

Oscar Wilde

Epigrams

a cura di Sarah Gudgeon

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1. Read

Oscar Wilde was a famous writer. He was born in Dublin in 1854. He wrote numerous plays, books and poems. He probably got his writing talent from his mother, who was a poet. He is still popular today because the things he wrote were very (1) *witty*. He was particularly good at writing epigrams. Oscar Wilde's epigrams are examples of literary brilliance; with a few (2) *clever* words he could say something very true yet funny. He was very good company and was renowned for his wit and humour. His epigrams were so good that people all over the world still use them today when they want to say something astute.

(1) witty - arguto

(2) clever - perspicace

2. Before you complete exercise 3.

What is an epigram? Tick A or B.

(A) A short sentence that expresses an idea in a clever or funny way.

(B) A long sentence that expresses an idea in a boring or stupid way.

3. Read the epigrams and match each one to the correct translation.

- a. I can resist everything except temptation.
- b. To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.
- c. Nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.
- d. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all.
- e. The truth is rarely pure, and never simple.
- f. There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.

- 1. Amare se stessi è l'inizio di una storia d'amore per tutta la vita.
- 2. La verità è raramente pura e mai semplice.
- 3. So resistere a tutto tranne alla tentazione.
- 4. Non si può insegnare nulla che valga la pena conoscere.
- 5. C'è una sola cosa al mondo peggiore del far parlare di sé: non far parlare di sé.
- 6. Vivere è la cosa più rara del mondo: i più, esistono solamente.

4. Complete the conversations with an epigram.

- 1. A: I'm on a diet but I have to eat this chocolate cake!
B: Me too!.....
- 2. A: That's horrible! I can't believe that really happened!
B: Well,.....
- 3. A: I hate people at school gossiping about me. When will it stop?
B: Don't worry.....
- 4. A: I'm so stupid! I'll never be good enough.
B: Don't say that.....
- 5. A: My grandparents have such an exciting life. They have travelled the world and are going to India again next month.
B: That's great!.....
- 6. A: I hate studying! It's so pointless.
B: Me too!.....
A: Hmm... we still need to learn these maths equations for tomorrow!

5. Talk to a partner. How true do you think Wilde's epigrams are today?

Example:

I think Wilde's epigrams are relevant today because....
I don't think Wilde's epigrams are relevant today because...

Teacher's Notes

1. Read

2. A

3. a3 b1 c4 d6 e2 f5

4.

1. I can resist everything except temptation.
2. The truth is rarely pure, and never simple.
3. There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about.
4. To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.
5. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all.
6. Nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.

* Sarah Gudgeon

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