



IDX G9 English H+
Study Guide S1 Finals
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The Picture of Dorian Gray Plot Summary

Chapter One:

Painter Basil Hallward spoke of Dorian Gray, a young man he deemed his muse, as he was completing a portrait of him. Lord Henry Wotton was intrigued by Basil's description of Dorian and subsequently requested to be introduced to him. He presents his Hedonistic and immoral worldview for the first time.

Chapter Two:

Lord Henry expands with his philosophy of youth, beauty, and hedonism. Dorian, shaken and very changed by the idea that his youth and beauty will fade, wildly wishes the portrait would age in his place.

Chapter Three:

Dorian visits Henry's home and meets Henry's wife, Victoria. Henry continues lecturing on pleasure and personal freedom. Dorian seems to become increasingly in tune with Henry's worldview.

Chapter Four:

Dorian tells Henry he has fallen in love with Sibyl Vane, a young, poor, actress.

Chapter Five:

The narrative shifts to Sibyl's theoric family (her mother and brother), who worry about the mysterious "Prince Charming". Sibyl is portrayed as very naïve.

Chapter Six:

Basil expresses concern over Dorian's rapid lifestyle shift. Dorian, however, is thrilled about Sibyl, and Henry minimizes Basil's doubts.

Chapter Seven:

Dorian brings Basil and Henry to see Sibyl perform, but she delivers a wooden, lifeless performance of Juliet. She explains to Dorian later that real love makes acting feel false. Dorian, disgusted, rejects her cruelly, showing how he had probably only fallen in love with the characters she portrayed onstage.

Chapter Eight:

Dorian discovers the portrait has changed—its lips appear crueler, and he is horrified. Lord Henry then tells him that Sibyl has died.

Chapter Nine:

Basil begs Dorian to see Sibyl's death as a tragedy. However, Dorian, already very influenced by Henry's philosophy, treats it as an aesthetic event. He refuses to let Basil see the changed portrait.

Chapter Ten:

Dorian hides the portrait in a locked room. He becomes increasingly paranoid about its condition and the possibility that others may accidentally see it.

Chapter Eleven:

Many years have passed. Dorian indulges in a life of pleasure, art collection, and scandal. Rumors circulate, but his beautiful appearance protects him.

Chapter Twelve:

Basil confronts Dorian about the rumors. Dorian attempts to evade his moral lectures; in the end, he decides to reveal the portrait's corruption to Basil.

Chapter Thirteen

Basil, appalled by the portrait, urges Dorian to repent. Dorian murders Basil in a sudden fit of rage.

Chapter Fourteen

Dorian forces an old friend, Alan Campbell, to destroy Basil's body by using blackmail. Campbell eventually complies.

Chapter Fifteen

At a dinner party, Dorian tries to appear composed, but anxiety about Basil's disappearance gnaws at him. Lord Henry, not knowing anything about Basil's death, remains his old self.

Chapter Sixteen

Dorian goes into the dark opium dens of London seeking escape. He encounters James Vane, Sibyl's brother, who has vowed to avenge her. Dorian narrowly escapes death by fooling James with his youthful looks that he was not Sibyl's Prince Charming.

Chapter Seventeen

Dorian and Lord Henry exchange lively and light remarks with the Duchess of Monmouth at a party. To his horror, Dorian spots James Vane stalking him.

Chapter Eighteen

Dorian attends a shooting party, during which a peasant was accidentally shot to death. Dorian feels extreme relief as he discovers the identity of the slain man to be James Vane.

Chapter Nineteen

Lord Henry dismisses the possibility of true moral transformation. Dorian realizes that Henry will never understand the weight of what he has done.

Chapter Twenty

Dorian tries to convince himself he can reform, but his motivations are shallow. The portrait shows that his attempts at goodness are not sincere. Hoping to free himself, Dorian attempts to destroy the portrait. In doing so, he kills himself. The portrait returns to its original beauty; Dorian's body shows the age and total corruption of his life.

Character Development

Dorian Gray

- Starts off as very innocent and impressionable;
 - Kind of polite, gentle, and unsure of himself.
 - Henry starts to change him by telling him about his youth and beauty and how those would eventually fade away with time, which was inevitable. (This is a turning point, as Dorian is starting his descent into corruption).
- Gradually accepts and embraces Lord Henry's hedonistic ideals throughout the book.
 - Dorian starts listening to Henry more than to Basil.
 - Begins to see people as sources of entertainment rather than human beings (leaving Sibyl when she performs badly and eventually treats her death as beautiful and artistic rather than tragic).
 - Hides the portrait to avoid the truth and live a double life.
- Becomes manipulative, cruel, and morally numb.
 - Actions shift from accidentally causing someone's death → very intentional (directly murdering Basil, his old friend)
 - Takes advantage of people who trust him
 - Begins ruining friendships and reputations without any human emotion.

- When he declares that he wanted to be “good” again, he realizes he’s already in too deep. (One way of interpreting this is that he only wants to feel better about himself, not actually change.)

Lord Henry

- Virtually unchanged; brilliant, cynical, hedonistic, irresponsible
- The catalyst for Dorian’s corruption yet doesn’t have any consequences.

Basil Hallward

- Gentle, intellectual painter; was genuinely affectionate of Dorian Gray
- Tried to guide Dorian Gray but he was ignored next to Lord Henry’s fancy, appealing ideas.

Reflections on Society

- People judge others by how they look, not who they are.
- Dorian is trusted and admired only because he is handsome and young.
- His beauty protects him from blame, even when rumors spread.
- Gossip is seen as amusing and can be discussed for 2 whole months in the upper classes
- Wealthy characters live comfortably without facing consequences.
- There’s a lot of talk of “living in the land of hypocrites”, critiquing how wealthy people are buried in gold and riches while talking about the plights of the poor.
- People enjoy hearing sharp, witty ideas without thinking about the harm they might cause. (The relationship between Dorian and Henry).
- Dorian’s world values pleasure as the highest value.

Background Information on *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

- There are 3 versions of the text: the original typeset, the 1890s edited, and the 1891 expanded and edited version that we read now.
- Written by Irish author Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was first published in 1890 in Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine as a shorter novella; Wilde later expanded it into a full-length novel in 1891 (Brittanica)
- Upon its release, the book caused significant controversy due to its homoerotic undertones and hedonistic thinking (well, you can’t help but think Lord Henry is actually Oscar), leading to

harsh criticism and even being used as evidence against Wilde during his 1895 trial for gross indecency.

- Plot is covered above.

Aestheticism

- Literary and cultural movement, prominent at 19th century
- Emphasize aesthetic values more than social or political themes for lit, art, and music
- Related to lit of decadence
- Considered by some to be immoral
- Linked to decaying morality
- Features: evocative use of lan of senses; excessive attention to self; absense of instructive aim; perversity in subject matter; hedonistic attitude

How can we explore the question Morality versus Corruption?

At what point does someone become too obsessed with themselves?

How does the novel display aesthetics during the Victorian age?

- The novel promotes the idea that beauty and art should be valued for their own sake, not for moral or practical purposes, which is the main focus of the aesthetics movement
- Characters like Lord Henry argue that living beautifully is more important than being morally good, which is the ultimate key in corrupting Dorian
- Dorian surrounds himself with fine clothes, music, perfumes, and art, a living style devoted to the sensory pleasure
- One who concentrates too much on his appearance is called a FOP (e.g. Dorian)
- The novel puts together public respectability with private indulgence, revealing how the Victorians tend to hind their souls, displaying only their outermost shell
- The decaying portrait also represents the conflict between outward beauty and inner corruption, highlighting once again the era's obsession with the outer appearances.

Epigram

- Witty sayings. God! Oscar Wilde fills his novel with this. Lord Henry uses sharp, clever epigrams that challenge conventional morals

- "To get back one's youth... there is nothing else in the world worth having"
- Epigrams often glorify beauty, pleasure, and art over morality, therefore it is commonly used in Victorian England works and daily life
- The author's frequent use reflects the aesthetic ideal of valuing surface elegance
- Lord Henry's epigrams seduce Dorian into a hedonistic worldview, showing how language and style can shape belief
- Additional: Dramatic foil: when 2 characters have opposite characteristics (e.g. Basil and Lord Henry)

The Mask

- The poem examines the tension between the true self of a person and the persona they present to the world.
- Written in the form of a short dialogue, it describes the moment of questioning about sincerity and appearance
- The mask also represents some parts of aesthetic ideals, that beauty and performance can be more powerful than raw truth
- The speaker suggests that wearing a mask not to deceive love, but to protect it, is reasonable, as it shields love from the harshness of reality

Victorian Gothic

Elements of the Victorian Gothic style of writing include, but are not limited to:

- Dark, eerie settings like crumbling mansions or foggy streets.
- Focus on characters' inner fears and mental struggles.
- A mix of supernatural events and possible rational explanations.
- Plots driven by hidden family secrets or past sins.
- Use of doubles or split personalities to show inner conflict.
- Heroines who are vulnerable but also show strength.
- Exposes moral decay behind a respectable social front.
- Reflects fears about cities, industry, and modern life.
- Stories told through diaries, letters, or multiple narrators.
- Buildings mirror characters' psychological states.

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

J&H Full Summary

Chapter 1: Mr. Utterson and his cousin Enfield discuss a disturbing incident involving a man named Edward Hyde, who trampled a child and later paid compensation using a cheque signed by Dr. Jekyll. Hyde's behavior and appearance deeply unsettle Utterson.

Chapter 2: Utterson reads Dr. Jekyll's will, which leaves everything to Hyde if Jekyll disappears. Troubled, Utterson seeks out Hyde and finally meets him, finding him repulsive without knowing why.

Chapter 3: Utterson confronts Jekyll about Hyde, but Jekyll calmly dismisses his concerns and insists he can control the situation.

Chapter 4: Hyde brutally murders Sir Danvers Carew and disappears. Evidence leads the police to Hyde's residence, but he has vanished.

Chapter 5: Jekyll claims Hyde has fled and shows Utterson a letter supposedly from Hyde. Utterson later learns the handwriting matches Jekyll's.

Chapter 6: Jekyll briefly returns to normal life, but then isolates himself again. Dr. Lanyon falls gravely ill after witnessing something shocking related to Jekyll.

Chapter 7: Utterson and Enfield see Jekyll at a window; suddenly, his expression turns horrific, and the window is slammed shut.

Chapter 8: Utterson and Poole break into Jekyll's laboratory and find Hyde dead. Jekyll has vanished, leaving documents behind.

Chapter 9: Lanyon recounts how he helped Hyde retrieve chemicals, then watched Hyde transform into Jekyll before his eyes.

Chapter 10: Jekyll explains his belief that humans are inherently dual. His experiments allowed him to separate his evil side as Hyde, but Hyde grew stronger and ultimately destroyed him.

- Explicitly states the novel's central theme (duality of good and of evil)

Author: Robert Louis Stevenson

- Scottish writer in the Victorian era.
- Interested in morality, psychology, and the idea of a divided self.
- Wrote during a time of rapid scientific progress.
- Concerned with the dangers of science without ethical limits.
- Stevenson uses Jekyll to show how intellectual pride and self-denial can lead to moral collapse.
- Victorians valued self-control and good reputation.
- Immoral desires were hidden, not discussed.
- Jekyll appears respectable, while Hyde represents hidden desires.
- New scientific discoveries challenged religion and morality.
- People feared science could go too far.
- Jekyll's experiment breaks natural limits and causes destruction.
- London had rising crime and stark class divisions.
- The wealthy feared the criminal underclass.
- Hyde moves through dark streets and slums, symbolizing this fear.
- Belief that people and societies could regress morally and physically.
- Evil was thought to show in physical appearance.
Hyde looks deformed, reflecting moral corruption.
- **Gothic:** Popular genre focusing on fear, secrecy, and the unnatural.
- Explored anxiety about identity and control.
- The transformations and dark setting create psychological horror.

Perspective

- Stevenson tells the story largely through third-party observers such as Utterson and Enfield rather than through Jekyll himself, making the story much more mysterious.
- It makes the horror story almost a mystery story.
- Readers have to piece evidence together rather than receiving clear explanations.

Symbolism

- Repeated images of locked doors, windows, and rooms symbolize secrecy, repression, and barriers between identities, while also heightening fear and suspense.

- London's constant smog and pollution represent obscurity and uncertainty; respectable neighborhoods existing alongside violent ones suggest that evil is embedded within civilization, not separate from it.
- Doors, windows, locks, and sealed letters function as symbols of concealment and “delayed truth,” reinforcing mystery throughout the novella.
- Jekyll’s house has two entrances—the respectable front door and Hyde’s neglected laboratory door—symbolizing and foreshadowing Jekyll’s divided identity.
- The name “Hyde” echoes “hide,” emphasizing themes of concealment and repression.
- Hyde’s inexplicably disturbing physical appearance suggests that evil is sensed instinctively rather than rationally observed.