

*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, by Oscar Wilde

Reviewed by Starr Anderson (Literary Arts 2025)

I first read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in freshman year. “Booktok” was becoming a big thing on social media so I decided to look up books that had gothic themes, and I was met with *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a suggestion. The book grabbed my hand and pulled me into its beautiful writing by not only introducing me to the theory of immortality and philosophy, but by getting me interested in more books on philosophy by taking the many sides of people who have been exposed to the theory, and showing how different reactions can come from it. I think this book could hook anyone who reads it and get them interested in the topics Oscar Wilde has to talk about in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

One of the first reactions to the theory of immortality comes in Chapter Two when the readers, along with Lord Henry Wotton, first meet Dorian Gray, a young and naive new socialite. Lord Henry is one of the three main characters readers see throughout the whole book. He is of high class in London and he believes that he is an intellectual, yet readers can see that he just yaps about his opinions on random ideas. When he first meets Dorian Gray, he marvels at his youth and places the idea in Dorian’s head that he might be nothing without his beauty. Dorian becomes appalled at the thought of losing what makes him likable to others. Dorian is confused and bewildered by Lord Henry Wotton’s views and breaks down in a panic. A few days after being exposed to Lord Henry’s views, Dorian begins to make rash decisions like engaging himself to a woman he just meets, hating all portraits of himself, and committing many crimes. Because of Dorian’s upbringing, youth, and naivety, we can see that the thought of immortality can corrupt innocent minds and destroy someone’s well being.

We can see the other reaction a little bit later on when Lord Henry Wotton and Dorian Gray dine with people of higher class in the London society. Lord Henry begins his infamous rant on his ideals and how his theory of immortality affects the ethics of their society. The others there begin to laugh, along with Lord Henry, about how absurd

the thought of being immortal is. The others of high class joke about the possibility without realizing how Dorian felt about the subject and how much it had really affected him. The readers don't see these people later on in the book and we, the readers, assume that they just went on to live their lives without thinking about immortality again. They were probably immune to Lord Henry's exposition based on their higher class and the way they were brought up in high society London.

This book can entertain as well as inform readers on the theory of immortality by using beautiful imagery to foreshadow what's to come with immortality themes included in the book, and talking and showing both sides of people exposed to the theory of immortality and its ethics/ideals. I really recommend this book if you're new to the thoughts on immortality and if you want a book filled with beautiful writing.