



The Picture of Dorian Gray

By Oscar Wilde



Wilde's Aestheticism

- Oscar Wilde's motto: "my life is like a work of art".
- Against didacticism of Victorian novels.
- The artist is the creator of beautiful things.
- Art has:
 - no didactic function
 - no moral function
 - no Utilitarian, but "Art for Art's Sake"
 - Art celebrates beauty and the sensorial pleasures.
 - All art is quite useless.



Setting

- “The Picture of Dorian Gray” takes place in the late nineteenth century **London**, England.
- Mostly at Dorian's estate, clubs, operas, ect., 19th century dainty London.





Main Characters

- *Dorian Gray*. A young and handsome boy. He is Basil's model for most of his paintings. He later becomes Lord Henry Wotton's corrupted pupil
- *Basil Hallward*. A gifted painter. A more shy person. He adores Dorian and wants to keep him safe and lovely.
- *Lord Henry Wotton*. The tempting snake. Wealthy nobleman who influences Dorian Gray. Witty talker with lot of theories He is the friend of both Basil and Dorian.



Dorian Gray :plot

- The painter Basil Hallward makes a portrait of a handsome young man, Dorian Gray.
- Charmed by Lord Wotton' theories becomes his pupil.
- Once made aware of his beauty and the consequent power it derives, Dorian wishes intensely to be young forever while admiring the painting.



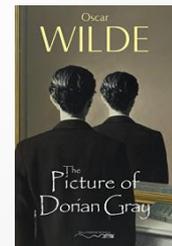
The diabolical bargain



- "How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June.... If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that—for that I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!"

The consequences of a choice

- Dorian's desires of eternal youth are satisfied.
- His experiences and vices appear on the portrait.
- Falls in love and eventually dumps a young actress, who commits suicide for disappointed hopes.
- Dorian lives only for pleasure.
- The painter discovers Dorian's secret and he is killed by the young man
- Later Dorian wants to get free from the portrait; he stabs it but in so doing he kills himself.



Lord Henry Wotton

- Lord Henry is a man possessed of “wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories.
- He is a hedonistic manipulative aristocratic.
- Becomes Dorian’s mentor.
- Advocates the equal pursuit of both moral and immoral experience.
- Dorian falls under his spell .
- He lives a rather staid life.
- His character is based on Lord Ronald Gower, a friend of the author Oscar Wilde.
- Wilde also based Henry around what he thought the world viewed of himself.



Dorian Gray: a modern Dr. Faustus?

- A temptation is placed before Dorian: a potential ageless beauty.
- Lord Henry Wotton's cynical attitude is in keeping with the devil's role in Dr. Faustus.
- Lord Henry acts as the "Devil advocate".
- The picture stands for the dark side of Dorian's personality.





Meaning (at our peril)

- Every excess must be punished and reality cannot be escaped.
- When Dorian destroys the picture, he cannot avoid the punishment for all his sins = death.
- The horrible, corrupting picture could be seen as a symbol of the immorality and bad conscience of the Victorian middle class.
- The picture, restored to its original beauty, illustrates Wilde's theories of art: art survives people, art is eternal. (Keats)

The Picture

- Metaphor of the Victorian Compromise
- Once the changes on the picture become unbearable to Dorian, he covers and hides it from everybody's sight.
- Vices must always be kept hidden.
- The picture represents Dorian's dark side.



Musing

- But this murder—was it to dog him all his life? Was he always to be burdened by his past? Was he really to confess? Never. There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The picture itself—that was evidence. He would destroy it. Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing old. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away, he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy. It had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience. He would destroy it.
- He looked round and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened. As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it.
- There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke and crept out of their rooms. Two gentlemen, who were passing in the square below, stopped and looked up at the great house. They walked on till they met a policeman and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but there was no answer. Except for a light in one of the top windows, the house was all dark. After a time, he went away and stood in an adjoining portico and watched.

The Death

- “Whose house is that, Constable?” asked the elder of the two gentlemen.
- “Mr. Dorian Gray’s, sir,” answered the policeman.
- They looked at each other, as they walked away, and sneered. One of them was Sir Henry Ashton’s uncle.
- Inside, in the servants’ part of the house, the half-clad domestics were talking in low whispers to each other. Old Mrs. Leaf was crying and wringing her hands. Francis was as pale as death.
- After about a quarter of an hour, he got the coachman and one of the footmen and crept upstairs. They knocked, but there was no reply. They called out. Everything was still. Finally, after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof and dropped down on to the balcony. The windows yielded easily—their bolts were old.
- When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was **withered, wrinkled, and loathsome** of visage. **It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was.**

The End