

Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Individual Learning Packet

Teaching Unit

The Picture of Dorian Gray

by Oscar Wilde

written by Eva Richardson



Prestwick House

Item No. 303097

The Picture of Dorian Gray

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. describe and analyze the significance of leading a double life in Victorian England.
2. explore the principles of the Aesthetic movement and its relation to traditional Victorian upper class society.
3. discuss the idea of Hedonism as it pertains to the characters in literary works.
4. analyze the novel as a commentary on social identities and social masks.
5. trace the development of a character's psychological state.
6. relate Wilde's aphorisms to the plot and characters in the novel.
7. trace the connection between art and life with regard to the Aesthetic movement.
8. analyze how the novel complicates nineteenth-century notions of sexuality.
9. analyze the theme of eternal youth and everlasting beauty.
10. explain and analyze the Faustian pact between Dorian and the portrait.
11. respond to writing prompts similar to those on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
12. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
13. offer a close reading of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. What is the significance of youth and beauty for Dorian Gray?
2. What is the connection between identity and social masks within the novel?
3. To what extent does the novel challenge conventional notions of sex and gender, as well as public and private life?
4. How does the novel provide a commentary on the power of influence? What kinds of influence does the novel describe?
5. In what ways does the novel comment on the behaviors of the Victorian upper—and middle—class?
6. What is Wilde's attitude toward the Victorian preoccupation with philanthropy?
7. How are Lord Henry and Dorian Gray's views of hedonism similar and different?
8. How much responsibility does Basil Hallward have for Dorian's excessive lifestyle? What responsibility does Lord Henry have?
9. How does the novel comment on excess and hedonism?
10. In what ways does the novel champion the principles of the Aesthetic movement?

The Picture of Dorian Gray

Chapter I

1. Why does Lord Henry insist that Basil Hallward should exhibit his painting of Dorian Gray?

2. Why does Basil Hallward not want to put the portrait in an exhibition?

3. How do Lord Henry's comments on marriage support the novel's motif of leading a double life?

4. To what extent has Dorian Gray influenced Basil's art?

5. What is Lord Henry's assessment of upper class involvement in philanthropy?

6. What does Basil's hesitation to introduce Lord Henry and Dorian to each other reveal about both Basil and Lord Henry?

Chapter VIII

1. Why is it psychologically necessary for Dorian to write a long letter of apology to Sibyl Vane?

2. What news does Lord Henry reveal when he visits Dorian?

3. Why does Dorian call Sibyl's suicide "selfish"?

4. How does Lord Henry help Dorian come to terms with Sibyl's death?

5. What is the intended effect of the rhetorical questions toward the end of the chapter?

Chapter XVI

1. To what extent does Basil's death drive Dorian deeper into the world of illicit drugs?

2. How do the similes in the chapter illustrate the changes taking place in Dorian's life?

3. How is James Vane alerted to Dorian's presence at the Opium Den?

4. How is Dorian able to convince James Vane that he is not the man responsible for Sibyl Vane's death?

Chapter XVII

1. How has Dorian's character changed in regard to the pursuit of pleasure?

2. Why does Dorian faint in the garden during his party at Selby Royal?
