



PRESTWICK HOUSE

Activity Pack

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

BY OSCAR WILDE



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Item No. 305168

Written by Rhiannon Boyce

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter I

Analysis and Paragraph Writing

Objective: Analyzing a chapter and forming opinions

Activity

The artist, Basil Hallward, and his companion, Lord Henry Wotton, spend a great deal of time arguing over whether Basil should exhibit his new painting of young man with whom Basil is fascinated. Basil seems unusually protective of the portrait, as well as its subject. Basil makes it clear that he does not wish to introduce Henry to the young man, Dorian Gray, because he feels Henry would have a negative influence on Dorian. He becomes upset when Dorian shows up and introductions are unavoidable.

Think about the following questions, and write a brief paragraph to answer each. Be prepared to discuss your answers with the class.

- What do you think Basil means when he says, “I have put too much of myself in the thing”?
- What do you think about the friendship between Basil and Dorian?
- Why do you think Henry is so determined to meet Dorian?
- Is Basil being unreasonable in his endeavors to keep Henry and Dorian separate?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter II

Self-Portrait

Objective: Creating a written self-portrait

Activity

In Chapter II, Lord Henry is introduced to Dorian Gray. It appears as though Basil's portrait has accurately depicted him, and the real Dorian Gray is as charming and beautiful as he appears on canvas. Lord Henry mentally notes:

[H]e was certainly wonderfully handsome, with his finely curved scarlet lips, his frank blue eyes, his crisp gold hair. There was something in his face that made one trust him at once. All the candor of youth was there, as well as all youth's passionate purity. One felt that he had kept himself unspotted from the world.

By analyzing at Dorian's appearance, Lord Henry is able to discern a great deal about Dorian's character.

You are going to paint a self-portrait; however, rather than creating an accurate picture of how you really look, you are going to draw your characteristics and attributes.

In the following chart, make a list of ten characteristics that you attribute to yourself. When you have finished, write how you could depict this characteristic in your self-portrait. An example has been provided for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter III

Dramatization

Objective: Converting prose into a play

Activity

Although Oscar Wilde is well known for his plays, such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *An Ideal Husband*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is written in the form of a novel. While novels are written in prose, plays use dialogue and stage directions to tell a story. Wilde included a great deal of dialogue in the text of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. He uses conversation between the characters as a vehicle for conveying information about the plot.

Rewrite a passage from Chapter III as if it were a scene in one of Wilde's plays; however, write it for a 21st century audience. Retain Oscar Wilde's witty and sarcastic sense of humor, but transcribe the original dialogue into words and phrases that would appeal to a modern audience. You must also add dialogue of your own to take the place of narrative in the passage. Additionally, you may change the setting and minor actions of the characters to make them seem more contemporary. Finally, be sure to include stage directions, indicating things such as when the characters enter the stage and what they are physically doing. The following is an example of how a dramatization of a passage from Chapter II could begin:

[As the scene begins, DORIAN is standing in front of BASIL's stereo, looking at all of his friend's cds in a leather case. LORD HENRY and BASIL enter.]

DORIAN: *[his back toward BASIL]* Basil, you have to lend me these. I want to listen to them all.

BASIL: Alright, just as long you sit still enough to let me finish the portrait today.

DORIAN: Basil, I am so tired of sitting. We've been doing this for weeks, and by the time you're finished the stupid painting, I'm going to be old and near death. I didn't want a life-size portrait of myself in the first place. *[He swings around in his stool to face BASIL and LORD HENRY. He seems shocked and embarrassed to encounter someone new.]* I'm sorry Basil. I didn't know you had anyone with you.

BASIL: This is Henry Wotton, an old friend from college. I was just telling him about you and how patient you are. Thanks for making me look like a liar!

LORD HENRY: *[extending his hand to shake DORIAN'S]* Please excuse our friend, Mr. Gray. He is the most controlling man alive. If you don't do what he wants, he gets all upset and locks himself in his room with his paint. Anyway, my aunt has told me so much about you...

When you write your play, feel free to highlight certain portions of the text and downplay others. You may also introduce new minor characters if they are necessary.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter IV**Character Email**

Objectives: Understanding character relationships
Writing an email

Activity

During Oscar Wilde's time, when one person wanted to communicate with another, he or she wrote a letter to either be sent by mail or delivered by a servant. Today, sending a message to another person is much easier. With modern conveniences like email, instant messenger, "Facebook," and other Internet programs, a message can be sent and received in a matter of seconds.

Pretend that you are either Lord Henry or Dorian Gray, and write an email to one of the other characters regarding Dorian's love and admiration for Sibyl Vane. Make sure you reference plot points from the chapter and stay in character throughout the entire email.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter V

Writing a Journal Entry

Objectives: Creating a journal for a character
Summarizing events in the chapter

Activity

A journal or diary has been a popular method of recording thoughts, observations, and fears about events in one's life. Chapter V covers the reactions of Sibyl Vane's family members to her relationship with Dorian. Create a journal entry for one of the characters featured in Chapter V (Sibyl, Mrs. Vane, or Jim), focusing on this subject. Imagine that you are the character, and write the entry in his or her unique voice. Comment on the major plot events in this chapter, in addition to your personal opinion about the engagement. Use formal writing without any modern slang.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter VI**Pros and Cons**

Objectives: Examining character relationships
Determining character motivation

Activity

In Chapter VI, Dorian expects his friends to congratulate him on his engagement to Sibyl Vane. He is very excited by his engagement to the beautiful, charming actress, but Basil and Lord Henry do not share his excitement. While they understand some of the reasons for Dorian's decision, they have their own reasons for being against the engagement.

In the following chart, create a list of ten pros and ten cons of Dorian's engagement to Sibyl Vane. You will find a few reasons for and against it in the chapter, but you must also supply reasons of your own. Two examples have been provided for you. When you have completed the chart, decide whether you think the engagement is overall a good decision or a bad one.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter VII**Plot Analysis**

Objectives: Writing a comprehensive essay in alternate formats
Analyzing an important plot twist

Activity

In Chapter VII, Dorian dissolves his engagement to Sibyl. His decision may be surprising, especially since he professed a great love for her to all of his friends. Dorian's decision is an important part of the story, showing not only the first big change in his character, but causing an alteration in his beautiful portrait.

Using one of the following formats, write a short about why Dorian changed his mind about marrying Sibyl and how you think this will affect the rest of the story:

- a blog entry from Dorian's point of view
- an entry in Sibyl's diary or journal
- a letter from Oscar Wilde to his publisher about why he chose not to have Dorian marry Sibyl

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter VIII

Newspaper Article

Objectives: Making inferences
Incorporating facts and ideas into a newspaper article

Activity

After changing his mind about the engagement with Sibyl and having an argument with her backstage, Dorian wakes up the following morning to see that his bad behavior has caused his portrait to change. Rather than watching the portrait degenerate more, and hoping that it will return to its original state, Dorian decides to apologize to Sibyl and renew their engagement. Unfortunately, when Lord Henry arrives that morning, he brings with him terrible news—Sibyl Vane is dead.

Imagine that you are a reporter for a London newspaper, and you have been asked to write an article about Sibyl's death. You must inform readers about the facts of her death and what London's law enforcement agency is doing to investigate Sibyl's death. You must include the facts presented in the chapter and make inferences about other information that may be pertinent to the situation. Feel free to include interviews with characters in the novel or characters that you have created, but make sure you stay true to the story.

Death of Actress Raises Questions

By: [Student's name here]

At approximately 1:00 a.m., police arrived at the Bard's Theater on the outskirts of London to investigate a terrible crime scene. The leading lady of the theater company, seventeen-year-old Sibyl Vane, was found dead on the floor of her dressing room. Authorities have reason to believe that her death was caused by poisoning, most likely from ingesting Prussian acid or some liquid laced with white lead; however, they have not yet determined whether her death was a suicide, a murder, or an accident.

The actress's death occurred sometime between the hours of 12:30 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. Miss Vane left the theater with her mother, but then went back to her dressing room to retrieve a forgotten article. When she did not return, her mother went looking for her, and found Miss Vane sprawled on the floor.

When asked if she saw anyone entering or leaving Sibyl's dressing room around the time of the murder, Mrs. Vane said no and then refused to comment further. However, Mr. Isaacs, who owns the theater, agreed to talk to reporters.

"Nope, nobody in the theater but Mrs. Vane, Sibyl, and myself. Suicide, I think. Very unfortunate. You see, there was this chap courtin' her, and they were to be married. He called off the engagement last night after the show. There was a lot of yelling and a lot of crying goin' on. Sibyl was heartbroken."

When asked who the gentleman was, Mr. Isaacs was unable to answer, saying that everyone around the theater called him, "Prince Charming."

The identity of this "Prince Charming" is still a mystery. Investigators will be making an inquest, and anyone with information regarding Sibyl Vane's death or "Prince Charming" are asked to come forward.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Chapter IX

From Prose to Poetry

Objectives: Interpreting details from the text
Rewriting prose as poetry

Activity

Novels are written in prose, and poems are written in verse. Some people have a preference for one or the other, while others like both forms.

Rewrite a passage from Chapter IX into a poem of ten to fifteen lines. Be creative in the details you choose to highlight in your poem, and try to bring out the most important events, feelings, and images.

1. After choosing a passage, extract the details you think will best convey the meaning of it.
2. Incorporate those details into your poem in a creative way. You may compose the poem in any form, and it does not need to rhyme.

For example: The line, “But I was afraid of intruding on a sorrow I could not lighten” might be changed to:

The sadness
The pain of my imagination
I cannot say for certain
How it must consume you,
I am on the outside—a drop
Within the ocean of perceived sorrow.

3. Then, write responses to the following questions:
 - Which version did you like better?
 - Did writing the passage in verse change the tone of it?
 - What details did you leave out, and did their exclusion affect the meaning?
 - Did you gain a deeper understanding of the passage by rewriting it in verse?