

**Prescribed DRAMA for Junior Cycle  
English.  
For students commencing Junior Cycle  
in September 2017**

An tSraith Shóisearach



BREEN, John	<i>Alone It Stands</i>
FRIEL, Brian	<i>Lovers (Winners and Losers)</i>
GOGOL, Nikolai	<i>The Government Inspector</i>
HILL, Susan	<i>The Woman in Black (adapted for stage by Stephen Mallatratt)</i>
LAURENTS, Arthur	<i>West Side Story</i>
MORPURGO, Michael	<i>War Horse (adapted for stage by Nick Stafford)</i>
O'CASEY, Sean	<i>The Shadow of a Gunman</i>
ROSE, Reginald	<i>Twelve Angry Men</i>
RUSSELL, Willy	<i>Blood Brothers (musical or stage play)</i>

**Students intending to take the Final Assessment at Higher Level must study the full text of one of these prescribed Shakespearean dramas during second and/or third year.**

<b>SHAKESPEARE, William</b>	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>
	<i>As You Like It</i>
	<i>Henry IV, Part 1</i>
	<i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>
	<i>The Merchant of Venice</i>
	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
SHAW, George Bernard	<i>Pygmalion</i>
WILDE, Oscar	<i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>

# GUIDE TO PRESCRIBED DRAMA

This guide to the prescribed junior cycle drama texts may be of assistance to teachers and students in the selection of drama texts for second and third year. The guide provides an overview of the 16 prescribed drama texts, including recommendations regarding plot summaries, themes and suitability.

## Guidelines for Prescribed Drama

- The 17 prescribed drama texts for second and third year are for students **commencing** Junior Cycle in September 2017 only.
- From the list of 17 prescribed drama texts, students must study two drama texts. An extract from a play or extracts from one or more plays may be used as one of the drama texts.
- The extracts may be chosen from outside the list of prescribed texts. The extract or extracts selected by schools should provide students with a broad experience of the dramatic form.
- Students intending to take the Final Assessment at Higher Level should study a prescribed Shakespearean drama during second **and/or** third year.

## ALONE IT STANDS — JOHN BREEN

**Publisher: Samuel French, 1999. Pages: 86.**



John Breen's *Alone It Stands* is a comedy which tells the story of the Munster rugby team's epic and unprecedented 12-nil victory over the All Blacks, the New Zealand national rugby team in Thomond Park in October 1978.

The story is set against the background of this unparalleled win and follows the unique and personal stories of a variety of characters. The broad range of colourful roles (sixty two in all) is diverse, and includes encounters with the players from both teams, the motivational team coaches, supporters looking for tickets for the sell-out game, pessimistic fans, the local Limerick residents and a Munster fanatic's wife about to give birth.

The breadth of characters involved results in a fast-paced and engaging drama that succeeds in capturing the hype associated with this heroic triumph.

**Themes:** Courage, daily life, social class.

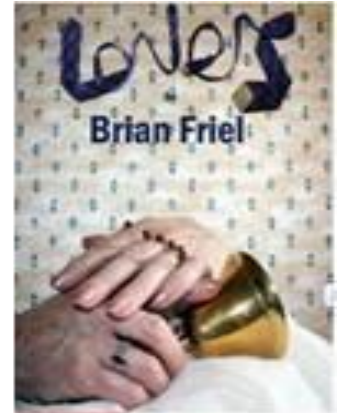
***“The bounce of a rugby ball is unpredictable. It can break your heart”***

## LOVERS (WINNERS AND LOSERS) – BRIAN FRIEL

**Publisher: Gallery Books, 2013. Pages 77.**

*Winners* and *Losers* are two short complimentary plays in the one volume entitled *Lovers*. They may be regarded as forming one play with complementary themes/issues. Both plays are set in 1960s Ireland.

In *Winners* we meet two young lovers, Mags and Joe on a hilltop as they meet to study for their upcoming examinations. We find out that Mags is pregnant, and the young couple are to be married in a few weeks for this very reason. Both have been asked to leave their respective schools as a result. It is all a sign of the times they live in. Both are meant to be revising, but Mags prefers to distract herself with lots of talk, much to Joe's annoyance. We find out a lot about the characters from their conversations here.



The two narrators ('Man' and 'Woman') give us an insight into what happens to the young couple on this day. Mags and Joe decide to take a boat onto the lake. According to the narrators, Mags and Joe have drowned. The exact circumstances are unclear.

Andy and Hanna, the lovers from *Losers* are older. Hanna's mother, Mrs Wilson, is a devout Catholic and she disapproves of the relationship. The couple are frustrated by her presence and demands. When the couple marry, Mrs Wilson is still a source of annoyance, especially for Andy who mocks her for her devotion to Saint Philomena. This alienates Hanna, and in the end the couple stay together in a loveless marriage.

**Themes** in both plays: Love/marriage, religion, role of men and women in society.

***“My God, the things they said to me – they seared my soul forever” (Winners)***

## THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR – NIKOLAI GOGOL

**Publisher: Nick Hern Books. Pages 100.**



Gogol's comedy of errors is built around a classic case of mistaken identity.

When word reaches the corrupt mayor of a provincial Russian town that a government inspector will soon be arriving to inspect them, he and the (equally corrupt) town dignitaries are thrown into a state of panic. They become convinced that Khlestakov, a low-ranking wastrel who is holed up penniless in a hotel room, is the government inspector travelling incognito.

Much of the comedy centres around low farcical moments as the various dignitaries' ply Khlestakov with bribes to ensure a good report. He takes full advantage of the situation; his desire for food, women and money comes to the fore. The play is populated with mostly unsympathetic, greedy, corrupt, self-serving, back-

stabbing characters. Through these characters Gogol satirises greed, stupidity, arrogance and the wider political corruption of Imperial Russia.

**Themes:** Greed, corruption, deception.

***“The convicts haven’t had their rations! The streets are filthy, the whole town’s like a dungheap! It’s a disgrace!”***

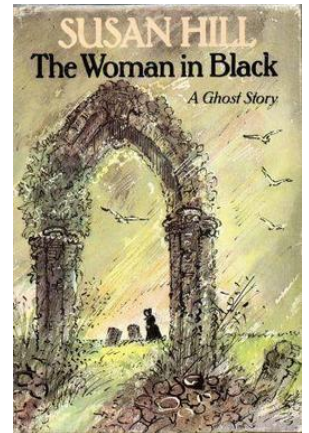
## **THE WOMAN IN BLACK – SUSAN HILL**

**Publisher: Samuel French Ltd. London. 1989. Pages 52.**

*The Woman in Black* is a captivating, haunting drama in which two actors recreate the mysterious story of a ghostly figure whom the central character, Mr. Kipps, first met while attending the funeral of the elderly Mrs. Drablow.

The play begins in an empty theatre where Arthur Kipps, an ageing lawyer, and a newly hired young actor recreate Kipps’s own story. The young actor agrees to play the part of the younger Kipps while Arthur plays all the other character roles and narrates the story.

The story brings us back in time where the young Arthur Kipps travels to Crythin Gifford to attend the funeral of an elderly, eccentric lady named Mrs. Drablow and to sort out her papers. At the funeral, he ‘sees’ a woman in black, apparently suffering from some severe illness. On speaking of the lady to his guide, Mr. Horatio Jerome, he is somewhat bemused and puzzled by Jerome’s terrified reaction. At Mrs. Drablow’s house he again encounters the woman in black and this begins a story of mystery and ghostly happenings where we learn of the tragic tale surrounding the death of the mysterious lady; the fear engendered in the community and of the apparent consequences for those who have met *The Woman in Black*.

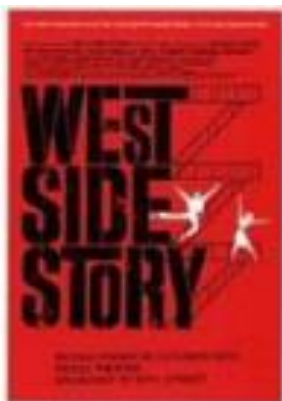


**Themes:** The supernatural, fear, revenge, conspiracy.

***“I felt confused, teased by it, as though it were made up of millions of live fingers that crept over me, hung onto me and then shifted away again.”***

## **WEST SIDE STORY—ARTHUR LAURENTS**

**Publisher: Random House, Inc. 1989. Pages 92.**



*West Side Story* is a modern-day adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead of two feuding families in the Shakespearean classic love story, *West Side Story* features two rival New York gangs. The Jets are an established white gang who have ruled this area for years and the Sharks are a gang from Puerto Rico who have recently moved to New York and have ambitions to take control of the Jets’ patch.

Following a run-in with Lt Schrank and Officer Krupke from the New York police, the Jets decide to ‘take care’ of the Sharks. However, the feud intensifies when Tony, one of the founders of the Jets, who is now living a ‘clean’ life, attends a gymnasium dance and meets and falls in love with Maria, sister of Bernardo. This

of course is a forbidden union and leads to an escalation of hostilities which can only be resolved by one final 'rumble' or winner-takes-all fight which has tragic consequences for some but brings about an end to the hostilities. *West Side Story* is an engaging drama. Students will enjoy reading this tale of love and rivalry.

**Themes:** Gang warfare, love, violence, ambition, death.

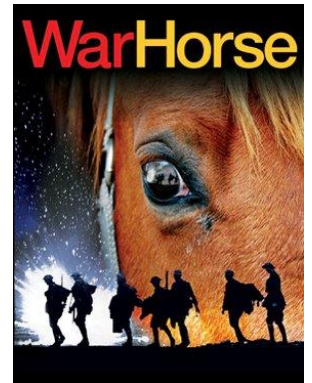
***“Maria! Say it loud and there's music playing.  
Say it soft and it's almost like praying.  
Maria, I'll never stop saying Maria!  
The most beautiful sound I ever heard. Maria.”***

## WAR HORSE – MICHAEL MORPURGO

**Publisher: Faber & Faber 2007. Pages 112.**

*War Horse* is the powerful story of a young boy called Albert and his beloved horse, Joey. The play is based on a novel by Michael Morpurgo and adapted by Nick Stafford.

The play begins in England, 1914, with a drunk farmer buying a colt at auction. His young son Albert quickly forms a bond with the colt, names him Joey and raises him. At the outbreak of World War One, the farmer sells Joey to the military to pay for his struggling farm. Albert is heartbroken. Joey is shipped to France and soon caught in enemy fire. Fate takes him on an incredible journey, serving on both sides during the war before landing in no man's land. But Albert cannot forget Joey and, still too young to enlist, he embarks on a treacherous mission to find his horse and bring him home. The stage production features ground-breaking puppetry work, bringing breathing and galloping horses to life on stage.

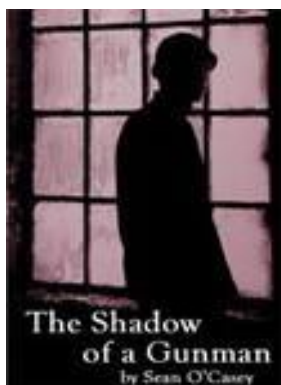


**Themes:** War, friendship, loyalty and courage.

***“I, Albert Narracott, do solemnly swear that we shall be together again.”***

## THE SHADOW OF A GUNMAN - SEÁN O'CASEY

**Publisher: Faber & Faber, 1998. Pages 62**



*The Shadow of a Gunman* is a powerful play depicting the gripping effects of poverty, nationalism and violence on the lives of the Irish tenement dwellers in the Dublin of 1920. Ordinary lives are controlled by forces which seem to offer solutions, but which apparently only bring further misery.

The play begins in May 1920 and is set in a Dublin tenement occupied by Seamus Shields, a pedlar, and Donal Davoren, a dreamer and poet who is mistakenly believed by other tenement residents to be an on-the-run member of the IRA. Davoren plays along with this notoriety and it has positive benefits for him, as it initially wins him the spurious admiration of other would-be freedom fighters, but



more importantly, it wins him the affections of Minnie Powell, an attractive young lady of strong nationalist beliefs who, like Donal is slightly delusional as a result of the times in which she lived.

As the play progresses, we see the negative impact of Davoren's supposed heroism. He is the mere 'shadow' of a gunman and ultimately the shadow turns out to be a cowardly figure who must shoulder responsibility for much of the tragedy that befalls others in the play. Darkness, violence, deception, fear, tension and poverty are all bedfellows of the play, but the real tragedy is found within the lives of the people who were victims of their time.

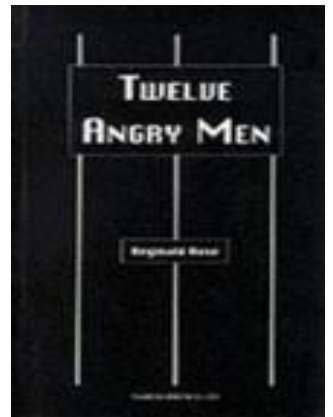
**Themes:** Deception, war, religion, nationalism, poverty, love

## TWELVE ANGRY MEN - REGINALD ROSE

**Publisher: Samuel French Ltd. 1977 Edition. Pages 59.**

*Twelve Angry Men* is a gripping 1957 courtroom drama where the life or death of a young Puerto Rican teenager, charged with murdering his father, lies in the hands of a diverse group of twelve jurors.

As the play begins, we see a twelve-man jury entering the jury room of a New York City courthouse on a sultry, hot summer's day to decide on the guilt or innocence of a teenager accused of murdering his father. We hear the offstage voice of the judge giving instructions to the jury and learn that, if found guilty, the accused will face the death penalty. What at first appears as a straightforward guilty verdict, given the apparent bank of incriminating evidence against the accused, soon becomes a case of intrigue and suspense, as one juror, Juror 8, following an initial guilty vote of 11 to 1, insists that they re-examine the evidence to be absolutely certain of what they are entrusted with. Despite the protests of the other jurors, the evidence is reviewed, and the initial certainty of the jurors is put under the spotlight with a surprising outcome.

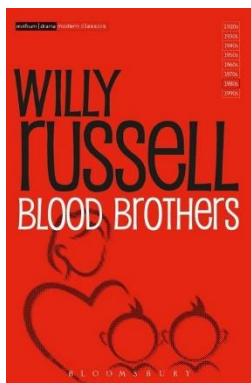


**Themes:** Prejudice, justice, truth, power of conviction.

***“And now gentlemen of the jury, I come to my final instructions to you. Murder in the first degree - premeditated homicide - is the most serious charge tried in our criminal courts.”***

## BLOOD BROTHERS - WILLY RUSSELL

**Publisher: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2013. Pages 108.**



Set in Liverpool, Willy Russell's *Blood Brothers* tells the story of twins who are separated at birth as their mother is unable to afford to keep both. As a result, Eddie is raised in a privileged family while his twin brother Mickey is raised in poverty by their birth mother, along with the rest of their siblings.

Despite their different backgrounds, both boys meet at age seven and become best friends, in fact they become 'blood brothers' both unaware of the identity of

the other. They share happy times as they grow up, first into teenagers and then into adulthood, until their different backgrounds finally become an issue and a misunderstanding lead to tragedy.

**Themes:** Social class, growing up, family, friendship, superstition.

*“Do we blame superstition for what came to pass? Or could it have been what we,*

## Shakespearean Drama

There are **five** Shakespearean dramas on the prescribed list of texts for Junior Cycle English.

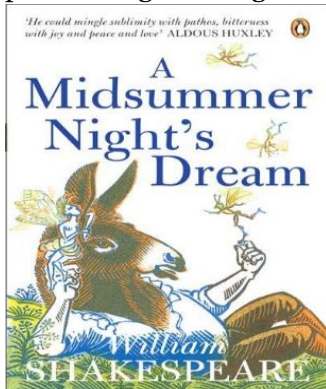
Students intending to take the **Final Assessment at Higher Level** must study a Shakespearean drama during second and/or third year

### A MIDSUMMER NIGHT’S DREAM - WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**Publisher: Penguin Books, 1967. Pages 82.**

*A Midsummer Night’s Dream* is a Shakespearean comedy that cleverly interconnects four different subplots to form a united piece of light-hearted slapstick comedy.

Theseus, the Duke of Athens and Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons are to be married. Great celebrations are planned. Egeus brings his rebellious daughter Hermia in front of the Duke. Egeus wants her to marry Demetrius



but Hermia is refusing, because she’s in love with Lysander. The Duke orders Hermia to obey her father or she must face the death penalty or banishment to a nunnery.

Hermia and Lysander decide to elope that evening. As they contemplate the plan, Helena enters. She is in love with Demetrius. They tell Helena of their elopement plans, but Helena decides to tell Demetrius in an attempt to win his love. All four end up in the forest but the intercession of Oberon, the king of the fairies, and the mischievous Puck, adds to the confusion when they attempt to get Demetrius to fall in love with Helena, but mistakenly gets Lysander to fall in love with her. Both men love Helena and neither love Hermia. Comedy abounds.

**Themes:** Love, magic, dreams.

*“O spite! O hell! I see you all are bent to set against me for your merriment. If you were civil and knew courtesy, you would not do me thus much injury.”*

## AS YOU LIKE IT – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**Publisher: Penguin Books 1967 Pages: 93**

Written in 1599, this is a pastoral comedy, set in the countryside in France, specifically in the forest of Arden. Rosalind is the heroine. Her father Duke Senior has been usurped and exiled by his brother Frederick. Rosalind is permitted to stay in court since she is best friend to her cousin Celia. Orlando, a young gentleman falls in love at first sight with Rosalind. This displeases Frederick and both ladies flee to the forest seeking refuge and looking for love. Touchstone, the court fool accompanies them. Rosalind disguises herself as a young man, Ganymede, while Celia pretends to be a poor woman, Aliena.



Here they encounter a variety of memorable characters, notably Jacques, a malcontent and melancholy figure. Unknown to the ladies, Duke Senior and his supporters are also in the forest. Orlando posts simplistic love poems on the trees for Rosalind. She as Ganymede encounters him and tries to cure him of his lovesickness. The shepherdess Phoebe falls in love with Ganymede while Silvius loves Phoebe. Further romantic complications occur but all is resolved in the end.

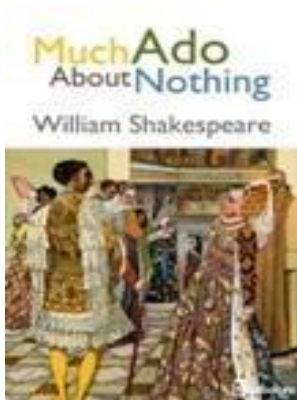
**Themes:** Love, deception, loyalty.

*“All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players...”*

## MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**Publisher: Penguin Books, 1967. Pages 104.**

*Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare is a comedy set in Messina in 16<sup>th</sup> century Italy. The story revolves around two love stories, one straightforward between Claudio and Hero, the governor's daughter and a more complex union between the governor's niece Beatrice and a family friend, Benedick.



A spiteful villain, Don John, having suffered a defeat in war, is keen to get revenge on his brother Don Pedro and Claudio, who helped defeat him. He encourages his friend Borachio to enact a love scene with Margaret, Hero's serving woman, but convinces both Claudio and Don Pedro that the woman is Hero. Believing this tale, Claudio angrily denounces Hero during their wedding ceremony. The friar performing the marriage arranges for Hero to be hidden, as if dead, until her innocence can be proven. A blundering local constable discovers the truth and following a series of comical events, Hero and Claudio are reunited. Love has blossomed also for Beatrice and Benedick and the play ends on a happy note.

**Themes:** Deception, romance, honour.

*“I do love nothing in the world so well as you- is not that strange?”*



## HENRY IV PART 1 – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**Publisher: Penguin Books, 1967. Pages 96.**

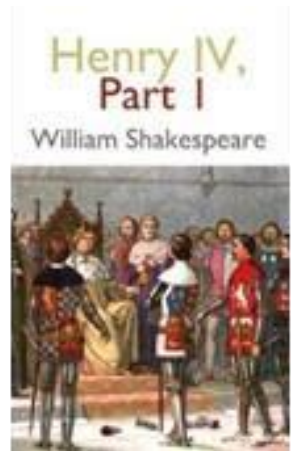
*Henry IV, Part 1* is a history play by Shakespeare. The play starts with the news that King Richard II is dead and Bolingbroke is now King Henry IV. Henry's conscience is troubled with guilt about the removal of King Richard. Henry would like to go to the Holy Land to pay penance, but due to problems at home, he is unable to make the journey.

Henry's reign faces growing opposition from some of those nobles who had helped him to the throne – especially the Percy family. Wales and Scotland are threatening to rebel and Richard's nominated heir, Edmund Mortimer, looms on the horizon. King Henry's treatment of Harry 'Hotspur' Percy (the Earl of Northumberland's son) only makes matters worse.

Henry's only son, Prince Hal, is living a life of debauchery, frequenting the taverns of Eastcheap in the company of Sir John Falstaff and other disreputable characters. As the rebellion to the King grows, Prince Hal returns to his father's side and a gripping battle ensues.

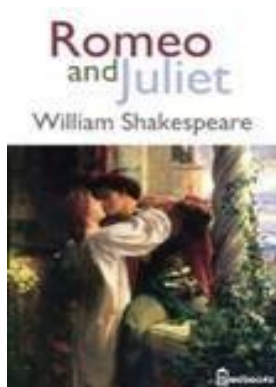
**Themes:** Power, warfare, family, rules and order.

***“Thou seest I have more flesh than another man, and therefore more frailty.”***



## ROMEO AND JULIET – WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**Publisher: Penguin Books, 1967. Pages 120.**



*Romeo and Juliet* is classified as a tragedy but is perhaps one of the most powerful love stories ever told. The city of Verona is beset by a feud between two wealthy feuding families, the Montagues and the Capulets. The young Romeo from the Montague family gate-crashes a feast hosted by the Capulets and falls in love with Juliet, the daughter of the Capulets.

As their union is forbidden, they meet in secret, and following a meeting in the Capulet orchard they decide to marry. Romeo seeks the help of his friend, Friar Laurence, who agrees to marry them. Later Tybalt, a nephew of the Capulets, is killed by Romeo in a street fight and Romeo is banished but hides in Friar Laurence's cell. It is agreed that Juliet will marry Paris in three days. Friar Laurence hatches a plan which involves Juliet taking a drug which will

give her the appearance of death. Sadly, a series of unexpected events ruin the plan and the final scene is filled with tragedy.

**Themes:** Love, the destructive power of hatred, fate.

***“But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun.”***

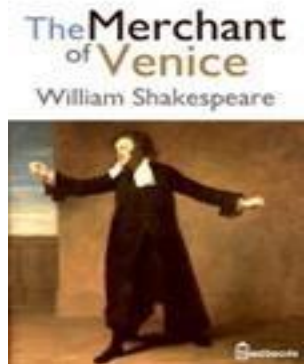
## THE MERCHANT OF VENICE—WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

**Publisher: Penguin Books, 1967. Pages 98.**

*The Merchant of Venice* is classified as a Shakespearean comedy, primarily because it ends on an upbeat note.

At the beginning of the play, we meet Antonio, the merchant of Venice, whose mood is inexplicably downcast. His good friend Bassanio, a lover of life, has fallen in love with a beautiful, wealthy lady named Portia and seeks financial assistance from Antonio to help him win her hand in marriage. Unable to instantly furnish him with the necessary funds, Antonio advises him to borrow the money and to use his name as guarantor. Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, is keen to supply the 3,000 ducats needed, but in so doing ties Antonio into an unusual bond. Bassanio's quest for Portia also involves an unusual caveat, but his delight at winning her is somehow tarnished by Antonio's forfeiture of the bond. The main action reaches a crescendo in the memorable courtroom scene, where it appears that Antonio will lose his life to his arch nemesis Shylock. Several dramatic twists ensue, and each character is left to ponder the success or failure of his/her endeavours.

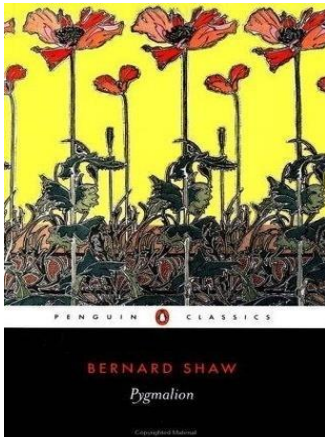
**Themes:** Revenge, justice, mercy, love, self-interest.



***“If I can catch him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.”***

## PYGMALION— GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

**Publisher: Penguin Classics. Pages 96.**



Written over a century ago, *Pygmalion* is simultaneously shockingly old-fashioned and strikingly modern. Shaw tells the tale of a Cockney flower girl plucked from poverty to be taught manners and diction as part of a waggish bet between two gentlemen. We watch with some amusement as Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics, attempts to mould Eliza Doolittle into a woman with the poise and speech of a duchess, and then marvel at his shock when she asserts her individuality.

Many moments in this play will jar with modern sensibilities; students may need guidance to understand the context and to appreciate the point Shaw was making. Shaw's opinions on social class and his feminist ideology underpin the entire play.

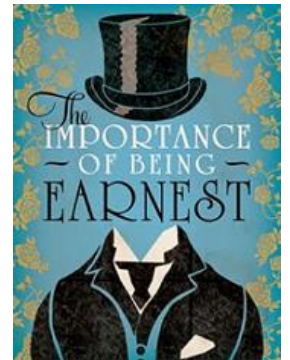
**Themes:** Role of women, class, poverty, relationships.

***“Yes, you squashed cabbage leaf... you incarnate insult to the English language: I could pass you off as the Queen of Sheba.”***

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST – OSCAR WILDE

**Publisher: Dover Publications, 1895. Pages 64.**

Two gentlemen living in 19th century England decide to live a lie in order to put some excitement into their indulgent and mundane lives. Jack Worthing has invented a brother 'Earnest' and uses his existence as an excuse to leave his life in the country to visit the rather beautiful Gwendolyn in London. As it happens, he has told Gwendolyn that he is Earnest. His friend Algernon Montcrief, who lives in London, also decides to take on the name of Earnest and pretends to be Jack's brother when visiting Jack's home in the country and when meeting Cecily Cardew, Jack's ward. However, things begin to go awry when they end up together in the country and their double lives are discovered, threatening to ruin everything...



This is one of Wilde's best known and most successful plays. It has some very funny moments and memorable quotations. Yet this seemingly frivolous play has a much darker side beneath the humour and the memorable quotations. It is a very strong critique of Victorian society of the time. It is a biting satire on the time and the people who live in this society.

**Themes:** Social Class, relationships/marriage, humour, hypocrisy, role of men and women in society.

***“I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being good all the time. That would be hypocrisy”***

