

AP English Literature and Composition Summer Reading

The College Board web site states, "[t]he AP English Literature and Composition course is designed to engage students in the careful reading and critical analysis of imaginative literature." We will carefully read and analyze this work of recognized literary merit to begin your literary exploration. When you purchase your book, please consider our local bookseller, Books for Less, because they offer a discount.

All students will read
The Importance of Being Earnest
By Oscar Wilde

Working with the play:

1. As you read, mark passages that you find to be powerful, provocative, dramatic, surprising, or humorous. (A passage consists of more than three sentences or three lines.) The passages should focus on themes, setting, conflict, narrative style, characterization, or outstanding features of style (allusion, diction, dialect, figurative language, irony, mood, point of view, syntax, tone). See the handout on annotating literary texts to help you select and organize the passages. You should also consider the following elements:

Satire is writing that pokes fun at society and human nature, often with the aim of improving them. Wilde's play is a type of satire called a comedy of manners. Notice how it ridicules the social manners and behavior of upper-class British society, as well as human folly in general.

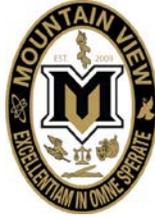
Most satires contain **humor**, a quality of writing that is meant to be amusing. Wilde's humor is famous for epigrams, witty sayings, and puns. He also achieves humor with exaggerated situations and illogical character behavior. Notice how remarks and action in the play are designed to provoke laughter.

Irony results from a discrepancy between what is expected or seems true and what actually happens or is true. Consider how Wilde's humor stems from discrepancies between what characters expect and what actually happens, or between the way we expect them to behave and the way they do behave.

Wilde's **plot**, or sequence of events, centers around a lighthearted romantic conflict in which characters struggle to find happiness in love. Notice how Wilde adds complications to the plot, sometimes **foreshadowing** them, or hinting at what is to come.

2. After annotating the play, complete the Comedic Conventions chart.

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Assessment:

You should read carefully with a focus on analyzing those elements that the author uses to craft the literature. You will have greater success if you read the selection at least twice—once for overall impressions and a second time for greater depth. At the start of the school year, we will engage in several rich and challenging assignments associated with the play. You should be prepared to discuss and write about your interpretations of the play.