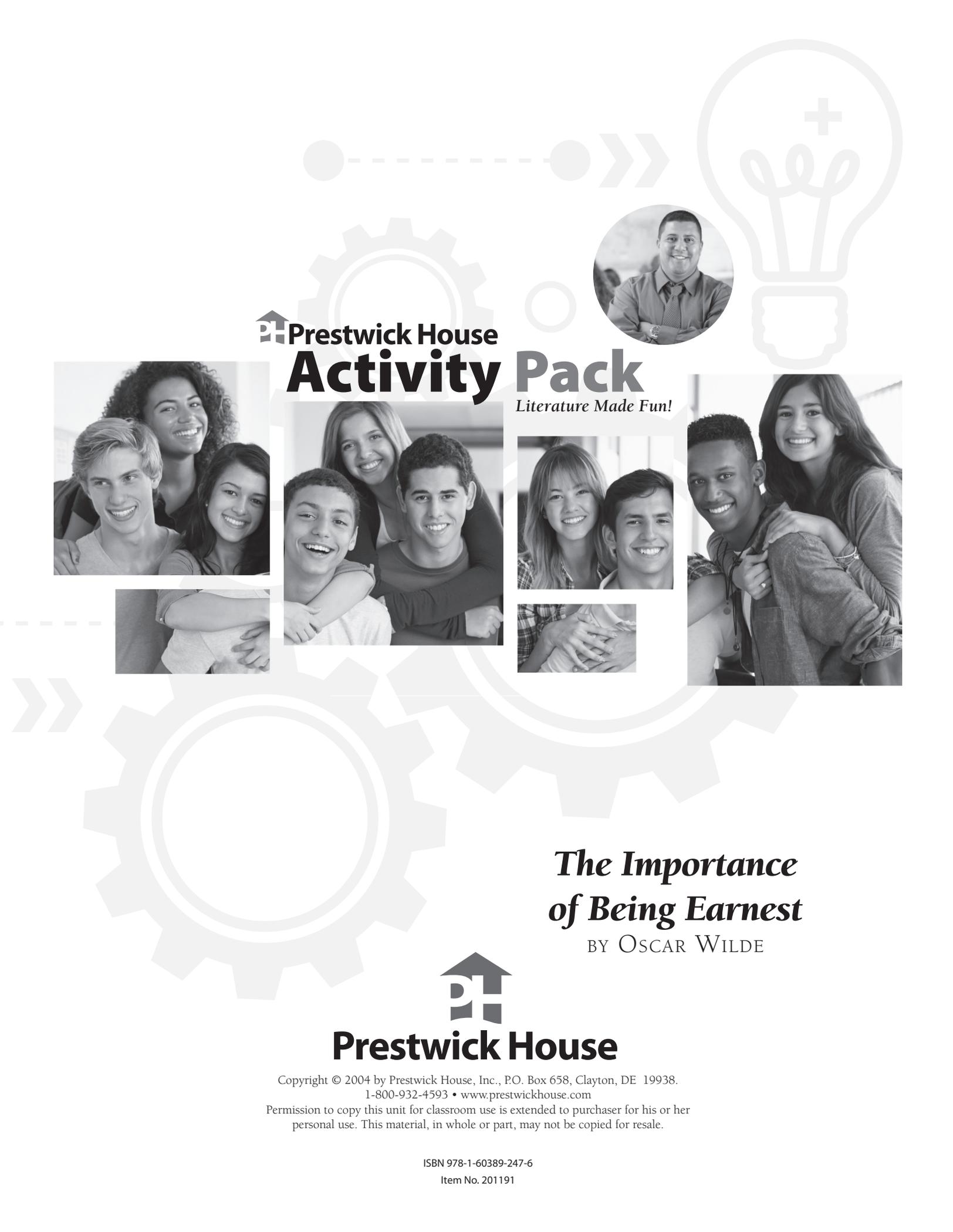
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***The Importance
of Being Earnest***

BY OSCAR WILDE



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All references come from the Dover Thrift Edition of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, published 1990.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Critical Reading****Objective:** Applying literary ideas to life**Activity**

Queen Victoria ruled England for most of the nineteenth century, which became known as the Victorian Era. Oscar Wilde opened *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the St. James' Theatre in London on February 14, 1895. Thus, the play both mocks and celebrates Victorian traditions and attitudes. One such tradition is the afternoon tea. Algernon explains, "I believe it is customary in good society to take some light refreshment at five o'clock." (Pg. 2)

As a class, hold a Victorian tea party. In groups, research the Victorian tea. Each group should research one aspect of the tea party and provide it for the tea. For example, one may locate a recipe for teacakes, and make enough for the class. Another group may research a type of brewed tea (such as Earl Grey), and bring in the required accoutrements.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act I**Style I****Objective:** Identifying elements of an author's style**Activity**

Identify the speaker of each epigram.

1. "When one is in town one amuses oneself. When one is in the country one amuses other people." (Pg. 2)

2. "The very essence of romance is uncertainty." (Pg. 3)

3. "Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone." (Pg 13)

4. "More than half of modern culture depends on what one shouldn't read." (Pg. 4)

5. "Health is the primary duty of life." (Pg. 9)

6. "No married man is ever attractive, except to his wife." (Pg. 26)

7. "To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness." (Pg. 14)

8. "Relations are simply a tedious pack of people, who haven't got the remotest knowledge of how to live, nor the smallest instinct about when to die." (Pg. 15)

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act I**Characterization II**

Objective: Understanding how an author uses characterization to lend meaning to a literary work

Activity

In pairs, complete the character chart below. Discuss the character traits that make the players so convincing and necessary. Then, invent an appropriate character to join the cast. We have done the first one for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act III**Theme**

Objective: Extracting underlying ideas from a literary text

Activity

Create a poster collage or a PowerPoint presentation illustrating ideas from the play. On the back of your collage or in your presentation, write a paragraph explaining your choice of theme.

Sample Ideas:

- marriage as a financial arrangement
- morality vs. the appearance of morality
- seriousness vs. triviality
- ideal romance
- alter egos
- social respectability
- class bias
- gender bias

Name: _____

Date: _____

Act III**Plot****Objective:** Understanding the plot progression of a literary text**Activity**Identify the following events in relation to the way the plot progresses in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

- A. exposition
- B. rising action
- C. major conflict
- D. climax
- E. falling action
- F. resolution

- ___ 1. Earnest wishes to marry Gwendolen, but she will only love a man named Earnest; her mother forbids their union anyway because he has no parents.
- ___ 2. Lady Bracknell reveals Miss Prism to be the governess who abandoned her sister's baby twenty-eight years ago.
- ___ 3. Cecily and Gwendolen meet, argue, and discover that neither of their fiancés bears the name Earnest.
- ___ 4. Algernon poses as Earnest and falls in love with Cecily.
- ___ 5. Lady Bracknell reveals that Jack is Algernon's brother.
- ___ 6. Gwendolen and Cecily obsess over the name Earnest.
- ___ 7. Algernon forces Jack to reveal his secret identity and discloses his own habit of Bunburying.
- ___ 8. Algernon and Jack individually seek Dr. Chasuble to christen them Earnest.