Reader's diary example (with quotes)

Author: Oscar Wilde
Title of the book: The Picture of Dorian Gray
Year of first edition: 1890
Genre: Gothic fiction / Philosophical novel / Aesthetic literature
Audience: Adult readers; particularly those interested in morality, society, art, human psychology

1. Subjects and main ideas

I think the novel explores some very deep ideas about beauty, **morality**, and the consequences of living for pleasure alone. What fascinated me is how Dorian Gray's obsession with **eternal** youth and appearances drives the story further. ***"The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing for the things it has forbidden to itself."*** *(page 26)* This passage really made me think how **desire** can dominate people's choices, even when they know the consequences. I realised that Wilde is warning readers about the danger of valuing **superficial** beauty over the soul's health.

Another main idea is the **duality** of human nature. Dorian's portrait **bears** all the corruption of his actions, while he remains outwardly innocent and charming. The following quote suggests that appearances are never the fully truthful: ***"Behind every exquisite thing that existed, there was something tragic. Behind every portrait, there was a secret."*** *(page 44)* What people show on the surface, can hide deep corruption or **sorrow**.

Task: Define the underlined words from the section above.

1. _____: to want something, especially strongly
2. _____: a feeling of great sadness
3. _____: a set of personal or social standards for good or bad behaviour and character
4. _____: the state of combining two different things
5. _____: lasting forever or for a very long time
6. _____: to accept, tolerate, or take something, especially something unpleasant
7. _____: (false appearance) appearing to be real or important when this is not true

2. Analysis of the main characters

Task: Complete the analysis with the missing verbs. You do not need to change the forms.

captures	*noticing*	*found*	*explains*	*becomes*	*chose*	*pursue*

The main protagonist Dorian Gray is the character I [1]_____ both fascinating and terrifying. He starts as an innocent young man, but as he [2]_____ more influenced by Lord Henry, he slowly prioritizes pleasure over conscience. At one point, Dorian says: ***"I would give my soul for that. I would give my soul to make the shadow on the canvas change and leave me as I am, young and beautiful."*** *(page 33)* In my opinion, this moment [3]_____ his moral turning point and shows how obsessed he becomes with his image. It made me think about how people today sometimes sacrifice integrity or happiness just to maintain appearances.

Lord Henry Wotton is another character that I consider charming but dangerously persuasive. He encourages Dorian to [4]_____ selfish pleasures without moral restraint: ***"To be good is to be in harmony with oneself. Discord is to be forced to be in harmony with others."*** *(page 89)* This line shows how Lord Henry views morality as flexible, which [5]_____ why he influences Dorian so strongly. He feels like the seductive, philosophical older man that can corrupt younger people.

Basil Hallward, the artist, is the moral compass of the novel. He believes in truth and beauty, and he senses the danger in Dorian's obsession. I [6]_____ this quote as an example to describe this character: ***"He had a respect for Dorian Gray that was almost reverential. There was something in the boy's innocence that compelled admiration."*** *(page 144)* Reverential, according to Cambridge Dictionary, means full of respect and admiration. He admires the beauty of Dorian without [7]_____ his true colours behind his charming look.

3. Age and time period; historical, religious, social, political or religious context

The novel is set in late 19th-century London, during the Victorian era. Understanding this context helped me appreciate the conflict between strict social morality and the emerging aesthetic movement, which emphasized beauty and pleasure. The society in the book was obsessed with appearances and reputation, and the novel explores how dangerous that can be. For example, Wilde describes the lavish parties Dorian attends and the fascination with surface-level charm: ***"London was full of curious secrets and people who wanted to seem more brilliant than they were. In such a society, one's reputation was more valuable than one's conscience."*** *(page 8)* The quote highlights how social pressure influenced Dorian's choices. The Victorian obsession with correct moral behaviour and actions makes Dorian's rebellion even more shocking, because he violates unspoken moral codes.

4. Description of the setting, important places or locations

The setting of the novel contributes strongly to the mood. Wilde switches between luxurious London houses, expensive and luxurious party rooms, and Dorian's secret private spaces, which reflect his inner life. For example, Dorian's house contains a hidden room where he keeps the corrupted portrait: ***"It was a room that had been closed for years, and the air was heavy with the smell of decay. There, the portrait seemed alive, watching him with a terrible knowledge."*** *(page 216)* This hidden room symbolizes Dorian's secret sins and the duality of his life. In contrast, the public spaces, like the streets of London or fashionable drawing rooms, show the elegance and charm of society. The contrast between public and private spaces highlights Wilde's theme: what the world sees is rarely the truth. It made me think about how people often hide their flaws behind a polite and respectable persona.

Task: Are these statements true or false about the 3rd and 4th sections of the analysis?

1. _____: Dorian's obsession with beauty and pleasure is unrelated to the social expectations of Victorian society.
2. _____: The diary explains that the contrast between Dorian's public and private life highlights the theme that appearances are often deceptive.
3. _____: We get the idea that society in the novel values character and integrity more than appearances and reputation.
4. _____: Dorian's private house contains a public room with his portrait on the wall.
5. _____: The hidden room with the portrait symbolizes Dorian's wrongdoings and the two sides of his character.
6. _____: London's appearance showcases the attractiveness and appeal of the particular era.

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