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# Designing and Creating Costumes for *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Holly Chayes  
Valley Cottage, NY  
Advisor: Aimee Michel  
Technical Creation & Design; The History of Fashion

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In my senior thesis I'll be tying together my primary concentration, "Theater Arts: Technical Creation and Design" with a focus on costume design, and my self designed concentration, "The History of Fashion," by researching, designing, creating, and discussing costumes and their historical context for *The Importance of Being Earnest* written by Oscar Wilde. I'll be designing three sets of costumes, setting the play in three different time periods, so I can compare the three periods to one another, and explore both how and why fashion changed across the 20th century. The three periods I've chosen are the turn of the 20th century, pre-World War II (late 30s), and the 1970s. All three will be set in England.



I chose the turn of the 20th century, the pre World War II period, and the 1970s because I think each of these periods are accompanied by changes, which influence the fashion of the period. At the turn of the 20th century the effects of the industrial revolution had made their way into everyday life, and were beginning to influence and dramatically change fashion. At the end of the 1930s I want to explore how an impending world war changed and influenced society, and therefore society's fashion. The 1970s was another time of social change with the advent of punk, but since the characters in *The Importance of Being Earnest* are upper-class, and not the working class where punk originated, I want to explore what happened when punk was swept up and cycled into main stream fashion, including how punk was changed, and how it altered the levels of acceptability within mainstream fashion.

At its core, *The Importance of Being Earnest* is about identity, how much of a person's identity comes from themselves, and how much is in response to what society, friends, and family want and expect. Identity and what is considered acceptable is something I want to focus on while designing costumes for each of these characters. It is also something I want to explore and focus on while looking at fashions within their historical contexts.

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