



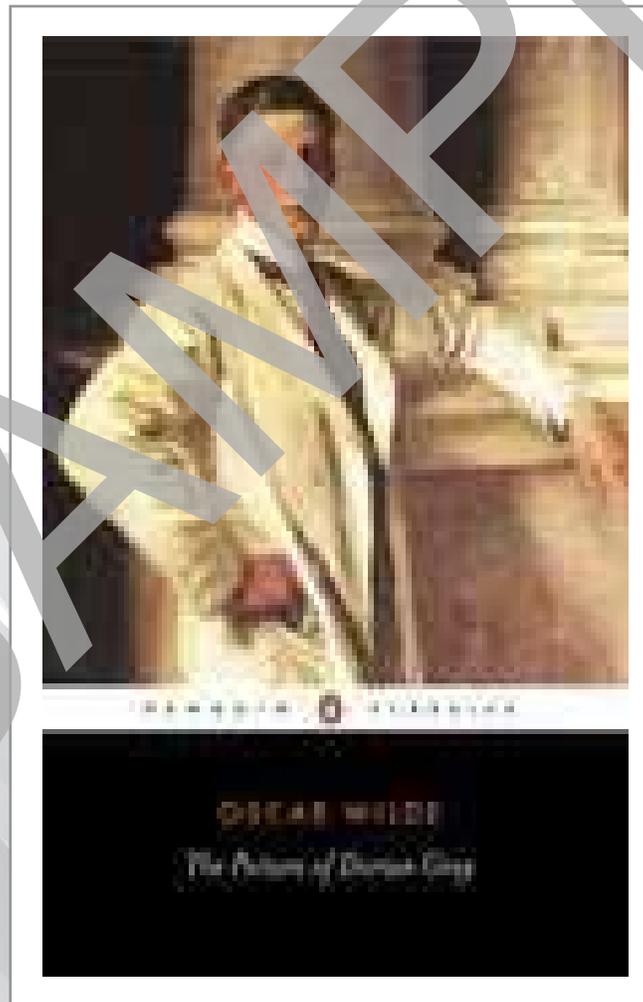
**TEACHER GUIDE**

**GRADES 9-12**

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

# **The Picture of Dorian Gray**

Oscar Wilde



**READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT**

# The Picture of Dorian Gray

Oscar Wilde

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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## Skills and Strategies

### Thinking

Research, compare/contrast,  
analysis

### Vocabulary

Target words, definitions,  
application

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral  
presentation, charades

### Comprehension

Predictions, cause/effect

### Literary Elements

Characterization,  
personification, simile,  
metaphor, allusion, theme,  
symbolism, universality

### Writing

Poems, response, eulogy,  
elegy, personal, sequel,  
précis

### Across the Curriculum

Art—collage, drawing;  
Drama—acting;  
Music—mood, ballad

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**Date of First Publication:** 1891 by Messrs. Ward, Lock & Co., London

**Genre:** fiction

**Point of View:** third-person omniscient

**Style:** narrative

**Setting:** London, England; 1800s

**Themes:** aestheticism, self-love, decadence, innocence, influence/manipulation, sin/redemption

**Tone:** pessimism, fatality, doom

## Summary

As young, handsome Dorian Gray views a portrait of himself, he vows, "If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old...I would give my soul for that!" His plea is granted, and he begins his decline into decadence. He immerses himself in his search to satisfy his sensuality, leading him into immorality, degradation, and, eventually, murder. His moral corruption is reflected in the aging and ugliness of his image in the portrait, yet his actual appearance remains the same. After a futile effort to reform, he attempts to destroy his evil by destroying the portrait. The tragic ending leaves room for speculation.

## Primary Characters

**Dorian Gray:** protagonist, a.k.a. Prince Charming; novel revolves around his desire to remain forever young and handsome, his pledge to give his soul to stay young, and the subsequent perversion and destruction of his soul

**Basil Hallward:** artist who paints Dorian Gray's portrait; offers Dorian true friendship; acts as his voice of conscience

**Lord Henry Wotton (Harry):** meets Dorian through Basil; becomes mentor to Dorian; manipulates and encourages him in his life of pleasure and decadence

**Sibyl Vane:** 17-year-old actress who commits suicide because of Dorian's rejection of her love; symbolizes innocence

**James Vane:** Sibyl's brother who vows to avenge his sister's death; symbolizes vengeance

## Secondary Characters

**Lady Victoria Wotton:** Lord Henry's wife; eventually divorces him

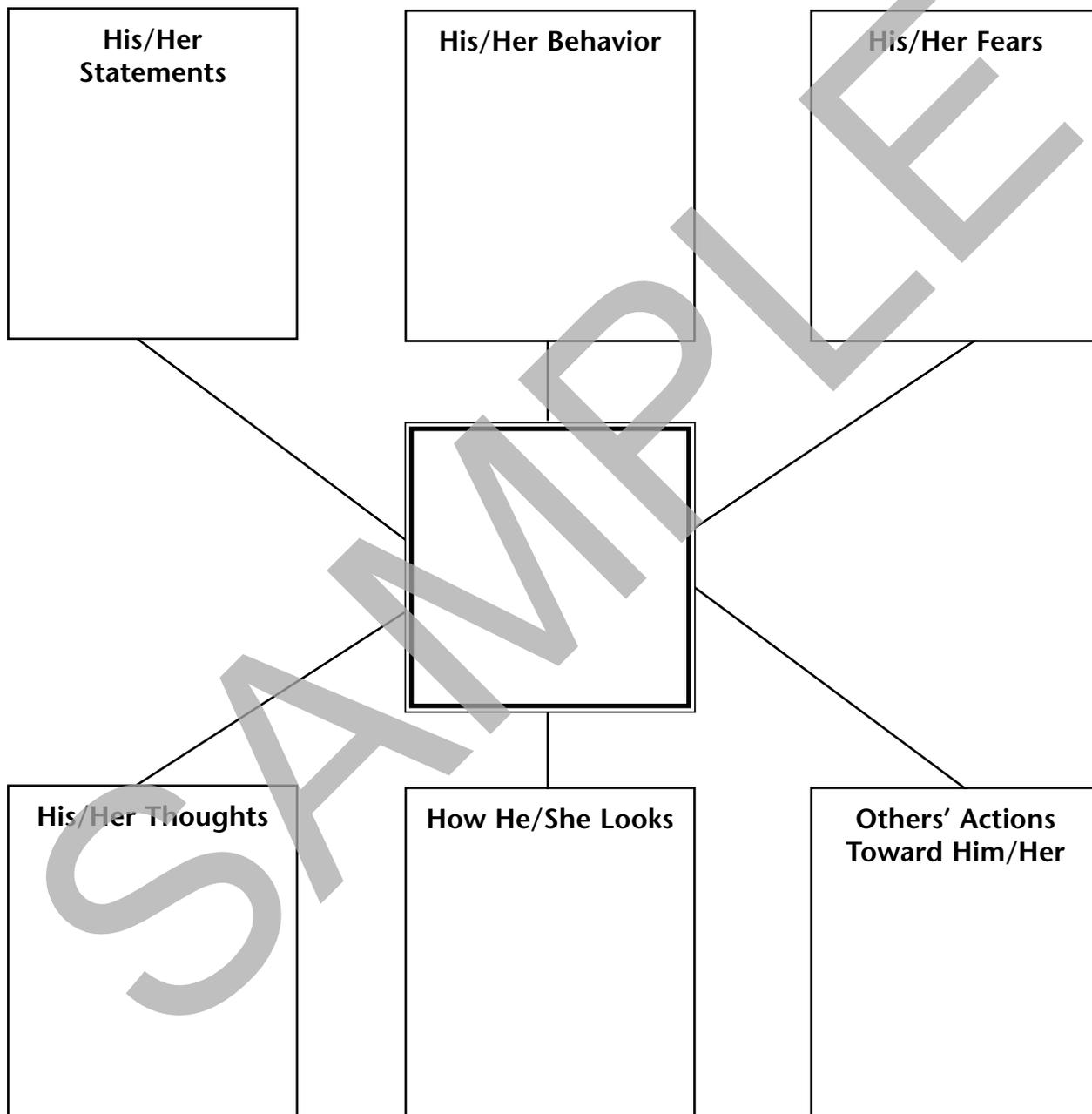
**Mrs. Vane:** Sibyl's mother

**Mr. Isaacs:** Jewish owner of theatre where Sibyl performs

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## Attribute Boxes

**Directions:** Place the name of a character from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the center box. Within each surrounding box, record evidence about the character.



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Seven Deadly Sins	
Sin	Virtue
Pride	
Avarice (greed)	
Envy	
Wrath (anger)	
Lust	
Gluttony	
Sloth	

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## Chapter One, pp. 5-19

Lord Henry Wotton views a portrait of Dorian Gray painted by Basil Hallward, who reveals his deep admiration for Dorian's beauty and tells Lord Henry that the portrait contains too much of the artist to be placed on public view. He cautions Lord Henry not to try to influence Dorian.

### Vocabulary

conjectures (5)  
enmity (12)

languidly (6)  
proletariat (13)

cynicism (9)

truculent (12)

### Discussion Questions

1. Examine the characteristics of Lord Henry Wotton. Note that Lord Henry is a manipulator and the initiator of Dorian's corruption. (*His opium-tainted cigarette is the first hint of a decadent lifestyle. He is cynical; e.g., he does not think beauty and intellectual expression can exist together, he views the church bishop as incapable of thinking for himself, and he believes marriage creates the need for a life of deception. He chooses his friends for good looks, his acquaintances for good characters, his enemies for good intellects, and he despises his relatives. Although they are friends, Basil views him as a bad influence.*)
2. Discuss Basil Hallward and analyze his relationship with Dorian and his reaction to his painting of Dorian Gray. Note the contrast between Lord Henry and Basil, who symbolizes truth, friendship, and conscience for Dorian. (*He is an artist who is enthralled with his portrait of Dorian Gray, a young man whom he recently "discovered." He feels that he can never display the portrait in public because he has shown the portrait of his own soul in the painting. He senses that his meeting with Dorian was destined, yet he fears him even though he believes Dorian has become necessary to him and his art. He sees in Dorian absolute beauty and harmony. At times Basil feels that Dorian is his dearest friend, but occasionally Dorian treats him thoughtlessly. Basil is apprehensive about Lord Henry's possible influence on Dorian.*)
3. **Prediction:** What will be Lord Henry's influence on Dorian Gray?

### Supplementary Activities

1. Have students write name poems for Lord Henry and Basil Hallward, characterizing what they now know about the two men. Pattern: place letters of name vertically on paper; write a descriptive word or phrase beginning with each letter.
2. Note the literary devices: **Similes**—dim roar of London like the bourdon note of a distant organ (p. 5); Lady Brandon treats guests like auctioneer treats goods (p. 12); clouds like skeins of glossy white silk (p. 12); Dorian treats Basil's soul as if it were a flower to put in his coat (p. 16); mind like a bric-a-brac shop (p. 16) **Metaphor**—she (Lady Brandon): peacock (p. 11)
3. Correlate the allusions with traits and circumstances surrounding Dorian Gray: Adonis (p. 7): Greek mythology, handsome youth whose beauty attracts Aphrodite, the goddess of love; Narcissus (p. 7): Greek mythology, youth courted by many lovers because of his beauty