

"What happened to Dorian really makes me think about whether it's important to care about staying young and beautiful forever." Stacey, 13



THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

OSCAR WILDE

'I believe the only way to live, is to be true to oneself. The only way to get rid of temptation is to give in to it.'

Young, rich and handsome, Dorian Gray seems to have it all. So why do people who were once his friends leave the room when he enters? Can there really be any truth in the dark tales that are told about him? And why does he keep his portrait locked away in an attic room?

Two men hold the answer to Dorian's secret. One is the artist, Basil Hallward, who paints Dorian's portrait. The other is Lord Henry Wotton, who convinces the impressionable Dorian that youth and pleasure are the only things worth living for.

Is Dorian Gray really as innocent as he seems? Can love and friendship save him from himself? Or will the secret of the picture of Dorian Gray be a secret he takes to his grave?



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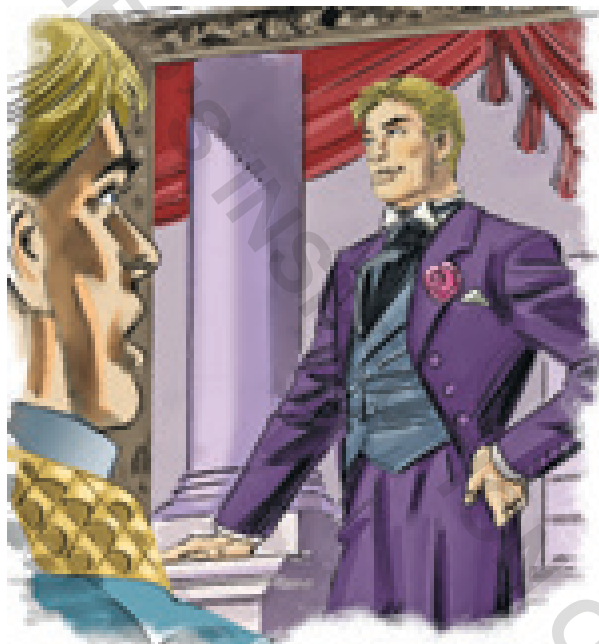


Retold by Paula Hammond
Illustrated by Kevin Hopgood



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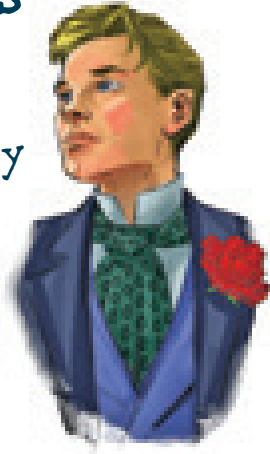
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THE CHARACTERS

Dorian Gray

Dorian is a beautiful young man with a simple nature, but is he too easily influenced by others?



Basil Hallward

Basil paints a life-size picture of Dorian. Will he ever discover which is the real Dorian – the picture or the man?



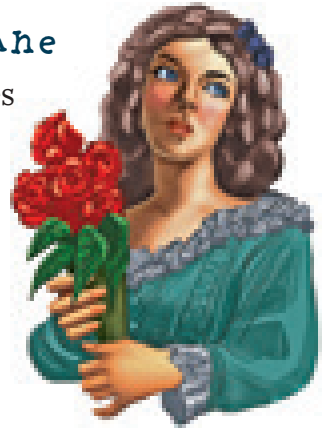
Lord Henry Wotton

Wotton views Dorian as a fascinating experiment. How far can he mould Dorian into being the man he would like to be himself?



Sibyl Vane

Sibyl is a young actress who sees Dorian as her Prince Charming. Will he be her salvation or her doom?



James Vane

Sibyl's adoring brother, James, vows to take vengeance on anyone who hurts his sister. But will he?



Mrs Vane

Sibyl's mother is an ageing actress who treats life like a cheap stage romance. How will she deal with real tragedy?



The Picture

Why does Dorian keep his portrait locked away in an attic room? What is the terrible secret of the picture of Dorian Gray?





THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

Lord Henry Wotton lay back on the soft cushions of the divan, cigarette in hand. The garden door was open. Behind heavy silken curtains he could just glimpse the honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum tree, trembling in the breeze.

In the centre of the room stood a full-length portrait, and in front of it stood the artist, Basil Hallward. As the painter looked at the image of the beautiful young man whose graceful form he had so skilfully reproduced, a troubled look crossed his face.

‘My dear fellow,’ Lord Henry said, ‘this painting will make your reputation. You will exhibit it, of course?’

‘No’, replied Basil. ‘No, I don’t think so.’

Through the blue smoke rings whirling up from his opium-tainted cigarette, Lord Henry watched his friend with amusement. ‘What odd chaps you painters are,’ he said. ‘This portrait will make you the talk of London. Why, if there’s one thing in the world worse than being talked about it’s not being talked about!’

'All the same,' Basil answered, 'I really can't exhibit it. Don't ask me why. You would hardly believe it.'

Lord Henry stroked his pointed beard and laughed. 'Why, Basil, I can believe anything provided that it is quite incredible.'

'Then,' answered the painter, 'the truth is simply this; the work I have done since I met Dorian Gray is the best of my life. Somehow, when he is with me I see the world afresh. It's as though he has passed all his youthful innocence and wonder on to me.'

'Then I must meet him!' Lord Henry exclaimed.



The painter was about to reply when the butler announced the arrival of the very man they had been discussing. Hallward turned pale. 'Harry,' he said with a quiet urgency, 'Dorian has the most simple and beautiful nature. Please don't spoil him. My art quite depends on him.'

Lord Henry said nothing, but lit another cigarette. How delightful other people's emotions were, he thought. This afternoon promised to be much more interesting than he'd expected.



Dorian Gray was as pale as ivory and as delicate as rose leaves, with frank blue eyes, scarlet lips and golden hair. Lord Henry could see why Basil had been so affected by this extraordinary youth. He seemed to have all the unspoilt charm of a past age.

'I want to finish your portrait today,' said Basil, waving the young man into his studio.

Back in time

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin on 16th October 1854. After university, he moved to London where his outspoken opinions and witty conversation made him a popular figure in Victorian high society.

The Picture of Dorian Gray, published in July 1890, was Wilde's first attempt at novel writing. Everyone expected the result to be funny and clever. What they didn't expect was controversy!

Before the novel was even published, Wilde's editors at *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* decided that it was too shocking for their readership, and made a large number of changes to the manuscript. Wilde himself also cut and rewrote many chapters, to the point where much of Dorian's 'sinful' behaviour is simply implied rather than stated outright. Despite this, *Dorian Gray* still outraged the critics. Some even suggested that Wilde should be tried in court for obscenity. This led to the author himself making even more changes to the story before it was republished in book form.

So why was *The Picture of Dorian Gray* so shocking to nineteenth-century audiences?

In the nineteenth century, society was very strictly controlled by the church and the rich, ruling classes. If you were a member of the elite, then you had a life of privilege and ease. But for ordinary families, life was hard. Working class men had only just been given the vote. Women had very few rights, and if a woman lost her 'good name' then she had little chance of finding work, a place to live, or a husband. Attitudes to sex were especially hypocritical. Unmarried mothers, divorcees, and women who had sex outside of marriage all faced shame and ruin. Homosexuality, too, was illegal.

In *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde does three things. First of all he shows his readers some of the realities of nineteenth-century life. He shows poverty, drunkenness, drug use, and suicide. He shows good people who are poor and bad people who are rich. He shows honest people who have been outcast, and dishonest people who have been embraced by society.

Secondly, Wilde mocks Victorian values. He mocks marriage, the church, and the aristocracy. He mocks love, fashions, and fads.