



11.10 Oscar Wilde: the brilliant artist and the dandy

like a knife and made each delicate fibre of his nature quiver³¹. His eyes deepened into amethyst, and across them came a mist of tears. He felt as if a hand of ice had been laid upon his heart.

'Don't you like it?' cried Hallward at last, stung³² a little by the lad³³'s silence, not understanding what it meant.

'Of course he likes it,' said Lord Henry. 'Who wouldn't like it? It is one of the greatest things in modern art. I will give you anything you like to ask for it. I must have it.'

'It is not my property, Harry.'

'Whose property is it?'

'Dorian's, of course,' answered the painter.

'He is a very lucky fellow.'

'How sad it is!' murmured Dorian Gray with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait. 'How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June ... If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that – for that – I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!'



COMPREHENSION

2 READ the text from line 1 to line 29 and answer the following questions.

- 1 What does Lord Henry tell Dorian about beauty?
- 2 What is youth, according to him?
- 3 What does he implore Dorian to do?
- 4 What advice does he give Dorian?
- 5 What does their age require?
- 6 What could Dorian be the symbol of?

3 READ the rest of the passage and say:

- 1 what Dorian realises looking at his portrait;
- 2 what feelings the picture has created in his soul;
- 3 what will happen to the portrait and to Dorian himself in the future;
- 4 what Dorian wishes.

ANALYSIS

4 IDENTIFY what kind of narrator tells this story, and say if he openly intervenes in the narration. Whose point of view is adopted throughout?

5 FOCUS on the characters presented in this passage: Lord Henry, Basil Hallward and Dorian Gray.

- 1 What social class do they belong to?
- 2 What kind of man is Lord Henry? He speaks through **paradox, that is, a statement which seems at first untrue and contradictory, but reveals a deeper truth**; find some examples in the first part of the text.
- 3 Say how Lord Henry exerts his influence on Dorian Gray.
- 4 Lord Henry's speech contains words and phrases conveying the ideas of youth, beauty and old age. Underline them in the text and fill in the table.

Youth	Beauty	Old age

- 5 What images of youth, beauty and old age are depicted by Lord Henry?

6 IDENTIFY the theme of the text.

7 POINT OUT the Victorian values emerging from this passage and Wilde's attitude to them. Then share your findings with the rest of the class.

31 quiver. Tremare.

32 stung. Ferito.

33 lad. Ragazzo.



YOUR TURN

8 DISCUSS with the rest of the class. Do we also value beauty and youth above talent, achievement or experience?