



The Picture of Dorian Gray

Oscar Wilde

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The novel that scandalized Victorian England

In a London studio, two men contemplate the portrait of another—younger and more beautiful—man. Despite Lord Henry Wotton’s urging, Basil Hallward refuses to show his painting in public—there is too much of his true feeling for the subject in it. “I will not bare my soul to their shallow, prying eyes,” he declares. “My heart shall never be put under their microscope.”

Instead, it is Dorian Gray’s soul put under the microscope of this unforgettable novel. Influenced by the cynical, hedonistic Lord Henry, Dorian becomes infatuated with his own youth and beauty and wishes that his portrait would grow old instead of him. His wish comes true, but it is not just the passage of time that mars the painting—the wages of sin are recorded there as well. Freed from the physical toll of his debauchery, Dorian devotes himself to the pursuit of pleasure above all else. He turns on his friends, drives his lover to suicide, and engages in every vice known to man. To society, he remains as handsome and youthful as Prince Charming. In the painting, he is hideous. Too late, Dorian realizes that only one of these two images can be real, and a reckoning deferred is not a reckoning absolved.

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