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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The Importance of Being Earnest

### 6: Cecily's confession



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

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#### LANGUAGE FOCUS: Use of definite article with uncountable abstract nouns

##### **Narrator**

Jack is not happy that Algernon has come to his house pretending to be his younger brother Ernest. And he's really not happy that Algernon has met Cecily, telling him to go back to London immediately. Jack has also asked Reverend Chasuble to christen him with a different name. Let's now join Algernon and Cecily in the garden.

##### **Algernon**

I hope you won't mind, Cecily, if I tell you quite truthfully that you seem to me to be in every way absolutely perfect.

##### **Cecily**

I admire your honesty, Ernest. Now, can I just write down what you are saying in my diary. [Writing in diary] ev... er... y... way... abs...

##### **Algernon**

Do you really keep a diary? **I'd love to** have a look. May I?

##### **Cecily**

Oh no. You see, it's just a young girl's **record** of her own thoughts, so I can publish them. But, Ernest, please, don't stop talking. I love doing **dictation**. I have reached 'absolutely perfect'. Go on...

##### **Algernon**

Ahem! Ahem!

##### **Cecily**

Oh, don't cough, Ernest. I don't know how to spell a cough.

##### **Algernon**

**The truth is**, Cecily, ever since I first saw you, I have loved you wildly, **passionately** and **hopelessly**.

##### **Cecily**

[Writing] Wildly... passionately... Oh, I don't think that you should tell me that you love me wildly, passionately and hopelessly. Hopelessly doesn't make much sense, does it?

**Narrator**

Here comes the butler, Merriman, again...

**Merriman**

The carriage is waiting, sir.

**Algernon**

Tell it to come back next week.

**Cecily**

Uncle Jack would be very annoyed if he knew you were staying till next week.

**Algernon**

Oh, I don't care about Jack. I only care about you. I love you, Cecily. You will marry me, won't you?

**Cecily**

**What a question!** Of course, silly! Well, we have been engaged for the last three months.

**Algernon**

For the last three months?

**Cecily**

Yes, it will be exactly three months on Thursday.

**Algernon**

But how did we become engaged?

**Cecily**

Well, ever since Uncle Jack told us that he had a **wicked** younger brother, you have been the main topic of conversation between myself and Miss Prism. And a man who is talked about a lot is always very attractive. I fell in love with you, Ernest.

**Algernon**

**Darling!** And when did we actually get engaged?

**Cecily**

On the 14th of February. I got tired of the fact you didn't know I existed, and so, after a long **struggle** with myself, I decided to accept you under this dear old oak tree here. Here are all your letters in this box. Look...

**Narrator**

And my goodness... There's a whole **bundle** of letters neatly tied up with a blue **ribbon**.

**Algernon**

My letters! But, my own sweet Cecily, I have never written you any letters.

**Cecily**

You don't need to remind me, Ernest. I had to write your letters for you. I wrote three times a week, and sometimes more often.

**Algernon**

Oh, do let me read them, Cecily.

**Cecily**

Oh, no. They would make you far too **conceited**. The three you wrote after I had **broken off** the engagement are so beautiful, and so badly spelt, that even now I can hardly read them without crying a little.

**Algernon**

But did we break off our engagement?

**Cecily**

Of course we did. On the 22nd of March. Look I'll read about it to you. [Reading from diary] 'Today I broke off my engagement with Ernest. I think it is the best thing to do. The weather is still lovely.'

**Algernon**

But why on earth did you break it off? What had I done? I had done nothing at all. Cecily, I am very hurt to hear you broke it off. Particularly when the weather was so lovely.

**Cecily**

It wouldn't have been a really serious engagement if it hadn't been broken off at least once. But I forgave you very quickly.

**Algernon**

**What an angel** you are, Cecily!

**Cecily**

You dear romantic boy.

**Algernon**

You'll never end our engagement again, will you Cecily?

**Cecily**

Not now that I have actually met you. Besides, of course, there is **the question of your name**.

**Algernon**

Yes, of course.

**Cecily**

You mustn't laugh at me, but it had always been a girlish dream of mine to love someone whose name was Ernest. That name **inspires** complete confidence.

**Algernon**

But, Cecily, do you mean that you could not love me if I had a different name?

**Cecily**

But what name?

**Algernon**

Oh, any name you like – Algernon – for instance...

**Cecily**

But I don't like the name Algernon. I might respect you, Ernest, but I don't think I'd be able to really love you.

**Algernon**

Ahem! Cecily! The Reverend is, I suppose, knows how to carry out all church ceremonies?

**Cecily**

Oh, yes. Reverend Chasuble is a very clever man. He has never written a single book, so you can imagine how much he knows.

**Algernon**

I must see him at once on a most important christening – I mean on important business.

**Cecily**

Oh!

**Algernon**

I won't be away more than half an hour.

**Cecily**

Considering that we have been engaged since February the 14th, and that I only met you today for the first time, I think it's rather hard that you should leave me for so long. Couldn't you make it 20 minutes?

**Algernon**

[He kisses her] I'll be back in no time.

**Narrator**

Merriman arrives to announce the arrival of a visitor.

**Merriman**

A Miss Fairfax is here to see Mr Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax says.

**Cecily**

Isn't Mr Worthing in the library?

**Merriman**

Mr Worthing went to see Reverend Chasuble some time ago.

**Cecily**

Please ask the lady to come out here. Mr Worthing will be back soon, I'm sure. And you can bring tea.

**Merriman**

Yes, Miss.

**Cecily**

Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his good work in London.

**Narrator**

But it's not an elderly woman who follows Merriman into the garden. **What a surprise!** It's Gwendolen!

## **Vocabulary**

### **record**

information written down about something that has happened

### **dictation**

writing down exactly what someone else says

### **passionately**

with great feeling or enthusiasm

### **hopelessly**

without any hope; very badly

### **darling**

a name used to call someone you love or care about

### **struggle**

something that is very difficult or requires a lot of effort

### **bundle**

a group of things tied together

### **ribbon**

a long, narrow piece of material used to tie or decorate something

### **conceited**

showing that you are very proud of yourself

### **broken off**

(phrasal verb) ended

### **inspires**

makes someone enthusiastic about something

## Quiz

1. Why was Algernon so surprised when Cecily told him they are already engaged?
  - a) Because he had broken it off on the 14th February.
  - b) Because she had arranged it herself and he didn't know about it.
  - c) Because he was already engaged to Miss Prism
  
2. What did Cecily tell Algernon she had always hoped to do?
  - a) write a book
  - b) love someone called Algernon
  - c) love someone called Ernest
  
3. Why do you think Algernon is going to see Reverend Chasuble?
  - a) Because he wants to ask Reverend Chasuble to christen him Ernest.
  - b) Because he wants to ask Reverend Chasuble to marry him and Cecily.
  - c) Because he wants to talk to Jack.

## Feedback

1. Why was Algernon so surprised when Cecily told him they were already engaged?
  - a) Because he had broken it off on the 14th February. – Wrong – It was for a different reason.
  - b) Because she had arranged it by herself and they have only just met. – Correct – Well done!**
  - c) Because he was already engaged to Miss Prism. – Wrong – He wasn't engaged to Miss Prism. It was for a different reason.
  
2. What did Cecily tell Algernon she had always hoped to do?
  - a) write a book – Wrong – She does want to publish her diary, but this is not what she said she had always wanted to do
  - b) love someone called Algernon – Wrong – She said she had always wanted to love someone called something else.
  - c) love someone called Ernest – Correct – Well done!**
  
3. Why do you think Algernon is going to see Reverend Chasuble?
  - a) Because he wants to ask Reverend Chasuble to christen him Ernest. – Correct – Well done!**
  - b) Because he wants to ask Reverend Chasuble to marry him and Cecily. – Wrong – He wants to ask him to do something else.
  - c) Because he wants to talk to Jack. – Wrong – Jack is at Reverend Chasuble's house but that is not why Algernon wants to see the Reverend.