

Society vs. inner and outer beauty

[Life](#), [Love](#)



The Picture of Dorian Gray, a notorious novel by Oscar Wilde, takes place in London, England. In this novel, Dorian Gray, an extremely arrogant Englishman, becomes crazed with the idea that his youth and appearance are all that he has. With this in mind, he vows to turn over his soul so his outward beauty will never terminate. Despite the way he lives, people still see him as an amazing man because of his innocent appearance. In the beginning of the novel, the reader realizes that everyone views Dorian as this gorgeous, superior man. People see the beauty he possesses and desire to befriend him without actually knowing him as a person. Basil Hallward, a painter, becomes infatuated with Dorian and wishes for him to sit and be painted often. This is evident when Lord Henry Wotton asks how often Basil sees Dorian. Basil responds to him by saying, "Everyday. I couldn't be happy if I didn't see him every day. He is absolutely necessary to me" (Wilde 11). Basil is not necessarily implying in this statement that he enjoys Mr. Gray's company as much as he just loves to paint him. In fact, the entire time Dorian sits for Basil, neither of them say a word. So to Basil, Dorian is just another pretty face, so to speak. Throughout the first half of the novel, Dorian becomes lovesick with a young actress by the name of Sibyl Vane. He goes to the theatre every night to watch her perform. One night, Dorian, Lord Henry, and Basil go to watch her act and she is terrible. After her performance, Dorian falls out of love with her. Sibyl explains to Dorian that the reason she performed so horribly that night is that she was so in love with Dorian that acting was boring to her now. Dorian responds to Sibyl saying, "You have killed my love" (Wilde 90). This proves that his love for her is different. He is not in love with Sibyl Vane as a person, but he is in love

with her as an actress. He loves her for the way she performs. In the last half of the novel, Dorian is at a dinner party with Lady Narborough and Lord Henry. While at the party, Lady Narborough says to Dorian, “ Lord Henry is very wicked, and I sometimes wish that I had been; but you are made good - you look so good” (Wilde 184). In this quote, she is implying that Dorian is not capable of doing anything wrong or wicked because of his innocent appearance. Again, society is only looking at the outer beauty of someone. Lady Narborough believes she knows Dorian just from the way he looks, not from who he really is. Many times throughout this novel, society pressures the young to conform to who they want each person to be. They, also, believe that a person is better because of the way they look or because of their background, which is not always the case. The Picture of Dorian Gray proves this by showing that just because Dorian is a good looking man, it does not mean that he cannot do anything wrong or immoral.