



**Banha University - Faculty of Education- English Department  
Third Grade  
Drama  
Second Term- 2013/2014**

**Answer the Following Questions:**

- 1. Explain how Pun is widely considered the lowest form of verbal wit in Oscar Wilde's *Importance of Being Earnest*.**

In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the pun, widely considered to be the lowest form of verbal wit, is rarely just a play on words. The pun in the title is a case in point. The earnest/Ernest joke strikes at the very heart of Victorian notions of respectability and duty. Gwendolen wants to marry a man called Ernest, and she doesn't care whether the man actually possesses the qualities that comprise earnestness. She is, after all, quick to forgive Jack's deception. In embodying a man who is initially neither "earnest" nor "Ernest," and who, through forces beyond his control, subsequently *becomes* both "earnest" and "Ernest," Jack

is a walking, breathing paradox and a complex symbol of Victorian hypocrisy.

In Act III, when Lady Bracknell quips that until recently she had no idea there were any persons “whose origin was a Terminus,” she too is making an extremely complicated pun. The joke is that a railway station is as far back as Jack can trace his identity and therefore a railway station actually is his “origin,” hence the pun. In Wilde’s day, as in the England of today, the first stop on a railway line is known as the “origin” and the last stop as the “terminus.” There’s also a whole series of implicit subsidiary puns on words like *line* and *connection* that can refer to either ancestry or travel. Wilde is poking fun at Lady Bracknell’s snobbery. He depicts her as incapable of distinguishing between a railway line and a family line, social connections and railway connections, a person’s ancestral origins and the place where he chanced to be found. In general, puns add layers of meaning to the characters’ lines and call into question the true or intended meaning of what is being said.

## **2. Write briefly on George Gordon.**

The erratic poet George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788-1824), has left several dramas, three of which are tragedies, and one he called a mystery play. His plays are too solemn and lacking in action to be favorites on the stage. They were most severely criticized on their appearance.