The Picture of Dorian Gray

By Oscar Wilde

25 Double Entries

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| 1. Quote: “Henry,” said Basil Hallward, looking him straight in the face, “every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul.” (pg. 6) | Explanation: What Basil is trying to tell Henry is that when a painter paints, the picture reveals the artist, not the subject. Every color, stroke, layer reveals the personality of the painter, and not the subject. For instance if a painter paints a colorful and bright picture, it is shown that the painter has an upbeat and good personality. Later on when Basil paints Dorian, the life and beauty of the portrait shows how much Basil admired Dorian Gray. |
| 2. Quote: “An artist should create beautiful things, but should put nothing of his own life into them. We live in an age when men treat art as if it were meant to be a form of autobiography. We have lost the abstract sense of beauty. Someday I will show the world what it is; and for that reason the world shall never see my portrait of Dorian Gray”. (pg. 12-13) | Personal Link: When I look at this quote, it makes me think of the definition of an artist. For instance, is an artist one who creates beautiful things, or is the one who puts life into them? However, Basil comments that a portrait is nothing but an autobiography, something to remember the artist by. What he means is that there is no real sense of beauty in the art that such artists create. Basil then takes a stance and says that it is the reason why he won’t show people his portrait of Dorian Gray. |
| 3. Quote: “Because to influence a person is to give him one’s own soul. He does not think his natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone else’s music, and actor of a part that has not been written for him.” (pg. 20) | Explanation: This quote basically summarizes the entire theme of the novel. When Henry Wotton plants the idea of a withering flower in Dorian Gray’s mind, Henry gave a bit of his soul to Dorian, and it inevitably took over his life and take a turn for the worst. It also because of this quote, that all of Dorian Gray’s transgressions are because of Henry Wotton. |
| 4. Quote: “Some day, when you are old and wrinkled and ugly, when thought has seared your forehead with its lines, and passion branded your lips with its hideous fires, you will feel it, you will feel it terribly. Now, wherever you go, you charm the world. Will it always be so?” (pg. 24) | Purpose: This quote is the starting point of Dorian Gray’s corruption. After Henry tells him this, Dorian starts becoming fretful and worried that his youth and beauty will go away. Had Henry not met Dorian that day, then the course of the story would have changed. |
| 5. Quote: “How said 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!” (pg. 29) | Purpose: Henry Wotton’s words sparked the conflict within the entire novel. He planted the idea that Dorian Gray will get old and stop looking young and beautiful, into his head, and made him think about what is really important to him. And when Dorian Gray finally figured it out, he grew scared. So he threw his soul away, to be young and beautiful forever. This starts the entire conflict within the story. Dorian Gray, being the lost fellow, and easily influenced man he is, traded his soul, for eternal youth and beauty. |
| 6. Quote: “Yes; he would try to be to Dorian Gray what, without knowing it, the lad was to the painter who had fashioned the wonderful portrait. He would seek to dominate him—had already, indeed, half done so. He would make that wonderful spirit his own. There was something fascinating in this son of Love and Death.” (pg. 41) | Explanation: Henry starts to seek interest in Dorian Gray. He believes Dorian to be a lovable young man who is often lost, and willing to follow others. However, his youth and beauty is so captivating, that it even captured Basil’s attention, and is thus why Basil painted a picture of Dorian Gray. Ultimately, Henry takes a liking to Dorian, and proceeds to influence him. |
| 7. Quote: “Lord Henry looked over at Mr. Erskine. “Humanity takes itself too seriously. It is the world’s original sin. If the cave-man had known how to laugh, History would have been different.” (pg. 45-46) | Explanation: Henry Wotton desires a good laugh because it gives him pleasure and eases whatever situation he’s in. He cross applies his lifestyle to modern history, telling Mr. Erskine that if humanity would stop being so serious and ease for a moment, things would have changed. Furthermore, he explains that if the earliest people, the cavemen, knew how to laugh, then history itself would have been changed. |
| 8. Quote: “The subject is not so abstruse as I thought it was. I find that, ultimately, there are only two kinds of women, the plain and the coloured. The plain women are very useful. If you want to gain a reputation for respectability, you have merely to take them down to supper. The other women were not afraid that others might pick them up”. (pg. 55-56) | Explanation: What Wilde is saying in this bit of text is that in life, there are only two kinds of women. The first being very plain women, who are considered useful. Men can use their body and mind for reputation and enjoyment. As shallow as this is what Dorian does later on in the story. He uses his youth and beauty to swoon women and finds his pleasure in using them. However what Dorian cannot go against is the other type of women, those who were fearless and who were not so easily influenced. |
| 9. Quote: “His sudden mad love for Sibyl Vane was a psychological phenomenon of no small interest. There was no doubt that curiosity had much to do with it, curiosity and the desire for new experiences; yet it was not a simple but rather a complex passion”. (pg. 66) | Explanation: What a shallow man Dorian is. His love for Sibyl was fueled by curiosity, not so much anything else other than that. What this shows is that Dorian is allowing his curiosity to get him involved with Sibyl, showing his rather young and vain side. Furthermore, his passion is complex because Sibyl’s acting is phenomenal. Had Sibyl not been a marvelous actor, Dorian would not be interested in her in the least bit. I feel bad for Sibyl, because she’s wasting her feelings trying to get closer to Dorian, when all Dorian wants is to experience her acting. |
| 10. Quote: “I wish I had, for as sure as there is a God in heaven, if he ever does you any wrong I shall kill him.” (pg. 78) | Personal Link: What a kind person James is. He cares so much for his sister that he would even kill her lover if something wrong happened. However, as much as I would love to help my sister, I wouldn’t kill for her like James would. Ultimately, while James doesn’t love Sibyl like Sibyl loves Dorian, he deeply cares for his sister. |
| 11. Quote: “When you see Sibyl Vane you will feel that the man who could wrong her would be a beast, a beast without a heart. I cannot understand how anyone can wish to shame the thing he loves. I love Sibyl Vane. I want to place her on a pedestal of gold, and to see the world worship the woman who is mine. What is marriage?” (pg. 87) | Explanation: Dorian’s love for Sibyl keeps growing at this point in the story. He explains that any man who would make her unhappy, or ruin her acting is a beast who does not have any compassion. Next, Dorian explains that Sibyl is a most beautiful woman whom he loves. However the way he expresses his love for her is kind of selfish. He wants everyone to exclaim at his woman, Sibyl Vane. |
| 12. Quote: “To spiritualize one’s age—that is something worth doing. If this girl can give a soul to those who have lived without one, if she can create the sense of beauty in people whose lives have been sordid and ugly, if she can strip them of their selfishness and lend them tears for sorrows that are not their own, she is worthy of all your adoration, worthy of the adoration of the world. This marriage is quite right. I did not think so at first, but I admit it now. The gods made Sibyl Vane for you. Without her you are incomplete.” (pg. 92) | Explanation: Basil speaks to Dorian, telling him it was the right idea to marry Sibyl. Basil explains Sibyl’s acting as giving a soul to those without one. The point of acting is to represent a certain idea or theme to the audience or as Basil puts it, giving her soul to others. Since Sibyl is such a great actress she is able to influence others, make them cry, and feel her emotions as if they were the audience’s emotions. The point Basil tries to make at the end is that because Sibyl is able to pull all of this off for her audience, Dorian is lucky to be able to marry her, and also complete his life. |
| 13. Quote: “It is not good for one’s morals to see bad acting. Besides, I don’t suppose you will want your wife to act. So what does it matter if she plays Juliet like a wooden doll? She is very lovely, and if she knows as little about life as she does about acting, she will be a delightful experience.” (pg. 95) | Purpose: This quote brings out how Sibyl Vane is starting to become worse at acting. Henry explains that it is an eyesore to view such bad acting. However, he adds that she can no longer act, presuming Dorian would want to use her for something other than acting. On the flip side, Henry explains that her lack of knowledge will prove most helpful for Dorian. What he means is that Dorian will seek pleasure from such an ignorant and blissful woman. |
| 14. Quote: “You used to stir my imagination. Now you don’t even stir my curiosity. You simply produce no effect. I loved you because you were marvelous, because you had genius and intellect, because you realized the dreams of great poets and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art. You have thrown it all away. You are shallow and stupid. My God! How mad I was to love you!” (pg. 98) | Explanation: How cruel of Dorian to say this to Sibyl, when she truly loved Dorian, even to the point of acting terribly. Dorian treats her like a tool, because Dorian fell in love with her acting, not so much the actual actor. When she threw away her acting career for Dorian, Dorian told her that she was shallow and stupid. What this means is that Dorian is selfish, not even appealed by the feelings of other people. |
| 15. Quote: “ His unreal and selfish love would yield to some higher influence, would be transformed into some nobler passion, and the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him would be a guide to him through life, would be to him what holiness is to some, and conscience to others, and the fear of God to us all.” (pg. 108) | Purpose: At this point in the story, Dorian believes that his painting will be the outlet for all of his pleasure and experience. He even admits that he holds unreal and selfish love, using his youth and beauty to his advantage. If he were to show everyone the painting, and how it preserves his life, perhaps he could either be revered, or hated for it. But that’s mainly speculating. What Dorian really means, is that he understands the power of his portrait, and the responsibility he holds to keep it a secret. |
| 16. Quote: “I am afraid that women appreciate cruelty, downright cruelty, more than anything else. They have wonderfully primitive instincts. We have emancipated them, but they remain slaves looking for their masters, all the same. They love being dominated.” (pg. 116) | Purpose: Wilde put this quote in to show how wicked Henry Wotton could be. He views women as slaves, tools for pleasure and use, rather than human beings. Furthermore he thinks that all men are masters to women, and that women look for a master. Essentially, Henry thinks that women are to be dominated and to be owned, like a physical object, rather than be treated as humanely. |
| 17. Quote: “Yes: there was to be, as Lord Henry had prophesied, a new Hedonism that was to recreate life, and to save it from that harsh, uncomely Puritanism that is having, in our own day, its curious revival. It was to have its service of the intellect, certainly; yet, it was never to accept any theory or system that would involve the sacrifice of any mod of passionate experience”. (pg. 147) | Purpose: Henry’s entire purpose for picking Dorian Gray was to spread his “new hedonism”. He believes that the world is being influenced and taken aback by some fake ideology such as Puritanism. Initially what Henry is trying to do is start his own ideology of how hedonism should be, and how your life should be lived. He describes the theory as an independent one, a theory that doesn’t sacrifice a bit of a passionate experience or a bit of pleasure. |
| 18. Quote: “Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book. There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful.” (pg 165) | Explanation: This excerpt basically explains how corrupted and influenced Dorian Gray had become. After Henry gave Dorian a book which explains his hedonistic theories, Dorian has become as bad as Henry. In fact, he views his evil and nonsensical actions as pleasure. Using his youth and beauty to his advantage, he can go out infecting everyone with his corruption and inevitably making their lives worse. |
| 19. Quote: “You are mad, I tell you—mad to imagine that I would raise a finger to help you, mad to make this monstrous confession. I will have nothing to do with this matter, whatever it is. Do you think I am going to peril my reputation for you? What is it to me what devil’s work you are up to?” (pg. 190) | Purpose: Thank goodness someone told Dorian that he was mad. Unfortunately, Dorian neither cares, nor wants to bother with the problem. Alan is a good man for denying Dorian, questioning his devilish and corrupt activities. However, I believe Alan did it for his own safety, not wanting rumors to get out that he is helping Dorian with his hedonistic desires. |
| 20. Quote: “Was it true that his senses could cure it? What could atone for that? Ah! For that there was no atonement; but though forgiveness was impossible, forgetfulness was possible still, and he was determined to forget, to stamp the thing out, to crush it as one would crush the adder that had stung one.” (pg. 210) | Personal Link: Dorian Gray knows that he can never be forgiven. While this saddens him, he knows that the only he can do is to run, and forget about it. While it is his only logical option left, I disagree with that. Even though he might die as a result of it, he should still try and make amends with those who were hurt and affected by his actions. At the very least, try and appeal to the people. This is what I would have done. |
| 21. Quote: “Romance lives by repetition, and repetition converts an appetite into an art. Besides, each time that one loves is the only time one has ever loved. Difference of object does not alter singles of passion. It merely intensifies it. We can have in life but one great experience at best, and the secret of life is to reproduce that experience as often as possible”. (pg. 223) | Explanation: Henry explains that the only goal in life is to find one moment or one person that gives you passion and pleasure. He also explains that right after that, the next goal is to redo that experience again, to enjoy life to the fullest. Cross apply this statement to Dorian Gray, and his passion is only to look young and beautiful forever. |
| 22. Quote: “The consciousness of being hunted, snared, tracked down, had begun to dominate him. If the tapestry did but tremble in the wind, he shook. The dead leaves that were blown against the leaded panes seemed to him like his own wasted resolutions and wild regrets. When he closed his eyes, he saw again the sailor’s face peering through the mist-stained glass, and horror seemed once more to lay its hand upon his heart”. (pg. 227) | Purpose: The consequences of Dorian’s actions have caught up with him. Wilde put this quote in here to summarize the link between Dorian and the painting. If the painting is blown by the wind, so is the doll causing havoc. What this means is that, it’s possible to get rid of Dorian’s good looks and beauty by tampering with the painting behind the tapestry. Finally, when he stops and looks back on his past actions, he is spooked and recalls a sailor peering at him, scaring him and giving him a mini-heart attack. |
| 23. Quote: “I wish I could love,” cried Dorian Gray, with a deep note of pathos in his voice. “But I seem to have lost the passion, forgotten the desire. I am too much concentrated on myself. My own personality has become a burden to me. I want to escape, to go away, to forget. It was silly of me to come down here at all. I think I shall send a wire to Harvey to have the yacht got ready. On a yacht one is safe”. (pg. 233) | Explanation: Dorian, indulging in his hedonistic desires, has lost all of his human emotions. He has played too much with the feelings of people and thus, does not even understand his own feelings. He even says it himself, that he has been too concentrated on himself. This shows that he admits his mistake and wants to repent for his son. However he knows he cannot, and his final destination is to be on a boat, away from civilization. |
| 24. Quote: “Ah! In what a monstrous moment of pride and passion he had prayed that the portrait should bear the burden of his days, and he keep the unsullied splendor of eternal youth! All his failure had been due to that. Better for him that each sin of his life had brought its sure, swift penalty along with it. There was purification in punishment. Not “Forgive us our sins,” but “Smite us for our iniquities” should be the prayer of a man to a most just God.” (pg. 250) | Purpose: This bit of text explains Dorian’s final moments with his picture. He finally understands that his portrait and his deal with the devil have gotten him eternally messed up. However, the funny part is when he blames the picture, and not his actions. All the portrait did was store Dorian’s true self. On the other hand the doll that encases the young and beautiful Dorian was the one causing trouble and wreaking havoc. In the end, when Dorian mentions purification as punishment, he means that asking for forgiveness won’t work, but being smited for his iniquities would. |
| 25. Quote: “When they entered they found, hanging upon the wall, a splendid portrait of their master as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was”. (pg. 254) | Explanation: Finally the end of Dorian Gray. He killed himself by stabbing the picture, and in the end, the picture switched forms with Dorian, showing a young and beautiful man in the picture, and an old bag of dust right next to it. I don’t blame Dorian for doing so either. He fully deserved the consequences for causing a woman to suicide, killing his artist, and a bunch of other crazy crimes which should have gotten him hanged. At long last though, what I’ve learned from his death, was that you can’t always have what you wish for. |