

Dorian gray (2009) movie review

[Health & Medicine](#), [Beauty](#)



Oliver Parker's version of 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' is a witty horror movie that captures subtlety of Oscar Wilde's writing. The movie is somewhat different from previous attempts of screening the story about a young and handsome Dorian Gray.

The setting of the movie takes place in 19th century London. Dorian Gray (Ben Barnes), an extraordinarily beautiful and pleasant man, moves to this big city after the death of his grandfather. Dorian starts to enjoy a life of wealthy London Victorian society, as he inherited great deal of money from his relative. Soon he meets two of the people, who greatly influence on his future. Lord Henry Wotton (Colin Firth) and Basil Hallward (Ben Chaplin) become Dorian's good friends. Mr. Wotton's character is performed brilliantly by Firth and thus movie keeps Wilde's moral story. Eloquent talks of Lord Henry about pleasures and hedonistic lifestyle persuade Dorian to engage into rebellious life without baring consequences. Meanwhile, Basil, a painter, is impressed with young man's beauty and offers to paint a portrait to preserve Dorian's handsome look.

The movie, as a book, can be divided to three parts, depicting portrait's transformations. The finished painting strikes everyone with its charm; even Dorian, who promises to stay forever young. That was the first time, when he said, he would rather give his soul to evil than get older. In fact, Oliver Parker paid a lot of attention to show further scenes of Dorian's pursuit of pleasure. Under the influence of Lord Henry, Dorian sank deeper into hedonistic lifestyle involving drinking, gambling, sexual orgies and no regrets.

One more person that suffers from Dorian's change is Sybil Vane (Rachel Hurd-Wood), a young actress. Dorian met Sybil in a pub and immediately fell in love, so he couldn't resist visiting her at the theater. Intoxicated by love and passion, they decide to get married. Dorian's friends do not meet this news very warmly, because of quick decision and difference in statuses. While understanding, that he might lose his friend, Lord Henry drags Dorian to brothels and ruins the relationships. Devastated because of Dorian's cruelty, beautiful and pregnant Sybil sinks in a river. In the original story Sybil's talent gets ruined because of her feelings, thus Dorian starts to hate her for this. Parker omitted this part and in my opinion, made movie milder in terms of showing Dorian's corrupt soul.

Scared that someone may notice ugly reality, Dorian hid the portrait farther from the eyes. Basil wants to exhibit this masterpiece, but Dorian tells that it is too precious. Meanwhile his debauchery continues with even more corrupt activities. In my opinion, the director brilliantly showed distortion of social values, sometimes even too much, with vivid scenes of orgies, smoking and both sex intercourses. At this point even Lord Henry is surprised with Dorian's behavior, a man, who never practiced what he preached.

When the movie continues, Dorian sees no limits to his actions and eventually kills Basil. The scene of killing is taken straight from classic horror movies, surrounded by smoggy and gloomy atmosphere. Basil discovered the changes on the portrait, so Dorian thrust him with a piece of mirror and threw his body cut to pieces into the river.

In the movie transformation from young pleasant man to cruel murderer seems quite abrupt, because of lack of details. However, the director could precisely show connection between the portrait and Dorian, despite that sometimes transformations on the painting were slow. The idea was to show distortion of moral values, physical change of a young innocent man because of the desire to enjoy all the possible pleasures.

After a long trip abroad, which director omits, Dorian returns with the same brilliant youth and beauty. People in the hall are astonished with his look. Dorian Gray looks exactly like 20 years ago and still charms women. Lord Henry's daughter also becomes a victim of Dorian's lovely personality that he exquisitely hides. Still, he remains the same evil, lying to Sybil's brother and watching him die under a train. By that time, nobody would be able to recognize a young Dorian on the portrait. And so didn't Lord Henry, who opened the curtain and revealed true face.

The movie ends with Dorian and the portrait unification in flames and a failure of human soul. Overall, I think, the movie is good and quite entertaining. It has some horror scenes that capture attention of a watcher and create some mystery. Horror effect is also created with darkness, and also flashbacks to Dorian's childhood on the roof that are repeating throughout. Symbolism is not well presented, especially because of some missing details from the original story. In comparison with book, I think this movie doesn't leave needed impression, because it lacks genuine realism. However, I would recommend to watch to those who like to compare novels with filmed movies, and who are interested in horror or drama.