

Review Notes for "The Picture of Dorian Gray" by Oscar Wilde



Chapters 1-2

1. Who is Basil Hallward?

He is a London artist who paints the portrait of young Dorian Gray.

2. What completely captures Lord Henry Wotton's attention when he visits Hallward's studio?

Lord Wotton is fascinated by Basil's subject for the painting, a beautiful young man named Dorian Gray.

3. What reason does Basil give for not wanting to exhibit his painting of Dorian Gray?

Basil feels that he has put too much of his own self into the painting, and it reveals the secrets of his soul.

4. What does Basil believe are the only two eras of importance in the world's history?

He believes that the appearance of a new medium for art and the appearance of a new personality for art are the only two eras of importance in the world's history.

5. Basil believes that his landscape painting is the finest work he's ever done. To what does he attribute this success?

Dorian Gray was sitting beside Basil when he painted the landscape. Basil credits "some subtle influence" from Dorian's presence to the success of the work.

6. Why doesn't Basil want to introduce Lord Henry to Dorian Gray?

Basil is afraid that Lord Henry will be a negative influence on the young Dorian.

7. What does Lord Henry claim is "the aim of life"?

Lord Henry claims that self-development is the "aim of life."

8. According to Lord Henry, what is "the only way to get rid of a temptation"?

Lord Henry believes that "the only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it."

9. What does Dorian Gray so desperately wish for that he "would give [his] soul" to have it come true?

Dorian wishes that his portrait would age and that he would remain young and untouched by the ugliness of life.

10. To what does Basil attribute Dorian's negative reaction to his painting?

Basil attributes Dorian's reaction to Lord Henry's negative influence.



Chapters 3-4

1. What happened to Dorian Gray's father?

Dorian's father was killed in a duel. It was rumored, but never proved, that this duel was set up by Dorian's grandfather because he despised the young man who had married his daughter.

2. What exercise does Lord Henry find "terribly enthralling"?

Lord Henry is enthralled with the exercise of influence.

3. What advice does Lord Henry give the Duchess when she asks how she can become young again?

He tells her that the secret of being young is to repeat the follies of her youth.

4. Who claims that Lord Henry is "extremely dangerous" yet still wishes to hear more of Henry's "philosophy of pleasure"?

Mr. Erskine feels this way about Lord Henry.

5. When Dorian Gray is reminded that he promised to visit Basil Hallward, where does Dorian go instead?

Dorian chooses to go to the park with Lord Henry instead of keeping his promise to visit Basil.

6. Who is Victoria?

Victoria is Lord Henry Wotton's wife.

7. With whom does Dorian Gray fall in love?

Dorian falls in love with an actress, Sibyl Vane.

8. What does Lord Henry tell Dorian Gray is "the real secret of life"?

Lord Henry tells Dorian that "the real secret of life" is the search for beauty.

9. To where does Dorian want Henry and Basil to accompany him?

Dorian wants Henry and Basil to come to the theatre to see Sibyl Vane, Dorian's love-interest, play Juliet.



10. What news is in the telegram that Lord Henry receives from Dorian?
Dorian sends a telegram to Lord Henry announcing his engagement to Sibyl Vane.

Chapters 5-6

1. What does Mr. Isaacs do to help Sibyl and her family?
Mr. Isaacs advanced them 50 pounds to pay off their debts and to buy James a proper outfit.
2. By what name does Sibyl Vane know Dorian Gray?
Sibyl only knows Dorian as "Prince Charming."
3. What does Jim demand to know from his mother before he leaves for Australia?
Jim demands to know whether or not his mother was ever married to his father. (He learns that she wasn't.)
4. What threat does Jim make regarding "Prince Charming"?
Jim swears that if "Prince Charming" ever hurts Sibyl, he will kill him.
5. What does Lord Henry say is the "real drawback to marriage"?
Lord Henry claims that marriage makes people unselfish and that unselfish people are colorless and lack individuality.
6. How does Dorian describe the details of his engagement to Sibyl Vane?
They'd kissed backstage after one of her performances. Dorian told Sibyl that he loved her, and she said that she was unworthy to be his wife. He'd not actually proposed, but he considered himself engaged to her.
7. What does it mean to be "good," according to Lord Henry?
To be good is to be in harmony with oneself
8. What does Lord Henry tell Dorian Gray that he represents to the young man?
Lord Henry says that he represents all the sins that Dorian has not had the courage to commit.

Chapters 7-8

1. When Lord Henry and Basil accompany Dorian to the theatre, what happens to make Dorian angry?
Sibyl's performance is terrible. Lord Henry and Basil leave during the show.
2. What explanation does Sibyl Vane offer Dorian regarding her performance?
She no longer desires to live the lives of her characters, and she wishes to live in the real world with Dorian. She now sees the actors on the stage and not the characters she used to see. This reality has spoiled her acting.
3. What is Dorian's reaction to Sibyl's explanation for her poor performance?
Dorian says that he is no longer in love with her, and he will never see her again.
4. After he breaks off his relationship with Sibyl, what does Dorian notice about the painting Basil had done of him?
The painting has changed, and on the face of the painting "there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth."
5. What does Dorian Gray realize when he sees the changes in the painting?
Dorian realizes how cruel he has been to Sibyl Vane, and he vows that he will make it up to her.
6. What news is in Lord Henry's letter that Dorian does not open?
Lord Henry's note says he has learned that Sibyl Vane died in an incident at the theater.
7. What choice does Dorian Gray make after Lord Henry points out how fortunate Dorian is that someone loved him so much as to kill herself for him?
Dorian chooses to follow his passions and to allow the painting "to bear the burden of his shame."
8. What does Dorian believe would be a real pleasure to watch?
Dorian believes that it would be a real pleasure to watch the painting change while he physically remains the same.

Chapters 9-10

1. Where does Basil believe Dorian had gone after learning the news about Sibyl?
Basil believes that Dorian went to comfort Sibyl's mother after the tragedy of Sibyl's death.
2. Where does Dorian go the evening he learns of Sibyl's fate?
He goes to the opera with Lord Henry.
3. Who does Basil blame for the changes in Dorian?
Basil blames Lord Henry for the negative changes in Dorian.



4. Dorian threatens never to speak to Basil again. Why?
Dorian doesn't want Basil to see the painting, so he threatens never to speak to Basil again if Basil looks at it.
5. What does Basil want to do with the portrait of Dorian he painted?
Basil wants to exhibit the portrait in Paris.
6. Who is Mrs. Leaf?
Mrs. Leaf is Dorian Gray's housekeeper.
7. Where does Dorian Gray decide to hide the painting?
Dorian decides to move the painting into an old schoolroom at the top of his house and keep the painting under lock and key.
8. What does the coroner give as the official cause of Sibyl Vane's death?
The coroner's official report is that Sibyl Vane met her "death by misadventure." It was officially proclaimed an accidental death.
9. What does Lord Henry send to Dorian that completely fascinates him?
Lord Henry sends Dorian a book about a man who lived his life completely by fulfilling his senses.
10. Why is Dorian late meeting Lord Henry for dinner?
Dorian gets so caught up in the book, he is late for dinner.

Chapters 11-12

1. What becomes a huge influence over Dorian Gray's life?
The book that Lord Henry gave Dorian has a huge influence over Dorian's behavior. He is so caught up in it, he purchases nine copies of it and has them bound in various colors to match his changing moods.
2. Why do people tend to disbelieve the rumors about Dorian Gray?
Because the portrait in his upstairs room absorbed all the aging and marks of sin, Dorian's youthful beauty keeps people from believing the worst about him.
3. What does Dorian Gray do once or twice every month during the winter, and each Wednesday evening while the season lasts?
Dorian hosts lavish parties complete with extravagant food and music. It is at these parties that he exerts his influence over impressionable young people.
4. What are some of the activities or interests that capture Dorian Gray's attention in his study of the senses?
Dorian, over a period of several years, delves into many areas of interest. Dorian studies embroidered clothing, tapestries, jewels, perfumes, the ritual of Roman Catholicism, mysticism, and music. When he gets bored with one topic, he moves on to the next.
5. What is the Duke of Berwick's reaction when Dorian Gray is "brought by a friend into the smoking room of the Churchill"?
When Dorian comes into the room, the Duke of Berwick walks out.
6. To what city does Basil tell Dorian he plans to travel?
Basil tells Dorian that he is leaving for Paris for a six months' stay.
7. What is it that Basil wishes to speak to Dorian about before leaving?
Basil wants to know the truth about the terrible rumors that are going around town surrounding Dorian's moral character.
8. What sort of fate have many of Dorian's acquaintances met?
Those who were closest to Dorian have lost their respectable reputations in society.
9. What does Basil claim that he would have to see before he could believe anything he's heard about Dorian's activities?
Basil claims that he would have to see Dorian's soul before he could believe any of the rumors he's heard about Dorian.
10. Where does Dorian take Basil so that the artist may see the "diary of [his] life"?
Dorian takes Basil upstairs to the locked schoolroom where the painting is kept. He intends to show it to the artist.



Chapters 13-14

1. What does Basil see when he looks at the portrait he painted of Dorian Gray?
Basil sees an aging man who had the look of a satyr. The cruelty of the mouth and the evil in it's eyes horrifies him.

2. What does Basil implore Dorian to do after seeing the condition of the painting?
Basil begs Dorian to get on his knees and pray to God for forgiveness of his sins.
3. What does Dorian Gray do to Basil?
Dorian viciously stabs Basil in the neck with an artist's knife.
4. Where does Dorian hide Basil's belongings?
He hides them in a secret compartment behind the wainscoting.
5. What does Dorian do to provide himself with an alibi regarding Basil's death?
Dorian goes outside and bangs on his door to awaken his servants. In doing so his servants will provide him with an alibi that he returned home after Basil had gone.
6. As Dorian sketches, what seems to appear in all of his drawings?
Basil Hallward's face begins to appear in all of his sketches.
7. Who does Dorian send his servant to fetch on the morning after Basil's death?
Dorian sends his servant to fetch Alan Campbell, a former friend of Dorian.
8. In what particular field of study does Alan Campbell specialize?
Alan Campbell specializes in the field of science, particularly chemistry.
9. What request does Dorian Gray make of Alan Campbell?
Dorian asks Alan Campbell to dispose of Basil's body through the use of chemicals and fire.
10. Why does Alan Campbell agree to do as Dorian asks?
Dorian Gray blackmails Alan Campbell with some deed from his past when he and Dorian had been friends. Dorian threatens to ruin Alan's reputation if he doesn't do it.

Chapters 15-16

1. What is Dorian's mood when he attends Lady Narborough's party?
He is surprisingly calm despite what had happened with Basil.
2. Why does Lady Narborough seem to hate visiting her daughter and son-in-law?
She thinks that living in the country is too boring.
3. Whom does Lady Narborough accuse of being "extremely wicked"?
Lady Narborough accuses Lord Henry of being extremely wicked.
4. What does Lord Henry ask Dorian at Lady Narborough's party that makes Dorian nervous?
Lord Henry asks Dorian where he went after leaving early the night before.
5. What "things that were dangerous" does Dorian believe had to be dealt with immediately upon arriving home from Lady Narborough's dinner party?
Dorian feels that he needs to immediately destroy all evidence that Basil had returned to the house, so he buries Basil's ulster and bag.
6. What words did Lord Henry say the first day he met Dorian that now repeatedly play through Dorian's mind?
On the day they had met, Lord Henry told Dorian that one could "cure the soul by means of the senses and the senses by means of the soul."
7. Though Dorian believes that forgiveness for his sins is impossible, what is "possible still"?
Although Dorian feels he cannot be forgiven for his sins, he could still obtain forgetfulness through drugs.
8. What former friend does Dorian Gray see at the opium house?
Dorian meets Adrian Singleton, a man who had once been a close friend, but whose life was ruined through his association with Dorian.
9. Who is the drunken sailor who accuses Dorian Gray in the street?
The drunken sailor is James Vane, Sibyl Vane's older brother, who had vowed to kill "Prince Charming" if he ever hurt his sister.
10. Why doesn't the drunken sailor shoot Dorian Gray?
Dorian tells James to look at him closely under a street lamp and see that, with his youthful looks, he could not have possibly been the man who caused Sibyl Vane to commit suicide eighteen years earlier.



Chapters 17-18

1. With what does Lord Henry have "one quarrel"?
Lord Henry's one quarrel is with words. He believes that society has "lost the faculty of giving lovely names

to things."

2. When Gladys tells Lord Henry he values beauty far too much, what is his response?

Lord Henry admits he thinks it is better to be beautiful than to be good--but acknowledges it is better to be good than ugly.

3. According to Lord Henry what three things, "have made ... England what she is?"

Lord Henry says, "Beer, the Bible, and the seven deadly virtues have made our England what she is."

4. What is Lord Henry's answer when the Duchess asks him to describe women?

Lord Henry says, "Sphinxes without secrets."

5. What does Dorian believe he had seen through the window of the conservatory?

Dorian believes he saw the face of James Vane watching him.

6. What does Dorian Gray blame for raising "such fearful phantoms" that keep him in his house for three days?

He blames his conscience.

7. What does Dorian beg Sir Geoffrey Clouston not to do?

Dorian begs Sir Geoffrey not to shoot a hare that was jumping into a thicket.

8. What happens that Dorian Gray proclaims to be a "bad omen"?

Sir Geoffrey ignores Dorian's request not to shoot at the hare. He shoots into the thicket, but there is a man hiding there. Dorian believes that the shooting of this man is a bad omen of things to come.

9. Who is the man in the thicket?

The man is James Vane, Sibyl Vane's brother. He had been hiding in the thicket intending to kill Dorian.

Chapters 19-20

1. What does Dorian promise that he will do in the future?

Dorian promises that he will be good in the future.

2. Who is Hetty?

Hetty is a young peasant girl with whom Dorian had planned to run away. Once he decides to be "good," Dorian believes that leaving her while she is still pure would be the best thing for her.

3. Although Dorian believes he has done right by Hetty, what does Lord Henry say will be the result of Dorian's great renunciation?

Lord Henry says that Dorian's jilting of Hetty has probably ruined any chance of Hetty's happiness with any other man.

4. What becomes of Alan Campbell?

Alan Campbell commits suicide.

5. What does Dorian tell Lord Henry that Henry immediately dismisses as impossible to believe?

Dorian tells Lord Henry that he killed Basil. Lord Henry thinks this is impossible since a man's sins would show in his face, and Dorian's face is still as beautiful and youthful as the day they met.

6. What does Dorian claim is "a terrible reality ... [that] ... can be bought, and sold, and bartered away"?

Dorian says this about the soul.

7. What is Dorian "tired of hearing ... now"?

Dorian is tired of hearing the sound of his own name coming from others.

8. What does Dorian believe should be the prayer of a man to a most just God instead of "Forgive us our sins"?

He believes that man's prayer to a most just God should be "smite us for our iniquities."

9. Why does Dorian go to look at his portrait while thinking of Hetty Merton?

Dorian believes that the picture must now be shedding its ugliness since he has decided to become good, and he had committed a "good deed" by leaving Hetty.

10. What happens to Dorian Gray?

Dorian attempts to destroy the painting by stabbing it. However, when the servants break into the room (after hearing a loud cry of anguish), they find an old decrepit man with a knife in his heart next to a beautiful painting of Dorian Gray. They only recognize the dead man as their master when they see his rings."

