

# Questions

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Questions Q1: Discuss the character of Lord Henry and his impact on Dorian.

A1: Lord Henry is an extremely immoral person. He finds no values in sticking to virtues and instead values living for the flesh. When he meets Dorian, he is immediately struck by his beauty. He stays and talks to Dorian while he sits for Basil. He tells Dorian that beauty is all that matters, and how it's a shame that it only lasts for so long. He urges him to spend his time always "searching for new sensations" and not wasting the time that his beauty is still alive. This scared Dorian and caused him to make the wish that his portrait would grow old instead of himself. He never wanted to lose his beauty. Lord Henry continues to be one of Dorian's closest advisors. When Sibyl kills herself, he does not focus on the horror of it like Dorian does, he focuses on the fact that no one will associate Dorian with it. He is not very sympathetic or caring, but matter-of-fact. He gives Dorian a book that ruins him. It consists of the story of a young Parisian who devotes his life to "all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own." Dorian himself causes it a "poisonous book," but he allows himself to be changed by it. He commits all sorts of sins and his portrait keeps getting uglier, but the more he sins, the more Lord Henry seems to love him. Lord Henry is a vile man that somehow still has the capacity to love something, albeit another evil person. Near the end when Dorian decides to be good all of a sudden, Lord Henry mocks his morality and commends Dorian for living his life the way he has so far. When Dorian tells him not to give the book about the Parisian to anyone else, Lord Henry mocks him yet again and tells him that "[a]rt has no influence upon action," which flies right in the face that Dorian's portrait has been influencing his actions for a very long time.

Lord Henry's words make him realize that something must be done about that portrait, so he tries to destroy it and ends up killing himself. Lord Henry is the reason for Dorian's demise morally, spiritually, and physically. Q2: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book," Wilde says in the Preface. "Books are well written, or badly written. That is all." Does the novel confirm this argument? A2: The novel does support this argument. The most important book in the novel is a book that consists of the story of a young Parisian who devotes his life to "all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own." There were two opposing opinions on this book, one from Dorian and one from Lord Henry. Dorian strongly believes that the book is immoral and that it affects the way he lives his life. When Dorian went to talk to Lord Henry about this, Lord Henry mocked him and told him "[a]rt has no influence upon action." Lord Henry's point of view is the same that Wilde had when writing the Preface. Dorian was just blaming his wrongdoings on the book so that he could rid himself of some of the guilt. Lord Henry shows us that no matter the book we read, it has no power over what we do unless we let it. Q3: Dorian rationalizes Basil's accusations, saying that every individual is responsible for his or her actions, and therefore for his or her downfall. Do you believe this? Likewise, is Dorian responsible for his own ruination, or is Lord Henry? A3: I do believe that every individual is responsible for his or her own downfalls, but I believe that Dorian only believes that when it suits him. He says that to Basil to get him to stop bugging him about everything that he's doing wrong, but then goes and tells Lord Henry "you poisoned me with a book once. I should not forgive that. Harry, promise me that you will never lend that book

to anyone. It does harm. " Dorian is trying to toss the blame for his actions from himself to Lord Henry. He may say that he believes that his actions are his own, but when the actions don't lead where he wants them to he throws them on someone else's laps. We as humans do that a lot, even from the very beginning. When Adam and Eve were caught in the garden after eating the fruit, they blamed each other, even when they knew that they themselves were to blame. It is the essence of the sinful nature of humans to do that, but the fault for the action lies with the individual. Q4: What significance did Sibyl Vane play in the novel? Although Sibyl does not seem like a huge character in the novel, she sets up the whole story. Dorian meets Sibyl at a play in London and goes as far as to say, " 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? An irrevocable vow. You mock at it for that. Ah! Don't mock. It is an irrevocable vow that I want to take." He sees her play Juliet in the play Romeo and Juliet, which bears a very similar feel to their relationship. He fell in love with her immediately, thinks about her nonstop, and then they both commit suicide. This book could actually be called a reenactment of Romeo and Juliet with a twist. He loves her and she loves him. Then he hates her and she kills herself. He decides to go back and marry her, then discovers that she committed suicide and becomes depressed. He then turns to a life of debauchery and pleasure. It all ends with him hating the life that he had been living and stabbing the picture with a knife, inadvertently killing himself, and finally bringing to a close Romeo's life as well. Although some could argue that he " died" when he found out

that she had committed suicide to make the story closer to its original, it is irrelevant. It is still a remarkable resemblance to Shakespeare's play.