

The Picture of Dorian Gray – final analysis

REVISION

Activity 1 - Insert the following data into the right place in the grid.

1 month - Alan Campbell - Basil - Basil is murdered - 18 years - Dorian - a few weeks - Dorian dies - Gladys - Dorian reads the book - James is killed - Dorian's wish - James Vane - Lord Henry - Sibyl Vane - Sibyl's suicide - Singleton - The portrait changes - The portrait changes back

The structure of the novel in terms of:

CHAPTERS	I	II-X	XI	XII-XX
TIME				
CHARACTERS				
EVENTS				

Activity 2 - Settings

Insert the following info into the right part of the chart:

- A. a fashionable young gentleman
- B. a secret life of sin and corruption
- C. Dorian is in the bloom of youth
- D. Dorian's conversation with Lord Henry
- E. Lord Henry, the devil figure of the novel, tempts Dorian
- F. the beginning of the summer
- G. the flowers are in full bloom : symbols of human youth and beauty, destined to fade
- H. the temptation of Eve in the Book of Genesis in the Bible

the garden	the city	the countryside

The Picture of Dorian Gray – final analysis

Activity 3 - The narrator

What adjectives can explain the kind of narrator Wilde uses? Underline the right adjectives among the following:

didactic - elusive - impossible to evaluate - inscrutable - ironic - moralistic - obtrusive - omniscient -
persuasive - serious - subjective - unobtrusive

Activity 4 - The characters

Match the suitable adjectives with the characters (you can use them more than once):

candid - charming - cultured - earnest - eloquent - fascinating - flippant - flirtatious - honest -
impressionable - impulsive - innocent - ironic - open - passionate - petulant - proud -
satirical - scrupulous - sensitive - serious - sincere - sophisticated - wilful - witty

CHARACTER	ADJECTIVES
Lord Henry	
Basil	
Dorian	

Activity 5 - Style

True or false?

1. Beautiful things and subtle emotions are described in minute detail.
2. The novel is written in a combination of styles.
3. In chapter 1 sentences are longer than usual.
4. The poetic style derives from the sounds of the words, the images and the music of the prose.
5. Lord Henry uses a satirical style.

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6. Sentences are usually short and grammatically simple.
7. The melodramatic style is used mainly in the descriptions.
8. The novel is written in pure and simple English.
9. The poetic style derives from the content.
10. The melodramatic style is used to express violent action and intense emotion.
11. The poetic style is typical of the long descriptions of the novel.
12. The style is never satirical.
13. There is more dialogue and less narrative description than in most Victorian novels.
14. When the narrative dwells on ideas and theories, Wilde uses a philosophical style.

Activity 6 - Language

Fill in the blanks using the words from the box.

advantage - book - charm - chosen - influence - poisonous - powerful - seductive - suicide - truth
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Language is seen as and dangerous, as both beautiful and , as the most and therefore the most real phenomenon in life. Lord Henry never indulges in any pleasure except that of the use of words to and influence people or simply for his own delight in verbal acrobatics. The power of Dorian words can be seen in the fact that they lead to (Sybil and Alan).

The discussions of sincerity and of literary realism in the novel suggest that words should be for their beauty rather than their..... . This increases their seductiveness and hides their danger. The question whether literature can be moral or immoral, of whether one can be poisoned by a , is left very much open: various conflicting views are given by Lord Henry, Dorian, the narrator and the voice of the Preface. This suggests that the implied author refuses to take of the power of his own words: he declines to the reader one way or the other.

Activity 7 - Themes

Match the right headline with the texts below:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| A. Women: angels and devils. | D. Making fun of Victorians |
| B. The psychology of guilt | E. Insight into social classes. |
| C. Social criticism | F. Elusive novel |

1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5 ____ 6 ____

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1. The novel is both lovely and unreal, that means, having no application to the real world, such as a moral to the story. It has a clear moral for those who want one, but it is expressed in such extravagant terms that those who do not want a moral to the story can ignore it as part of the insincerity of the narrator they can take it as a joke.
2. The novel can be seen as a critique of Victorian society and values, especially Victorian literary values. The Gothic events constitute a parody of the values that are being criticized, the presumptuous and self-important moralism that the implied author believes is damaging in society and has no place in literature.
3. In the novel, the English are seen as both sincere and hypocritical (a paradoxical combination!). Their fear of God and scandal is seen as the cowardice of Victorian people, contrasting (unfavourably) with the ancient Greeks, whose religion, philosophy, and art were consistent with the pursuit of pleasure and self-development. The only nation that receives harsher treatment than England in the novel is America.
4. The novel can also be seen as primarily a psychological novel about desire, repression and guilt. In this case the Gothic events are metaphors for the horrors of the subconscious mind. Dorian indulges all his desires, yet the result is a creeping madness and fear, a kind of mental hell he has created for himself. It might be that Dorian's problem is his inability to kill his conscience, that Lord Henry's theory (that the individual who pursues his desires is at peace with himself) is right as long as the individual has freed himself completely from the fear of God and of scandal.
5. Dorian's attitude to women is the typical Victorian male attitude taken to extremes: he considers women both supernatural (to be worshipped) and subhuman (to be consumed as a pleasure, like opium). Lord Henry considers women devious, deceitful, always tricking men in order to win advantage in their disadvantageous position. He also considers women to be slaves by nature.
6. The descriptions of the London slums use the imagery typical of Victorian literature, which suggests fear of the lower classes and also the fact that they are of a different race, almost a different species, from the genteel observer. The narrator's view differs from Lord Henry's in that he seems to regret the sense of difference and to suggest that the ruling classes are responsible for the degradation of the lower classes.