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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The Importance of Being Earnest

### 5: Jack meets Earnest



*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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#### LANGUAGE FOCUS: Adverbs

##### **Narrator**

Jack has returned earlier than expected to his house in the country. He's just told Miss Prism and Reverend Chasuble that his younger brother Ernest is dead. What they don't know is that Algernon is at the house at this very moment, pretending to be Ernest.

##### **Chasuble**

I am very sorry about your brother, Mr Worthing. I shall, of course, mention this tragic event in my **sermon** next Sunday.

##### **Jack**

That would be most kind, Reverend.

##### **Chasuble**

I **can usually adapt** my weekly sermon to almost any occasion, happy or sad – weddings, christenings...

##### **Jack**

Christenings... Ah! that reminds me, Reverend Chasuble. I suppose you do know how to **christen**?

##### **Chasuble**

Well...

##### **Jack**

I mean, of course, **you often christen people**, don't you?

##### **Chasuble**

But which baby do you want to christen, Mr Worthing? Your brother wasn't married, was he?

##### **Jack**

Oh no. But it's not for a child, Reverend. No! It's me – I'd like to be christened ... this afternoon.

##### **Chasuble**

But surely **you have been christened already**?

**Jack**

I don't remember anything about it.

**Chasuble**

Well, what time would you like the ceremony performed?

**Jack**

Oh, around five if that would suit you?

**Chasuble**

Perfectly!

**Narrator**

Just at this time, Cecily comes out of the house into the garden.

**Cecily**

Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But why are you wearing those awful clothes?

**Miss Prism**

Cecily!

**Cecily**

Oh! What's the matter, Uncle Jack? You look so sad, and I've got such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining room? Your brother!

**Jack**

Who?

**Cecily**

Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

**Jack**

But I haven't got a brother.

**Cecily**

Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past, he is **still** your brother. I'll tell him to come out. You will shake hands with him, won't you, Uncle Jack?

[Cecily leaves]

**Chasuble**

This is happy news...

**Jack**

My brother here? **That's quite absurd.**

**Narrator**

Cecily comes out of the house again, this time holding Algernon's hand.

**Jack**

Good heavens!

**Algernon**

Brother Jack, I've come to tell you that I'm very sorry for all the trouble I've given you, and that I plan to lead a better life in the future.

**Narrator**

Jack can't believe his eyes and stares at his friend. Algernon puts out his hand, but Jack ignores it.

**Cecily**

Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse to shake your own brother's hand?

**Jack**

Nothing will make me shake his hand. I think him coming down here is **disgraceful**. He knows perfectly well why.

**Cecily**

Uncle Jack, do be nice. There is some good in everyone. **Ernest has just been telling me** about his poor sick friend Mr Bunbury whom **he often visits**. And **there must certainly be** a lot of good in someone who is kind to a sick friend.

**Jack**

Oh! He's been talking about Bunbury, has he?

**Cecily**

Yes, he has told me all about poor Mr Bunbury, and how ill he is.

**Jack**

Bunbury! Well, I won't let him talk to you about Bunbury or about anything else.

**Algernon**

Of course I admit that I have not behaved well, but I expected a more enthusiastic welcome, especially as it's the first time I have come here.

**Cecily**

Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest I'll never forgive you.

**Jack**

Never forgive me?

**Cecily**

Never!

**Jack**

Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it... There!

**Chasuble**

I think we should leave the two brothers together.

**Miss Prism**

Cecily, you will come with us.

**Narrator**

And so they all go off leaving the men alone. Jack tells Algernon he must leave immediately, but just then, the butler, Merriman, arrives.

**Merriman**

I have put Mr Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right?

**Jack**

What?

**Merriman**

Mr Ernest's luggage, sir.

**Jack**

His luggage?

**Merriman**

Yes, sir.

**Jack**

Merriman, order the carriage at once. Mr Ernest has been suddenly called back to London.

**Merriman**

Yes, sir.

**Algernon**

What a terrible **liar** you are, Jack. I have not been called back to London at all.

**Jack**

Yes, you have.

**Algernon**

Well, I have to say, Cecily is lovely.

**Jack**

You are not allowed to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

**Algernon**

Well, I don't like your clothes. Why don't you go and change? It is perfectly **childish** to be in **mourning** for a man who is **actually** staying in your house as a guest.

**Jack**

You are certainly not staying with me as a guest or anything else. You are leaving... by the four-five train.

**Algernon**

Well, I won't leave you while you are in mourning. It would be most unkind. If I was in mourning, I think it would be very unkind if you didn't stay with me.

**Jack**

Well, will you leave if I change my clothes?

**Algernon**

Yes, if you are not too long. **I've never known** anyone take so long to get dressed and with such little result.

**Jack**

Well, **it's better than always being** over-dressed as you are.

**Algernon**

If **I am occasionally a little over-dressed**, I make up for it **by always being** immensely over-educated.

**Jack**

Your **vanity** is ridiculous and your behaviour is an **outrage**. You have got to catch the four-five back to London. This Bunburying, as you call it, has not been a great success for you.

**Narrator**

Jack leaves.

**Algernon**

[To himself] I think it has been a great success. I'm in love with Cecily. I must see her before I go. Ah, there she is watering the flowers.

**Cecily**

Oh, I just came back to water the roses. I thought you were with Uncle Jack.

**Algernon**

He's gone to order the carriage for me.

**Cecily**

Oh, is he going to take you for a nice drive?

**Algernon**

He's going to send me away.

**Cecily**

Then have we got to say goodbye?

**Algernon**

I'm afraid so. It's a very painful **parting**.

**Cecily**

It's always painful to part from people you have only just met. It's easy to be apart from old friends for a long time. But being apart for just a short period from someone you have just been introduced to is almost unbearable.

**Algernon**

Thank you.

**Merriman**

The carriage is at the door, sir.

## **Vocabulary**

### **sermon**

a talk given by a priest or religious leader during a religious ceremony

### **adapt**

to change something

### **christening**

a Christian ceremony during which a baby is given a name and made a member of the Christian Church

### **christen**

to carry out a religious ceremony during which a baby is given a name and made a member of the Christian Church

### **absurd**

stupid

### **disgraceful**

very bad

### **invalid**

a person who is ill or disabled and cannot look after themselves.

### **liar**

a person who says things that are not true

### **childish**

behaving in a silly way, like a young child

### **mourning**

custom of wearing black clothes to show sadness for someone who has died

### **vanity**

the fact of being too proud of your appearance or abilities

### **outrage**

an action that is shocking

### **parting**

the act of leaving someone

## Quiz

1. What does Jack ask Reverend Chasuble to do?

- a) christen him
- b) christen a baby
- c) come to his wedding

2. What is Jack's reaction when he sees Algernon?

- a) sad
- b) very surprised
- c) very happy

3. What is Jack's opinion of Algernon?

- a) Algernon is over-dressed and has behaved very badly.
- b) Algernon dresses very well and is well educated.
- c) Algernon is very unkind.

## Feedback

1. What does Jack ask Reverend Chasuble to do?

- a) christen him – Correct – Well done!**
- b) christen a baby – Wrong – He asks him to christen someone else!
- c) come to his wedding – Wrong – He asks him to perform a different ceremony.

2. What is Jack's reaction when he sees Algernon?

- a) sad – Wrong – He isn't sad. He says 'Good heavens!'
- b) very surprised – Correct – Well done!**
- c) very happy – He isn't happy. He says 'Good heavens!'

3 What is Jack's opinion of Algernon?

- a) Algernon is very unkind – Wrong – He says 'Your vanity is ridiculous and your behaviour is an outrage.'
- b) Algernon dresses very well and is well educated – Wrong – Jack says 'Well, it's better than always being over-dressed as you are.'
- c) Algernon is over-dressed and has behaved very badly – Correct – Well done!**