GRADED READERS

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

OSCAR WILDE



Student's Book

LEVEL 5

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CHAPTER 1

IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL SUMMER'S DAY. The sun was shining brightly and a light breeze filled the studio with the sweet smell of flowers. A painting stood on an easel in the middle of the room. It was a life-sized portrait of an extraordinarily handsome young man. The artist, Basil Hallward, was sitting in front of the portrait, and Lord Henry Wotton was relaxing on the sofa, smoking a pipe.

"It is your best work yet, Basil," said Lord Henry, as he removed the pipe from his lips. "You must exhibit it at a gallery."

Basil shook his head. "I don't think I'm going to exhibit it anywhere," he said.

Lord Henry raised an eyebrow in surprise. "My dear friend, why not? The portrait is magnificent! It will make you the most famous young artist in England."

"This might sound foolish to you, Henry," said Basil, "but the reason I don't want to exhibit it, is because I've put too much of myself in it."

Lord Henry laughed. "Too much of yourself? I hate to say this, Basil, but you don't look anything like the young man in the portrait. He is very handsome, you, are not."

Basil stirred his paints. "I am aware of that, Henry. What I mean is, I painted this portrait with real feeling. It is an expression of my deepest emotions. I'm afraid that if people see it, they will see the secret of my soul."

Lord Henry stretched lazily and laughed. "The secret of your soul? And what is that?"

Basil sighed. "Very well, Henry, I will tell you the story, but I don't think you'll understand. Two months ago, I went to a dinner party at Lady Brandon's house. I was talking to a group of very boring people, when I noticed a young man on the other side of the room. That was the first time I ever saw Dorian Gray, the man in the painting."

"Dorian Gray. So that's his name," said Lord Henry.

"I can't explain to you what our first meeting was like, Henry," Basil continued. "I had a strong feeling that Dorian would change my life forever. And he has. I see things differently now: Dorian's beauty and sweet nature have given me a new vision of art. He has become my best friend and my inspiration. But he doesn't know how much he has affected



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me. And if I show this picture to the world, everyone will know, including Dorian."

Lord Henry stared at Basil through the smoke that rose from his pipe. "That is the most extraordinary thing I've ever heard! I'm really looking forward to meeting this Dorian Gray," he said.

Basil stopped stirring his paints and turned to look at Lord Henry. "Dorian Gray is a good person. You are a bad influence on young people and I know you enjoy this, but please, Henry, don't spoil Dorian, and don't take him away from me. My success as an artist depends on him."

Lord Henry smiled. "I promise I'll behave, Basil."

At that time there was a knock at the door. "Excuse me, sir," said the butler, "Mr Dorian Gray has just arrived."

"Show him in, Parker," said Basil. The butler bowed and walked off. A few minutes later, Dorian Gray walked into the studio.

"Hello, Basil. I hope you're not expecting me to pose for you today. It's such a beautiful day that I want to spend it outdoors."

"I'm afraid you will have to pose for a little bit, Dorian. The painting is not completely finished yet," said Basil.

"But I'm tired of posing," Dorian grumbled. "Besides, I don't want a life-sized portrait of myself!" Then, he noticed Lord Henry.

"I beg your pardon, Basil. I didn't know you had company…" he said.

"This is Lord Henry Wotton, Dorian. He's an old friend of mine from Oxford," said Basil.

"Pleased to meet you Dorian," said Lord Henry, as he stood up and extended his hand.

"And you sir," said Dorian.

"All right, Dorian," Basil interrupted. "Let's get to work. Please go stand over there and don't pay any attention to Lord Henry. He's a very bad influence."

Dorian did as he was told.

"Now turn your head a little more to the right, Dorian," Basil instructed. "That's it…. Hold still…."

Lord Henry watched Dorian as he posed for Basil. He certainly was very handsome, with his full red lips, bright blue eyes and golden hair. He was about twenty years old, yet his face was as pure and innocent as a child's.

"Basil, I need some air," said Dorian suddenly. "I want to go out in the garden for a while."

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"Of course, Dorian, I'm sorry," said Basil. "When I paint, I forget everything else!"

"I think I'll join Dorian in the garden, Basil. It's very hot in here," said Lord Henry.

"All right, Henry," said the artist. "But don't keep Dorian too long. I'm feeling very inspired today. This painting is going to be my masterpiece!"

When Lord Henry stepped outside, he saw Dorian lying on the grass, enjoying the sunshine.

"Why don't we go sit in the shade?" Lord Henry suggested. "If you get sunburnt, Basil won't want to paint you again."

Dorian laughed. "That doesn't matter to me," he said.

"It should matter," said Lord Henry.

"Why?" asked Dorian.

"Because now you are young and beautiful and the whole world loves you," replied Lord Henry. "But, some day, you will be old and wrinkled and no-one will give you a second glance. It is a sad fact, but when youth goes, beauty goes with it. If you want my advice, go out and live. Live each day to the full and enjoy all of life's pleasures."

Dorian listened to Lord Henry in amazement. "I… I haven't really thought much about growing old…" he said.

"Dorian, you must never forget that time is your greatest enemy," Lord Henry warned. "It will take away everything you have now."

A few minutes later, Basil appeared at the door and called them both to come inside.

"The portrait is finished!" the artist announced, smiling.

"Congratulations," said Lord Henry. "It is the best portrait I have ever seen. Dorian, come and look at yourself."

After a moment of hesitation, Dorian walked over to the picture. The portrait was indeed magnificent and Dorian was filled with joy when he saw it. Then, he remembered what Lord Henry had said in the garden. He imagined that beautiful face growing old: he imagined wrinkles, thin lips and grey hair, and his eyes filled with tears.

"It's so sad," said the young man. "I will grow old and this picture will always be young. If only it were the other way round! If only I could stay young and the picture could grow old! I would give my soul for that! Henry, you are right! Youth is the only thing worth having! When I grow old, I will kill myself!"

Basil was horrified. He grabbed Dorian's arm. "Dorian! You mustn't talk like that!"

Dorian pulled away. "Why did you paint it, Basil? Do you enjoy seeing me suffer?" Tears rolled down the young man's cheeks and he threw himself on the sofa and buried his face in the cushions.

"You did this, Henry!" said Basil angrily. "You two have made me hate my best piece of work! Now I have no choice but to destroy it." Basil searched for his palette knife and moved towards the painting.

"No, Basil! Stop!" shouted Dorian as he jumped up from the sofa. "That would be murder!"

"So you do appreciate my work then?" asked Basil coldly.

"Appreciate it? I love it. It is part of me," said Dorian.

"Fine. As soon as it is dry, I will frame it and send it to you," said Basil. Then he walked across the room and rang the bell for tea. As the butler came in with the tea-tray, Basil sat down on the sofa and sighed. As tea was being served, Basil heard Lord Henry invite Dorian to the theatre that evening. A look of pain flashed briefly across the artist's face.



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