The Importance of Being Earnest Act One

1. What does Jack reveal to Algernon about his name?
2. Who is Bunbury? What is Bunburying?
3. What questions does Lady Bracknell ask Jack in her inquisition of him? What does she advise him to do if he wants to marry Gwendolen?
4. At the end of Act One what are the obstacles that Jack must overcome in his pursuit of Gwendolen? What is the first step he intends to take?
5. What obstacles does Algernon face in trying to meet Cecily?

6. In what way does the brief opening scene with the butler foreshadow the tone of the play?
7. Comedies often include a blocking figure who opposes the wishes of young lovers. Who is the main blocking figure in Act One and what is that character’s motive? Who is the other blocking figure?
8. Give some examples of Wilde’s use of epigrams (short witty statements) in Act One.
9. Wilde’s epigrams are often puns (plays on words). A pun depends on a word’s multiple meaning or on two or more words that sound alike but have different meanings. Explain the pun in the title.
10. Wilde also has his characters speak in paradoxes. Explain the paradox in the following quotations.
   a. Algernon: “The very essence of romance is uncertainty. If ever I get married, I’ll certainly try to forget the fact.”
   b. Lady Bracknell: “I do not approve of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone.”
   c. Algernon: “It is awfully hard work doing nothing. However, I don’t mind hard work where there is no definite object of any kind.”