

Oscar Wilde

The Picture of Dorian Gray



free Audiobook



Oscar Wilde


The Picture of Dorian Gray

Text adaptation by **Gina D. B. Clemen**

Activities by **Gina D. B. Clemen** and **Justin Rainey**

Illustrated by **Anna and Elena Balbusso**





Editors: Robert Hill
Design and art direction: Nadia Maestri
Computer graphics: Simona Corniola
Picture research: Laura Lagomarsino

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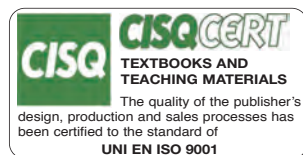
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info@blackcat-cideb.com
blackcat-cideb.com



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First Certificate in English Examination-style activities

T: GRADES 7-8 Trinity-style activities (Grades 7-8)



These symbols indicate the beginning and end of the extracts linked to the listening activities.



Oscar Wilde (1854).

A Note on Oscar Wilde

■ Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wilde was born on 16 October 1854 in Dublin, Ireland. His father, Sir William Wilde, was an important surgeon, and his mother was an Irish nationalist poet.

He studied at Trinity College in Dublin and in 1875, at the age of 20, won a scholarship¹ to study at Oxford University, where he was an outstanding scholar and a promising poet.

1. **scholarship** : financial aid given to a student to pay for his studies.

While at Oxford he was deeply influenced by the aesthetic theories of two eminent art critics, John Ruskin and Walter Pater.

Wilde remained a great aesthete throughout his life and pursued beauty in all its forms – literature, the arts, interior design, clothes, furniture and objects.

In 1879 Wilde moved to London where he began writing and mixing in high society. He soon became known as a great wit,¹ a brilliant conversationalist and an eccentric – he shocked and delighted his listeners.

In 1882 he published his first book, *Poems*, and toured and lectured in the United States. On his return to London in 1884 he married Constance Lloyd and they had two sons, Cyril (1885) and Vyvyan (1886).

The Happy Prince and Other Tales, a collection of stories for children, was published in 1888 and Wilde was now famous in London as a writer.

The Picture of Dorian Gray (1891) was Wilde's only novel and it was immediately attacked by the critics because of its ambiguous morality and allusions.

Between 1891 and 1895 Wilde wrote a series of highly successful plays: *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband* and his masterpiece, *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

In 1895 Wilde was accused of homosexuality, which was illegal in England at that time. After the trial² he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and hard labour. While in prison, he wrote *De Profundis*, a long letter to his friend Lord Alfred Douglas, which was published after his death.

1. **wit** : a person who has the ability to say clever, amusing things.

2. **trial** : legal proceedings in a court of law.

After his release from prison Wilde was a ruined man. He went to live in France, where he wrote his moving poem, *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898). He died in poverty of meningitis in Paris on 30 November 1900.



Hurd Hatfield in a scene from the film **The Picture of Dorian Gray** (1945).

Wilde and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

■ Oscar Wilde had been thinking about creating a major novel for some time. In 1884 he often visited the studio of a painter friend called Basil Ward. One day the sitter at Ward's studio was a very handsome young man who impressed Wilde greatly.

'What a pity,' Wilde said to Ward afterwards, 'that such a glorious creature should ever grow old!' The painter agreed and, laughing, added that it would be wonderful if the boy could always remain young while the portrait aged in his place. From these beginnings the idea for Wilde's first and only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, grew. It is interesting to note that the painter in the novel is called Basil.

In September 1889 J. M. Stoddart, an American editor from Philadelphia, was visiting London. He was there to introduce his literary magazine *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* and to meet writers who could contribute to his publication.

Stoddart invited Oscar Wilde and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to dinner and asked both men to write a story for his magazine. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was the result. It was published in the July 1890 issue of *Lippincott's* and went from page 3 to 100. The fact that the novel appeared in a magazine enabled Wilde to reach a greater number of readers.

As soon as *The Picture of Dorian Gray* appeared in *Lippincott's*, it created a scandal among the critics because they considered it immoral. Oscar Wilde replied to the unfavourable reviews with

elegance and restraint. However, the scandal that followed contributed to the success of the novel, which was shorter than the version we know today. Wilde added six chapters and elaborated others before publishing it in book form the following year. He also added the famous Preface, a series of aphorisms in answer to some of the criticisms. These include the statement: 'There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.'

1 Are the following sentences true (T) or false (F)?

	T	F
1 Wilde wrote other novels as well as <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Wilde also wrote stories for children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 The idea for <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> came to Wilde when he was in Basil Ward's studio.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 J. M. Stoddart wrote reviews for a British publication called <i>Lippincott's Monthly Magazine</i> .	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 When <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> first appeared it received excellent reviews from the critics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Before publishing the novel in book form Wilde added six chapters and elaborated others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 In the Preface, Wilde apologises for having created a scandal with the publication of his novel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Oscar Wilde's house at 34 Tite Street, Chelsea, London.

Before you read

1 Reading pictures

Look at the picture on page 11. Describe what you can see in the room. What are the two men doing? What are they looking at? What sort of atmosphere is there?



track 02

FCE

2 Listening

Listen to the first part of Chapter 1. For questions 1-10, complete the sentences. There is an example at the beginning (0).

- 0 In the studio, there was a strong perfume of roses
- 1 Lord Henry was relaxing on a divan
- 2 The man in the portrait was young and
- 3 Basil Hallward sat looking at his work
- 4 Lord Henry told Basil that the portrait was the artist's
- 5 Lord Henry said the portrait should be
- 6 Basil said the portrait contained a lot of
- 7 Lord Henry said that Basil and the man in the portrait were
- 8 Basil's hair was while the man in the portrait had fair hair.
- 9 Another difference was that Basil had a strong face but the man's features were
- 10 Basil's expression was

Now read the first part of Chapter One and check your answers.



CHAPTER 1

The Artist

The studio was filled with the rich perfume of roses, and the light summer wind brought the heavy scent of lilac from the garden through the open door.



track 02

Lord Henry Wotton was lying on a divan smoking one of his innumerable cigarettes. Beyond the soft buzzing of the bees in the garden, the distant noise of London could be heard.

In the centre of the room, on an artist's easel,¹ stood a portrait of an extraordinarily beautiful young man. Basil Hallward, the artist, was sitting in front of it, smiling at his work of art.

'It is your best work, Basil, the best thing you've ever done,' said Lord Henry languidly. 'You must send it to the Grosvenor. The Grosvenor is the only place to exhibit it.'

'I don't think I shall send it anywhere,' he answered.

Lord Henry looked at him through the thin blue smoke of his cigarette. 'Not send it anywhere? My dear man, why not? What

1. **easel** : a frame to hold up or display a painting (see picture on page 11).





The Picture of Dorian Gray

CHAPTER ONE

odd people you painters are! You do anything in the world to become famous, and when you're famous you're not happy!

'I know you'll laugh at me,' Basil replied, 'but I really can't exhibit it. I've put too much of myself into it.'

Lord Henry laughed. 'Too much of yourself into it! Basil, I didn't know you were so vain. You have black hair and a strong face. This young Adonis¹ has delicate features, fair hair and looks as if he were made of ivory and rose leaves. And you — well, you have an intellectual expression, and beauty ends where an intellectual expression begins. You don't look like your mysterious young friend at all. By the way, you haven't told me his name.'



end

'You don't understand me, Harry,' answered the artist. 'Of course I don't look like him. Dorian Gray is beautiful, and we all must pay for the gift the gods have given us, whether it is beauty, or intellect. It's better not to be different from others. The ugly and the stupid have the best of it in this world.'

'Dorian Gray? Is that his name?' asked Lord Henry.

'Yes, but I didn't want to tell you.'

'Why not?'

'Oh, I can't explain. When I like people immensely I never tell their names to anyone. It's like losing a part of them. I love having secrets.'

'You seem to forget that I'm married, and in marriage secrets are absolutely necessary. I never know where my wife is and my wife never knows where I am. When we meet, which we occasionally do, we tell each other the most absurd stories with the most serious faces.'

'I hate the way you talk about your married life, Harry,' said

1. **Adonis** : in Greek mythology, a handsome young man.

Basil. 'I think you're a very good husband, but you're ashamed of your virtues. Your cynicism is simply a pose.'

Lord Henry laughed and the two men went out into the garden.

After a while Lord Henry pulled out his watch. 'I must go now, Basil, but before I go I want to know the real reason why you don't want to exhibit Dorian Gray's picture.'

'Harry,' said Basil, 'every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter.'¹ I will not exhibit this picture because I'm afraid it shows the secret of my heart.'

Lord Henry laughed. 'And what is that?'

'I'm afraid you'll hardly understand it.'

Lord Henry picked a pink daisy² from the grass and said, 'I can believe anything if it's incredible.'

'The story is simply this,' said the painter. 'Two months ago I went to a party at Lady Brandon's. After I'd been in the room about ten minutes, I suddenly felt that someone was looking at me. I turned around and saw Dorian Gray for the first time. When our eyes met I grew pale with terror. I knew I'd met someone whose personality could absorb my soul and my art! I had a strange feeling that Fate had prepared exquisite joys and sorrows. I was afraid and wanted to leave the room. Lady Brandon stopped me and suddenly I found myself face to face with this young man. We were quite close and our eyes met. I asked Lady Brandon to introduce me to him.'

'Tell me more about Dorian Gray,' Lord Henry said. 'How often do you see him?'

'Every day. I couldn't be happy if I didn't see him every day. He's absolutely necessary to me.'

1. **sitter** : a person who sits as a model for a painter.

2. **daisy** : a small flower with a yellow centre and small white petals.



The Picture of Dorian Gray

CHAPTER ONE

‘How extraordinary! I thought you’d never care for anything but your art.’

‘He’s all my art to me now,’ said the painter. ‘He’s my inspiration! Since I met Dorian I’ve created the best work of my life. He knows nothing of my adoration for him. But if people saw this portrait, they might guess the secret of my heart, Harry!’

‘Tell me, Basil, does Dorian Gray like you?’ asked Lord Henry.

‘I know he likes me. As a rule he’s charming to me, but sometimes he seems to enjoy hurting me. Then I feel I’ve given my heart to someone who thinks it’s simply a lovely flower to enjoy on a summer day.’

‘Summer days, Basil, can sometimes linger,’¹ murmured Lord Henry. ‘Perhaps you’ll become tired sooner than he will.’

‘Harry, don’t say that. As long as I live, the personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me.’

Lord Henry was amused. How delightful other people’s emotions were! ‘I’d like to meet him.’

‘I don’t want you to meet him.’

‘Mr Dorian Gray is in the studio, sir,’ said the butler, coming into the garden.

‘You must introduce me now,’ cried Lord Henry laughing.

The painter said to his servant, ‘Ask Mr Gray to wait, Parker.’

Then he looked at Lord Henry. ‘Dorian Gray is my dearest friend. He’s a simple, beautiful person. Don’t spoil him. Don’t try to influence him. Your influence would be bad. Don’t take away from me the person who makes me a true artist.’

‘What nonsense!’ said Lord Henry, smiling.

1. **linger** : be slow to disappear or go away.

The text and **beyond**

1 Comprehension check

Answer the following questions.

- 1 According to Lord Henry, where should Basil exhibit the painting and why?
- 2 Why did Lord Henry say that painters are odd people?
- 3 How did Lord Henry describe the young Adonis in the painting?
- 4 Why didn't Basil want to exhibit Dorian Gray's picture?
- 5 How did Basil and Dorian Gray meet and what was Basil's first reaction?
- 6 Describe Basil's feelings towards Dorian.
- 7 What did Basil ask Lord Henry not to do?

2 Vocabulary – senses

The story begins with a strong appeal to our senses. Since the philosophy of pleasure is an important theme in this novel, the senses play a fundamental role. Look again at the beginning of Chapter One and write below in the first column the phrases which appeal to our senses. In the second column write which of our senses are stimulated.

Phrases appealing to the senses	sense
rich perfume of roses	smell

FCE 3 Word formation

Read the text below. Use the word given in capitals at the end of some lines to form a word that fits in the space in the same line. There is an example at the beginning (0).

Basil tells Lord Henry of his feelings for Dorian. The artist is (0) *desperately* serious whilst his friend remains his (1) , cynical self. Both characters introduce themes that are developed in the story. Lord Henry is a symbol of the hedonistic and (2) upper classes that enjoyed ridiculing the Victorian virtues of work and morals, generally associated with the middle classes. Truth is regarded as an (3) and awkward obstacle to pleasure. Henry freely admits to lying to his wife just as she lies to him, stating that 'in (4) secrets are absolutely necessary'. He provides us with several epigrams — short, clever and (5) sentences which Wilde himself was famous for — such as 'I can believe anything if it is incredible'. Against this background Basil communicates to Henry (and consequently to us as readers) the (6) disturbance Dorian Gray has created. The relationship between the artist and the sitter is not one of equal feelings and it represents a series of (7) : Basil adores Dorian and has to see him every day, as he is absolutely necessary also for his art. Dorian, however, is at best charming but at times enjoys hurting the artist. The (8) that Basil feels for the 'young Adonis' is a disturbing (9) of terror and sorrow. He is aware of gaining something from the relationship but also of (10) something. Dorian is also a symbol of beauty but, according to Basil, 'the ugly and stupid have the best of it in this world'.

DESPERATE
TYPE

DECAY

NECESSARY

MARRY

AMUSE

EMOTION

OPPOSE

ADORE

MIX

LOSE

4 Epigrams

Epigrams are short sayings or poems which express an idea in a clever and amusing way.

Oscar Wilde was famous for these. His alter ego in the story, Lord Henry, provides us with an example in the opening chapter. What is it?

5 Vocabulary – feelings

In this story there are allusions to homosexual feelings and relationships; for example, the surprising ‘confession’ that takes place in Basil’s garden. Which words best describe Basil’s feelings for Dorian Gray?

admiration anger respect inspiration jealousy
friendship adoration physical attraction indifference love

Support your choices with quotations from Chapter One.

6 Discussion

A The names of the characters have interesting connotations in this novel. ‘Dorian’ is one of the names for the Greeks, who were renowned for their ideals of classical beauty, which Lord Henry advocates.

The surname ‘Gray’ suggests Dorian’s hidden potential for good or evil, black or white, and therefore ‘Gray’.

Lord Henry is often referred to as ‘Harry’ in the novel. ‘Old Harry’ is one of the names for the devil in English, so the name might have connotations of the devil in this novel.

If you could change your first name, what would you choose? Why?

B When Basil says: ‘I have put too much of myself into (the portrait)’, Lord Henry misunderstands him. Basil tells him ‘you don’t understand me, Henry.’

What is the misunderstanding? Do you think it is deliberate?

Discuss your ideas with your partner.

7 Lady Brandon's diary

Rain again. Oh, how I detest March! The season' has been rather amusing. Last night's party was interesting. The usual people and some rather unoriginal gossip. One new face was a young man named Gray. Basil Hallward was there. I never did like his paintings, poor thing.

Use the following cues in the appropriate form to complete her diary entry for the same day.

- 1 I/see/Basil/stare/Dorian Gray/strange
- 2 he/seem/if/he/see/ghost/
- 3 not/move/all
- 4 everyone/embarrass
- 5 I/have to/do/something
- 6 Both/them/look/each other/without/say/word
- 7 finally/Basil/ask/introduce/Dorian Gray

What an extraordinary thing! Artists are so eccentric.

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1. **the season** : at the time of Wilde's novel, a period of intense social activity for the upper classes.

Before you read



track 03



1 Listening

Listen to the first part of Chapter Two. For questions 1-6, choose the best answer, A, B or C.

- 1 When Basil and Henry entered the house, Dorian was
 - A ☐ playing the piano.
 - B ☐ looking at his unfinished portrait.
 - C ☐ reading music.

- 2 How did Dorian feel when he realised that Basil was not alone?
 - A ☐ irritated
 - B ☐ embarrassed
 - C ☐ indifferent

- 3 Lord Henry
 - A ☐ could understand why Basil admired Dorian.
 - B ☐ couldn't understand why Basil admired Dorian.
 - C ☐ could understand why Dorian admired Basil.

- 4 How did Basil feel when Dorian asked him if Henry could stay?
 - A ☐ relieved
 - B ☐ angry
 - C ☐ jealous

- 5 Which does not explain Dorian's fascinations with Lord Henry?
 - A ☐ Lord Henry's voice
 - B ☐ Lord Henry's use of words
 - C ☐ Lord Henry's musical ability

- 6 When Lord Henry realises that Dorian finds him fascinating, he (Lord Henry) feels
 - A ☐ surprised.
 - B ☐ angry.
 - C ☐ irritated.