***The Importance of Being Earnest* Prompt #2:** Carefully study the conversation between Algernon and Cecily. Then, write a well-organized essay in which you analyze Wilde’s use of absurdity as a narrative and thematic technique. Do not merely summarize the passage.

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| 1  5  10  15  20  25  30  35  40  45  50  55  60  65  70  75 | **Merriman**. Mr. Ernest Worthing has ­just driven over from the station. He has brought his luggage with him.  **Cecily**. [Takes the card and reads it.] ‘Mr. Ernest Worthing, B. 4, The Albany, W.’ Uncle Jack’s brother! Did you tell him Mr. Worthing was in town?  **Merriman**. Yes, Miss. He seemed very much disappointed. I mentioned that you and Miss Prism were in the garden. He said he was anxious to speak to you privately for a moment.  **Cecily**. Ask Mr. Ernest Worthing to come here. I suppose you had better talk to the housekeeper about a room for him.  **Merriman**. Yes, Miss.  [**Merriman** goes off.]  **Cecily**. I have never met any really wicked person before. I feel rather frightened. I am so afraid he will look just like everyone else. [Enter **Algernon**, very gay and debonair.] He does!  **Algernon**. [Raising his hat.] You are my little cousin Cecily, I’m sure.  **Cecily**. You are under some strange mistake. I am not little. In fact, I believe I am more than usually tall for my age. [**Algernon** is rather taken aback.] But I am your cousin Cecily. You, I see from your card, are Uncle Jack’s brother, my cousin Ernest, my wicked cousin Ernest.  **Algernon**. Oh! I am not really wicked at all, cousin Cecily. You mustn’t think that I am wicked.  **Cecily**. If you are not, then you have certainly been deceiving us all in a very inexcusable manner. I hope you have not been leading a double life, pretending to be wicked and being really good all the time. That would be hypocrisy.  **Algernon**. [Looks at her in amazement.] Oh! Of course I have been rather reckless.  **Cecily**. I am glad to hear it.  **Algernon**. In fact, now you mention the subject, I have been very bad in my own small way.  **Cecily**. I don’t think you should be so proud of that, though I am sure it must have been very pleasant.  **Algernon**. It is much pleasanter being here with you.  **Cecily**. I can’t understand how you are here at all. Uncle Jack won’t be back till Monday afternoon.  **Algernon**. That is a great disappointment. I am obliged to go up by the first train on Monday morning. I have a business appointment that I am anxious… to miss?  **Cecily**. Couldn’t you miss it anywhere but in London?  **Algernon**. No: the appointment is in London.  **Cecily**. Well, I know, of course, how important it is not to keep a business engagement, if one wants to retain any sense of the beauty of life, but still I think you had better wait till Uncle Jack arrives. I know he wants to speak to you about your emigrating.  **Algernon**. About my what?  **Cecily**. Your emigrating. He has gone up to buy your outfit.  **Algernon**. I certainly wouldn’t let Jack buy my outfit. He has no taste in neckties at all.  **Cecily**. I don’t think you will require neckties. Uncle Jack is sending you to Australia.  **Algernon**. Australia! I’d sooner die.  **Cecily**. Well, he said at dinner on Wednesday night, that you would have to choose  between this world, the next world, and Australia.  **Algernon**. Oh, well! The accounts I have received of Australia and the next world are not particularly encouraging. This world is good enough for me, cousin Cecily.  **Cecily**. Yes, but are you good enough for it?  **Algernon**. I’m afraid I’m not that. That is why I want you to reform me. You might make that your mission, if you don’t mind, cousin Cecily.  **Cecily**. I’m afraid I’ve no time, this afternoon.  **Algernon**. Well, would you mind my reforming myself this afternoon?  **Cecily**. It is rather Quixotic of you. But I think you should try.  **Algernon**. I will. I feel better already.  **Cecily**. You are looking a little worse.  **Algernon**. That is because I am hungry.  **Cecily**. How thoughtless of me. I should have remembered that when one is going to lead an entirely new life, one requires regular and wholesome meals. Won’t you come in?  **Algernon**. Thank you. Might I have a buttonhole first? I never have any appetite unless I have a buttonhole first.  **Cecily**. A Marechal Niel? [Picks up scissors.]  **Algernon**. No, I’d sooner have a pink rose.  **Cecily**. Why? [Cuts a flower.]  **Algernon**. Because you are like a pink rose, cousin Cecily.  **Cecily**. I don’t think it can be right for you to talk to me like that. Miss Prism never says such things to me.  **Algernon**. Then Miss Prism is a short-sighted old lady. [**Cecily** puts the rose in his buttonhole.] You are the prettiest girl I ever saw.  **Cecily**. Miss Prism says that all good looks are a snare.  **Algernon**. They are a snare that every sensible man would like to be caught in.  **Cecily**. Oh, I don’t think I would care to catch a sensible man. I shouldn’t know what to talk to him about. |