

INDEPENDENT STUDY COMPANION

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY



A LIVING BOOK STUDY - LEARNING BOOKLET

Name: _____

TASKS: DAY 1

Week 1 - Preface + Chapter 1

READ:

Wilde's short Preface sets out his ideas about art. Then the painter Basil Hallward finishes a portrait of the beautiful Dorian Gray, watched by the witty, cynical Lord Henry Wotton.

DISCUSS:

Read the Preface, then meet the three men. What does each seem to want?

EXTENSION:

Art: research portrait painting, and what a fine portrait can seem to 'capture' about a person.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 2

Week 1 - Chapter 2: The Wish

READ:

Lord Henry dazzles Dorian with ideas about youth and pleasure. Fearing age, Dorian wishes the portrait would grow old in his place.

NARRATION:

Describe Dorian's fateful wish, and what leads him to make it.

EXTENSION:

Discuss: what exactly does Dorian wish for, and why is it so dangerous?

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 3

Week 1 - Chapters 3-4: Influence and Love

READ:

Lord Henry's grip on Dorian tightens; then Dorian falls headlong in love with a young actress, Sibyl Vane.

DISCUSS:

How does Lord Henry's influence over Dorian grow, day by day?

EXTENSION:

PSHE: discuss how much we are shaped by the people we admire.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 4

Week 1 - Chapter 5: Sibyl's Family

READ:

We meet Sibyl at home with her anxious mother and her devoted brother James, who vows to protect her.

NARRATION:

Introduce Sibyl, her mother, and her protective brother James.

EXTENSION:

Literacy: how does Wilde make us care about Sibyl before what is to come?

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 5

Week 2 - Chapters 6-7: The First Cruelty

READ:

Sibyl acts badly the night Dorian brings friends to watch - real love has made pretending feel false - and he cruelly rejects her. That night the portrait first changes.

NARRATION:

Retell how Dorian rejects Sibyl, and what he then notices about the portrait.

EXTENSION:

Discuss: why does Sibyl act 'badly', and is Dorian's cruelty ever forgivable?

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 6

Week 2 - Chapter 8: A Hardened Heart

READ:

Dorian learns that Sibyl has killed herself. Lord Henry talks him out of his guilt, teaching him to treat it all as a kind of drama.

DISCUSS:

How does Dorian begin to silence his conscience after Sibyl's death?

EXTENSION:

RE/PSHE: discuss conscience, and what happens when we train ourselves not to feel guilt.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 7

Week 2 - Chapters 9-10: The Portrait Hidden

READ:

Dorian locks the portrait away in an old schoolroom, and is drawn deeper into corruption by a mysterious 'yellow book' Lord Henry sends him.

NARRATION:

Describe how and why Dorian hides the portrait.

EXTENSION:

Literacy: explore the idea of a book, or a set of ideas, 'infecting' a person.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 8

Week 3 - Chapter 11: Years of Sin

READ:

Years pass. Dorian's reputation grows darker with whispered scandals, yet his face stays young and unspoiled while the hidden portrait rots.

DISCUSS:

How does Wilde show Dorian's secret corruption without spelling out every detail?

EXTENSION:

History: research Victorian hypocrisy - the gap between public respectability and private life.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 9

Week 3 - Chapters 12-13: Murder

READ:

Basil confronts Dorian about the terrible rumours. Dorian shows him the hideous portrait - and then murders him.

NARRATION:

Retell the confrontation with Basil and its shocking end.

EXTENSION:

Discuss: this is the story's turning point. How does Wilde make it so shocking?

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 10

Week 3 - Chapter 14: Covering the Crime

READ:

Dorian blackmails an old friend, the scientist Alan Campbell, into destroying Basil's body.

DISCUSS:

How does one crime force Dorian into more, dragging others down with him?

EXTENSION:

PSHE: discuss how wrongdoing can trap a person in a chain of further wrongs.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 11

Week 4 - Chapters 15-16: The Opium Den

READ:

Dorian slips from a glittering party to a squalid opium den, where Sibyl's brother James suddenly recognises him.

NARRATION:

Describe Dorian's night, and the danger James Vane now poses.

EXTENSION:

Science: research how Victorians viewed opium dens, and what addiction really does to a person.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 12

Week 4 - Chapters 17-18: The Hunter Killed

READ:

James Vane stalks Dorian at his country house, but is killed by accident during a shooting party.

DISCUSS:

Dorian escapes danger yet again. Is he simply lucky, or is something closing in on him?

EXTENSION:

Literacy: notice how Wilde keeps a sense of doom hanging over Dorian even in safety.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 13

Week 4 - Chapter 19: A False Reform

READ:

Dorian resolves to change and be good - but comes to see that even his one 'good deed' was really done out of vanity.

DISCUSS:

Can Dorian truly reform, or has he left it too late?

EXTENSION:

RE/PSHE: discuss whether good actions still count if they are done for the wrong reasons.

Your response:

TASKS: DAY 14

Week 4 - Chapter 20: The Reckoning

READ:

Tormented by the portrait, Dorian stabs it to destroy his conscience for good - and is found dead and hideous, while the picture is beautiful once more.

WRAP-UP:

What finally happens, and why is the ending so fitting?

EXTENSION:

'The portrait is Dorian's conscience made visible.' How does Wilde use it across the whole novel?

Your response:

THE PORTRAIT AS A MIRROR OF THE SOUL

Each time Dorian does wrong, the portrait changes. Track the key changes and what causes each one.

What Dorian does	How the portrait changes

WILDE'S WIT - EPIGRAM COLLECTION

Wilde fills the book with sparkling, upside-down sayings. Collect your favourites here, then try writing three of your own.

Epigram from the book	What it really means