

The life of Oscar Wilde

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1854. After he finished his education in Ireland, he studied at Oxford University in England. He was an excellent scholar. He travelled widely in Europe and made many friends. But he also made many enemies. He dressed in flamboyant clothes and had unusual opinions about religion and life. He liked to be the centre of attention.

In 1882, he visited America and gave a series of lectures. He was not the first important English writer to give a lecture tour in America. He travelled to many great cities, including Boston, New York, Chicago, Washington and Baltimore. He also went to Canada during his tour. He was in America from January until October and earned a lot of money.

The Americans wanted to see Wilde because of his reputation. Apart from being witty and his latest ideas about art, he wore strange clothes. For example, on the ship from England, he wore a green coat, a round cap like a turban, a shirt with a white collar and a sky-blue tie. During his lectures, he often wore knee-breeches. These were half-length trousers with silk stockings. Everybody wanted to see the eccentric Irish writer.

The American newspapers printed lots of stories about Oscar. They wrote that he was disappointed with the Atlantic when he crossed from England to America. As he was entering America, the customs officer asked him: 'Do you have anything to declare?' Wilde answered: 'I have nothing to declare but my genius!'. When he saw the Niagara Falls, where many Americans went on their honeymoon, he said: 'Niagara is the first great disappointment of American married life'. When he left America, he said: 'I have civilized America'.

At first, he was very popular. People invited him to dinners and parties and introduced him to famous poets at that the time. But not everybody liked him, many thought that his clothes were silly and his ideas were dangerous. In Boston, sixty American university students from Harvard attended his lecture, wearing similar clothes to Oscar. Each one carried a sunflower. They wanted to mock him for being effeminate and ridiculous. The newspapers began to attack him. But large audiences came to his lectures and he continued to make money. He even visited a silver mine in the Rocky Mountains. The miners had never seen anyone like him before. They lowered him down a mine in a silver bucket and he had dinner under the ground. His visit to the mine was a great success as well as his visit to America which was an important step in his career since he could arrange productions of two of his plays.

He married in 1884. He and his wife, Constance, had two sons. He wrote his most famous children's story, 'The happy Prince', for his sons. He became famous in London as a poet, a writer and a dramatist. His conversation was very witty. He went to many parties and was very popular. He reached the peak of his fame when his play *The Importance of being Earnest* was performed in London. It is his masterpiece.

Unfortunately, he was involved in a trial for immoral conduct. Many of his friends did not defend him. He was sent to prison for two years. After he was released, he lived in France. The last years of his life were very sad. He died in 1900, only 46 years old.

1)-Write True or False

- 1- Apart from being in the States Oscar visited Canada and gave lectures there
- 2- The lecture tour was finally successful
- 3-He wore very unusual and dramatic clothes
- 4-All the Americans liked Oscar Wilde
- 5-Oscar refused to visit Niagara Falls
- 6-The newspaper stories stopped people from attending his lectures
- 7- The students came to his lectures because they admired him.
- 8- The miners threw him down a silver mine

2)-Fill in the blanks in this summary

In 1882, Oscar Wilde travelled through America and Canada on a lecture He visited many anda lot of money. The American media printed manywhich he said. For example, as he entered the country, he said 'I haveto declare but my'. He was veryat first but later, the papers began to criticize him. In Boston, sixtymocked him at one of his lectures. However, he continued his tour and even went down ain the Rocky Mountains. Later, American theatres pun on two of his Near the end of his tour, he said, 'I haveAmerica!'

3)-Now answer these questions

- 1-What kind of trousers did he wear?
- 2-Which American university does he mention?
- 3-What was a popular honeymoon destination for Americans?
- 4-In which month did he begin his tour?
- 5-Where was he born?
- 6- Why was he in a trial?
- 7-How much did he spend in prison?
- 8- What's the name of the book he wrote for his children?