

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

CHAPTER SUMMARIES WITH NOTES

PREFACE

Summary

The artist creates beautiful things. Art aims to reveal art and conceal the artist. The critic translates impressions from the art into another medium. Criticism is a form of autobiography. People who look at something beautiful and find an ugly meaning are "corrupt without being charming." Cultivated people look at beautiful things and find beautiful meanings. The elect are those who see only beauty in beautiful things. Books can't be moral or immoral; they are only well or badly written.

People of the nineteenth century who dislike realism are like Caliban who is enraged at seeing his own face in the mirror. People of the nineteenth century who dislike romanticism are like Caliban enraged at not seeing himself in the mirror.

The subject matter of art is the moral life of people, but moral art is art that is well formed. Artists don't try to prove anything. Artists don't have ethical sympathies, which in an artist "is an unpardonable mannerism of style." The subject matter of art can include things that are morbid, because "the artist can express everything." The artist's instruments are thought and language. Vice and virtue are the materials of art. In terms of form, music is the epitome of all the arts. In terms of feeling, acting is the epitome of the arts.

Art is both surface and symbol. People who try to go beneath the surface and those who try to read the symbols "do so at their own peril." Art imitates not life, but the spectator. When there is a diversity of opinion about a work of art, the art is good. "When critics disagree the artist is in accord with him|her|self."

The value of art is not in its usefulness. Art is useless.

Notes

The Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is famous in its own right as a sort of manifesto of the Aesthetic Movement¹ in art and literature. It consists of a series of aphorisms or epigrams (short sayings) which affirm the notions of art for art's sake. Many of these aphorisms form the basis not only of Aesthetic writing, but also Modernist writing, which was to reach its height in the 1920s. In the nineteenth century, art was supposed to be useful for the moral instruction of the people. It was supposed to mirror life and also teach its readers to live the good and moral life. Oscar Wilde opposes this view of art. For Wilde, art was valuable in its own right, not for its usefulness for other aims. His sayings about art seem strange and against the norm even for late twentieth century readers. People

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Aestheticism (also the Aesthetic Movement): It is an intellectual and art movement supporting the emphasis of aesthetic values more than social-political themes for literature, fine art, music and other arts. This meant that art from this particular movement focused more on being beautiful rather than having a deeper meaning — "art for art's sake". It was particularly prominent in Europe during the 19th century, supported by notable figures such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, but contemporary critics are also associated with the movement, such as Harold Bloom, who has recently argued against projecting social and political ideology onto literary works, which he believes has been a growing problem in humanities departments over the 20th century.

often read them as a humorous overstatement of principles. However, each of the statements is exactly in accord with the ideas of the Aesthetes. They are not necessarily exaggerations. Wilde consistently defended the autonomy of art, that is, the separateness of art from use value.

CHAPTER 1

Summary

In a richly decorated studio an artist, Basil Hallward talks with a guest, Lord Henry Wotton about a new portrait he has standing out. Lord Henry exclaims that it is the best of Hallward's work and that he should show it at Grosvenor. Hallward remarks that he doesn't plan to show it at all. Lord Henry can't imagine why an artist wouldn't want to show his work. Hallward explains that he has put too much of himself in it to show it to the public. Lord Henry can't understand this since Hallward isn't a beautiful man while the subject of the portrait is extraordinarily beautiful. As he is explaining himself, he mentions the subject's name—Dorian Gray. He regrets having slipped, saying that when he likes people, he never tells their names because it feels to him as if he's giving them away to strangers.

Lord Henry compares this idea to his marriage, saying that "the one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties." He adds that he and his wife never know where the other is and that she's always a better liar than he is, but that she just laughs at him when he slips. Basil Hallward is impatient with Lord Henry for this revelation, accusing Lord Henry of posing. He adds that Lord Henry never says anything moral and never does anything immoral. Lord Henry tells him that being natural is the worst of the poses.

Hallward returns to the idea of the portrait. He explains that "every portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not the sitter." The sitter only occasions the production of the art. The painter is revealed, not the sitter. He won't, therefore, show the secret of his soul to the public.

He tells the story of how he met Dorian Gray. He went to a "crush" put on by Lady Brandon. While he was walking around the room, he saw Dorian Gray, "someone whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb by whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself." He was afraid of such an influence, so he avoided meeting the man he saw. He tried to leave and Lady Brandon caught him and took him around the room introducing him to her guests. He had recently shown a piece that created a sensation, so his cultural capital was quite high at the time. After numerous introductions, he came upon Dorian Gray. Lady Brandon says she didn't know what Mr. Gray did, perhaps nothing, perhaps he played the piano or the violin. The two men laughed at her and became friends with each other at once.

He tells Lord Henry that soon he painted Dorian Gray's portrait. Now, Dorian Gray is all of Hallward's art. He explains that in art, there are two epochal events possible: one is the introduction of a new medium for art, like the oil painting, the second is the appearance of a new personality for art. Dorian Gray is the latter. Even when he's not painting Dorian Gray, he is influenced by him to paint extraordinarily different creations. It is like a new school of art emerging. Dorian Gray is his motive in art.

As he is explaining the art, he mentions that he has never told Dorian Gray how important he is. He won't show his Dorian Gray-inspired art because he fears that the public

would recognize his bared soul. Lord Henry notes that bared souls are quite popular these days in fiction. Hallward hates this trend, saying that the artist should create beautiful things, and should put nothing of his own life into them. Dorian Gray is often quite charming to Basil, but sometimes he seems to take delight in hurting Basil. Basil feels at such moments that he has given his soul to someone shallow and cruel enough to treat it as a flower to ornament his lapel. Lord Henry predicts that Basil will tire of Dorian sooner than Dorian will tire of him. Basil refuses to believe this. He says as long as he lives, Dorian Gray will dominate his life.

Lord Henry suddenly remembers that he has heard Dorian Gray's name. His aunt, Lady Agatha, has mentioned him in relation to some philanthropic work she does, saying he was going to help her in the East End. Suddenly, Dorian Gray is announced. Basil Hallward asks his servant to have Mr. Gray wait a moment. He tells Lord Henry not to exert any influence on Dorian Gray because he depends completely on Dorian remaining uncorrupted. Lord Henry scoffs at the idea as nonsense.

Notes

Chapter 1 sets the tone of the novel. It is witty, urbane, and ironic with only brief moments of deep feeling expressed and then wittily submerged. The artist of the novel is Basil Hallward. He seems to be in love with his most recent model, Dorian Gray, whom he considers more than a beautiful man, but an inspiration to a new form in his art. The intensity of his feelings for Dorian Gray and the art that Dorian Gray inspires has to do with his sense of identity. He doesn't want his portrait of Dorian to be shown in public because he feels as if he's put something essential of himself in it. That is the seed of the novel.

The artist paints himself when he seems to be painting another.

Lord Henry is here for ironic relief and the production of aphorisms (short statements of truth) that irony spawns. He voices Oscar Wilde's signature expressions. He says, for instance, "It is only the intellectually lost who ever argue." One of the most often quoted of his aphorisms: "there is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about." He thinks of the luncheon he missed in lingering with Hallward. It had a philanthropic motive, upper class people gathering to discuss ways to share a bit with poor people, the idle people discussing the dignity of labour, the rich people discussing the value of saving money. Basil Hallward also has his own aphoristic rules of life. He never tells people where he's going when he travels as a way to keep mystery in his life. He never introduces people he likes to other people because he feels it would be like giving them away

CHAPTER 2

Summary

When they walk from the studio into the house, they see Dorian Gray at the piano. He tells Basil that he's tired of sitting for his portrait. Then he sees Lord Henry and is embarrassed. Basil tries to get Lord Henry to leave, but Dorian asks him to stay and talk to him while he sits for the portrait. He adds that Basil never talks or listens as he paints. Lord Henry agrees to stay.

They discuss Dorian's work in philanthropy. Lord Henry thinks he's too charming to do that kind of thing. Dorian wonders if Lord Henry will be a bad influence on him as Basil thinks he will be. Lord Henry thinks all influence is corrupting since the person influenced no longer thinks

with her or his own thoughts. He thinks the "aim of life is self-development." He doesn't like philanthropy because it makes people neglect themselves. They clothe poor people and let their own souls starve. Only fear governs society, according to Lord Henry. Terror of God is the secret of religion and terror of society is the basis of morals. If people would live their lives fully, giving form to every feeling and expression to every thought, the world would be enlivened by a fresh impulse of joy. He urges Dorian not to run from his youthful fears.

Dorian becomes upset and asks him to stop talking so he can deal with all that he has said. He stands still for ten minutes. He realizes he is being influenced strongly. He suddenly understands things he has always wondered about. Lord Henry watches him fascinated. He remembers when he was sixteen he read a book and was immensely influenced. He wonders if Dorian Gray is being influenced that way by his random words. Hallward paints furiously. Dorian asks for a break. Basil apologizes for making him stand so long. He is excited about the portrait he's painting, and praises Dorian for standing so perfectly still as to let him get at the effect he had wanted. He says he hasn't heard the conversation, but he hopes Dorian won't listen to anything Lord Henry tells him.

Lord Henry and Dorian go out into the garden while Basil works on the background of the portrait in the studio. Dorian buries his face in a flower. Lord Henry tells him he is doing just as he should since the senses are the only way to cure the soul. They begin to stroll and Dorian Gray clearly looks upset. He's afraid of Lord Henry's influence. Lord Henry urges him to come and sit in the shade to avoid getting a sunburn and ruining his beauty. Dorian wonders why it's important. Lord Henry tells him it matters more than anything else since his youth is his greatest gift and

that it will leave him soon. As they sit down, he implores Dorian to enjoy his youth while he can. He shouldn't give his life to the "ignorant, the common, and the vulgar." He thinks the age needs a new Hedonism (pursuit of pleasure as the greatest goal in life). Dorian Gray could be its visible symbol.

Dorian Gray listens intently. Suddenly, Basil comes out to get them. He says he's ready to resume the portrait. Inside, Lord Henry sits down and watches Basil paint. After only a quarter of an hour, Basil says the painting is complete. Lord Henry proclaims it his finest work and offers to buy it. Basil says it's Dorian's painting. When Dorian looks at it, he realizes he is beautiful as Lord Henry has been telling him. He hadn't taken it seriously before. Now he knows what Lord Henry has meant by youth being so short-lived. He realizes the painting will always be beautiful and he will not. He wishes it were reversed. He accuses Basil of liking his art works better than his friends. Basil is shocked at this change in Dorian. He tells him his friendship means more to him than anything. Dorian is so upset that he says he'll kill himself the moment he realizes he's growing old. Basil turns to Lord Henry and says it's his fault. Then he realizes he is arguing with his two best friends and says he'll destroy the painting to stop the argument. Dorian pulls the knife away from him to stop him. He tells Basil he's in love with the portrait and thinks of it as part of himself.

The butler brings tea and the men sit down to drink it. Lord Henry proposes they go to the theatre that night. Basil refuses the invitation, but Dorian agrees to go. When they get up to go, Basil asks Lord Henry to remember what he asked him in the studio before they went in to see Dorian. Lord Henry shrugs and says he doesn't even trust himself, so Basil shouldn't try to trust him.

Notes

Beauty lives only for a moment. The theme of this chapter is also one of the central themes of the novel. Dorian Gray is introduced as an un-self-conscious beauty. In the course of this chapter, he is made self-aware. He recognizes his beauty when he sees it represented in Basil Hallward's portrait. He is prepared for this recognition by Lord Henry who, in the garden, urges him to spend his youth on youthful pursuits, not on philanthropy, and warns him that his youth is his best gift and that it won't last. All of Basil Hallward's fears of Lord Henry corrupting Dorian Gray seem to have been borne out.

CHAPTER 3

Summary

It is 12:30 in the afternoon and Lord Henry Wotton is walking to his uncle's house. Lord Fermor had in his youth been secretary to his father, an ambassador to Madrid. When his father didn't get the ambassadorship of Paris, he quit in a huff and Lord Fermor quit with him. From then on Lord Fermor had spent his life devoted "to the serious study of the great aristocratic art of doing absolutely nothing." He pays some attention to the coal mines in the Midland counties, "excusing himself from the taint of industry on the ground that the one advantage of having coal was that it enabled a gentleman to afford the decency of burning wood on his own hearth."

Lord Henry is visiting him to find out what he knows about Dorian Gray's parents. He doesn't belong to the Bluebooks (the lists of English nobles), but he is Kelso's grandson and his mother was Lady Margaret Devereux, an extraordinary beauty of her day. She married a penniless man and upset everyone in the process. Her husband died soon afterwards, killed in a duel set up by her father. She was pregnant. In

childbirth, she died, leaving Dorian to grow up with his ruthless grandfather.

Lord Henry leaves from his uncle's and goes to his aunt's house for lunch. He becomes engrossed in his thoughts about Dorian Gray's background. He decides he will dominate Dorian just as Dorian dominates Basil Hallward. When he gets to his aunt's he is happy to see Dorian is at the table. He begins to regale his aunt's guests with his hedonistic philosophy of life. He scorns the motives of philanthropy, which his aunt and most of her guests espouse, and carries on about the joys of the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake. He is pleased to see that Dorian is fascinated by his speech. All of his aunt's guests are, in fact, and he receives several invitations.

When lunch is over, he says he will go to the park for a stroll. Dorian asks to come along and begs him to keep talking. Lord Henry says he is finished talking and now he just wants to be and enjoy. Dorian wants to come anyway. Lord Henry reminds him he has an appointment with Basil Hallward. Dorian doesn't mind breaking it.

Notes

The third element of the triangular relationship among Basil Hallward, Dorian Gray, and Lord Henry is in this chapter fully established. Lord Henry decides to dominate Dorian Gray as Dorian Gray dominates Basil Hallward. The chapter is framed by this realization. It opens with Lord Henry walking to his aunt Agatha's house for lunch at which he knows he will see Dorian Gray. On that walk he decides he will work his strong influence on Dorian. At the lunch, Lord Henry charms everyone present with his Hedonistic philosophy, even those who are staunch supporters of philanthropy. He works his influence on them all with a view toward influencing Dorian Gray. The plan

works. At the end of lunch, Dorian asks to accompany him on his walk through the park. He will stand up Basil Hallward, with whom he has an appointment.

The reader might be puzzled at the scorn that is heaped on charitable work in this chapter. It's useful to look at the history of the nineteenth century to see what Oscar Wilde is responding to in this attack on philanthropy. For many years, England had dominated the world, invading countries like India, Africa, and China (not to mention America and Ireland) and taking over, establishing colonial regimes and enslaving the people of those lands or making subordinates of them. The end of the nineteenth century saw the decline of the British Empire. Colonized people began successfully to revolt and England began pulling out of these other lands.

Colonization had always been done in the pursuit of raw materials, cheap labour, and land, but the outright theft of other lands and peoples went against England's sense of itself as a Christian nation. Therefore, it needed a moral justification for colonizing other lands. That justification came in the form of a sense of moral superiority. The English were doing these colonized people a favour by bringing them the light of a superior civilization, including a superior religion.

At the same time that justification was being built up, people were starving in the streets in England itself. The colonizers realized it was important to help those at home as well as "help" those abroad. Hence, the philanthropic societies of the late nineteenth century. Oscar Wilde was well aware that of the hypocrisy at the heart of much of the philanthropy of his time: workers were ruthlessly exploited, making possible the gourmet dinners of the

philanthropic dinners put on for their benefit. The poor remained poor and the rich didn't feel quite as guilty.

CHAPTER 4

Summary

One month later, Dorian Gray is waiting at Lord Henry's for him to come home. He is impatient since he's been waiting for a while. Lord Henry's wife comes in and they chat for a while about music. She notices that he parrots her husband's views, as many people in her social circle do. Lord Henry arrives and his wife leaves. After Henry advises him not to marry, Dorian says he is too much in love to consider marriage. He is in love with an actress. He thinks of her as a genius. Lord Henry explains that women can't be geniuses because they are made only for decoration. He adds that there are only two kinds of women, the plain and the coloured. Plain women are useful for respectability and coloured women are useful for charming men. Dorian claims to be terrified by Lord Henry's views. Lord Henry pushes him to tell more about the actress.

Dorian says that for days after he met Lord Henry, he felt alive with excitement and wanted to explore the world intensely. He walked the streets staring into the faces of people to see into their lives. He decided one night to go out and have an adventure. He was walking along the street and was hailed to come into a second-rate theatre. Despite his repulsion for the caller, he went in and bought a box seat. The play was Romeo and Juliet. He hated all of it until Juliet came on stage and then he was entranced. Since that night he has gone every night to the theatre. He met her on the third night and found her exquisitely innocent, knowing nothing at all of life but art.

He wants Lord Henry and Basil Hallward to come to see her the next evening. His plan is to pay her manager off and

set her up in a good theatre. Lord Henry invites him to dinner that evening, but he refuses, saying he has to see her perform Imogen. He leaves.

Lord Henry thinks about what he's learned. He thinks of Dorian Gray as a good study. He likes to study people like a scientist studies the results of an experiment. He thinks of Dorian as being his own creation. He had introduced his ideas to Dorian and made him a self-conscious man.

Literature often did that to people, but a strong personality like his could do it as well. As he thinks over his thoughts, he's interrupted by his servant reminding him it's time to dress for dinner. As he arrives home that night, he finds a telegram on the hall table announcing that Dorian Gray was to marry Sibyl Vane.

Notes

A month later, the relationship between Dorian and Lord Henry has developed just as Lord Henry wished. Dorian has avoided Basil Hallward and has become a protégé (follower) of Lord Henry, quoting him in everything and looking to him for guidance on all his decisions. Lord Henry is a spectator. He is setting up Dorian Gray with what he thinks of as premature knowledge, so that Dorian will live his youth in the full knowledge that it is fading daily. He recognizes that Dorian will burn out and he doesn't seem at all affected by this. He isn't jealous of Dorian's new passion for Sibyl Vane. It adds to his pleasure as a spectator. He regards himself as something of a social scientist.

The bigotry of the late Victorians is brought out in this chapter, expressed by Lord Henry about women's inferior status as human beings and by Dorian Gray about the repulsiveness of Jews.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

Sibyl Vane is exclaiming to her mother about how much in love she is with her Prince Charming, as she calls Dorian Gray, not knowing yet what his name is. Her mother warns her that she must keep her focus on acting since they owe Mr. Isaacs fifty pounds. Sibyl is impatient with her mother and tries to get her mother to remember when she was young and in love with Sibyl's father. Her mother looks pained and Sibyl apologizes for bringing up a painful subject.

Her brother Jim comes in. It's his last night on shore. He is booked as a sailor on a ship headed for Australia. When Sibyl leaves the room, he asks his mother about the gentleman he has heard has been coming to the theatre to see Sibyl every night. His mother tells him the man is wealthy and it might be a good thing for Sibyl. Jim is not convinced.

When Sibyl comes back, she and Jim go for a walk in the park together. While there, Jim questions her about the man who has been calling on her. She only says how much she is in love with the man and how she is sure he's trustworthy. Jim says that if he comes back and finds that the man has hurt her, he'll kill the man. They walk on and return home after a while.

Alone again with his mother, Jim asks her if she was married to his father. She has been feeling like he has been on the verge of asking this question for weeks. She is relieved to get it out in the open. She says she was never married to the man. He was married, but loved her very much. He would have provided for her and her family, but died. Jim tells her to keep the gentleman away from Sibyl. She tells him that he need not worry because Sibyl has a mother, but she herself didn't. He is touched by her

sincerity and they embrace. Soon, though, he has to get ready to leave for his ship. Mrs. Vane thinks about his threat to kill Sibyl's Prince Charming, but thinks nothing will ever come of it.

Notes

This chapter takes the reader to an entirely different social scene. The world of the Vanes. It serves to humanize Sibyl for the reader by showing her in her roles as daughter and sister. She is innocent as Dorian told Lord Henry she was. She knows nothing of the position which her social class puts her in relation to Dorian Gray. Her brother and her mother do know. For her brother, she will be used and discarded by a rich man. For her mother, she might be lucky enough to get money out of the rich man before he gets tired of her. The chapter closes with the revelation that James and Sibyl's father was an aristocrat himself and that their parents never married.

CHAPTER 6

Summary

Lord Henry greets Basil Hallward as he arrives at the Bristol for dinner. He tells him the news about Dorian's engagement to Sibyl Vane. Basil is surprised and can't believe it's true. He can't believe Dorian would do something as foolish as to marry an actress in light of his "birth, and position, and wealth." Lord Henry acts nonchalant about the news and Basil is quite worried.

Finally Dorian arrives elated to tell the others of his news. Over dinner he tells them that he proposed to Sibyl on the previous evening after watching her as Rosalind. He kissed her and told her he loved her and she told him she wasn't good enough to be his wife. They are keeping their engagement a secret from her mother. Dorian tells Lord

Henry that she will save him from Lord Henry's "wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories" about life, love, and pleasure. Lord Henry says they aren't his theories but Nature's. Basil Hallward begins to think the engagement will be a good thing for Dorian after all.

As they leave, Lord Henry tells Hallward to take a separate conveyance to the theatre since his is large enough only for him and Dorian. As he rides in the carriage behind Lord Henry's, Basil Hallward feels a strong sense of loss, as if Dorian Gray will never again be to him all that he had been in the past. He realizes that life has come between them. He feels, when he arrives at the theatre, that he has grown years older.

Notes

This chapter plays a structural role in the plot, bringing the three men back together before their parting again to go their own ways. Basil seems out of the loop of Dorian's affections almost completely. This status is underlined as he is told to take his own conveyance to the theatre alone while Dorian rides with Lord Henry. The engagement to Sibyl seems to be Dorian's last hope of regaining the innocence of youth which he has lost to Lord Henry's theories.

CHAPTER 7

Summary

At the theatre, Dorian is surprised to find it crowded with people. He takes Lord Henry and Basil Hallward to his usual box and they discuss the crowd below. He tells them that Sibyl's art is so fine that she spiritualizes the common people, transforming their ugliness into beauty. Basil tells him he now agrees that the marriage will be a good thing for him.

When Sibyl appears on the stage, both men are entranced by her beauty, but when she starts to act, they are embarrassed for Dorian. Dorian doesn't speak, but he is horribly disappointed. Sibyl's acting is horribly wooden. The people below hiss and catcall to the stage making fun of her poor acting. After the second act, Lord Henry and Basil Hallward leave. Dorian tells them he will stay out the performance. He hides his face in anguish.

When the play is over, he goes to the green room to find Sibyl. She's waiting for him. She looks radiantly happy. She tells him she acted so badly because she loves him. She says that before she loved him, the stage was real and alive for her. she never noticed the tawdriness of the stage set or the ugliness of her fellow actors. She had put everything into it because it was all of her life. When she realized tonight that she was acting horribly, she was struck by the realization that it was because she had found a new reality.

When she finishes, Dorian tells her she disappointed him and embarrassed him horribly. He says she killed his love. Sibyl is shocked and horrified by his words. She begs him to take them back, but he goes on. he tells her he loved her for her art and now she has nothing of her art and so he doesn't love her any more. Now she is nothing but "a third-rate actress with a pretty face." Sibyl throws herself at his feet begging him to be kind to her, but he walks away scornfully, thinking how ridiculous she looks.

He walks through the poverty-stricken streets of London for a long time. Then he gets back to his room, recently redecorated since he learned to appreciate luxury from Lord Henry. He is undressing when he happens to glance at the portrait. He is taken aback to notice a change in it. Lines around the mouth have appeared. The face has a cruel

expression. He turns on the lights and looks at it more carefully, but nothing changes the look of cruelty on the face. He remembers what he said in Basil's studio the day he saw it for the first time. He had wished to change places with it, staying young forever while it aged with time and experience. He knows that the sin he committed against Sibyl that evening had caused him to age. He realizes that the portrait will always be an emblem of his conscience from now on. He dresses quickly and hurries toward Sibyl's house. As he hurries to her, a faint feeling of his love for her returns to him.

Notes

The climax of the novel occurs in this chapter. Dorian takes his friends to see Sibyl's fine acting and is embarrassed by her dreadful acting. Even when she tells him she has lost her talent for acting because she loves him and thinks only of him, he doesn't soften toward her. He lets her sob and he leaves her coldly. The consequences of this sin of the heart is that Dorian Gray ages. However, it is not he that ages, but his portrait. Here, Oscar Wilde plays with the notion that art imitates life. When Dorian first saw his portrait, he wished for its timelessness. He wished he could change places with art, living the timelessness of art, and letting the portrait age and wither. In this climax chapter, that reversal seems to happen. Whether the reader is supposed to think of this as Dorian's guilty conscience projected onto the portrait or a depiction of magic is unclear at this point. The reader has to wait to find out if any other character besides Dorian will see the change in the portrait.

CHAPTER 8

Summary

Dorian doesn't wake up the next day until well past noon. He gets up and looks through his mail, finding and laying aside a piece of mail hand delivered from Lord Henry that morning. He gets up and eats a light breakfast all the while feeling as if he has been part of some kind of tragedy recently. As he sits at breakfast, he sees the screen that he hurriedly put in front of his portrait the night before and realizes it was not a dream but is true. He tells his servant that he is not accepting callers and he goes to the portrait and removes the screen. He hesitates to do so, but decides he must. When he looks at the portrait he sees that it was not an illusion. The change remains. He looks at it with horror.

He realizes how unjust and cruel he had been to Sibyl the night before. He thinks the portrait will serve him as a conscience throughout life. He remains looking at the portrait for hours more. Finally, he gets paper and begins to write a passionate letter to Sibyl apologizing for what he had said to her and vowing eternal love. He reproaches himself in the letter so voluptuously that he feels absolved, like a person who has been to confession. He lays the letter to the side and then he hears Lord Henry calling to him through the door.

Lord Henry begs to be let in and Dorian decides he will let him. Lord Henry apologizes for all that has happened. Dorian tells him he was brutal with Sibyl the night before after the performance, but now he feels good and is not even sorry that it happened. Lord Henry says he had worried that Dorian would be tearing his hair in remorse. Dorian says he is quite happy now that he knows what conscience is. He asks Henry not to sneer at it, and says

that he wants to be good. He adds that he can't stand the idea "of [his] soul being hideous." Lord Henry exclaims about this "charming artistic basis for ethics." Dorian says he will marry Sibyl. It is then when Lord Henry realizes Dorian didn't read his letter. In it, he had told Dorian that Sibyl committed suicide the night before by swallowing some kind of poison.

Lord Henry begins advising Dorian about how to avoid the scandal that such a story would attach to his name. He asks if anyone but Sibyl knew his name and if anyone saw him go behind stage to speak to her after her performance. Lord Henry urges Dorian not to let the episode get on his nerves. He invites him out to dinner and to the opera with his sister and some smart women. Dorian exclaims that he has murdered Sibyl Vane. He marvels that life is still as beautiful with birds singing and roses blooming. He adds that if he had read it in a book, he would have thought it movingly tragic. He recounts the exchange between he and Sibyl the night before, telling Henry of how cruel he was in casting her aside. He ends by condemning her as selfish for killing herself.

Lord Henry tells him that a woman can only reform a man by boring him so completely that he loses all interest in life. He adds that if Dorian would have married Sibyl, he would have been miserable because he wouldn't have loved her. Dorian concedes that it probably would have been. He is amazed that he doesn't feel the tragedy more than he does. He wonders if he's heartless. He thinks of it as a wonderful ending to a wonderful play, a "tragedy in which [he] took a great part, but by which [he] has not been wounded." Lord Henry likes to play on Dorian's unconscious egotism, so he exclaims over the interest of Dorian's sense of it. Dorian thinks he will now have to go into mourning, but Lord Henry tells him it is unnecessary since there is

already enough mourning in life. He adds that Sibyl must have been different from all other women who are so trivial and predictable. When Dorian expresses remorse at having been cruel to her, Lord Henry assures him that women appreciate cruelty more than anything else. They are primitive. Men have emancipated them, but they have remained slaves and they love being dominated. He reminds Dorian that Sibyl was a great actress and that he can think of her suicide as an ending to a Jacobean tragedy.

Dorian finally thanks Lord Henry for explaining himself to him. He revels in what a marvellous experience it has all been for him. He wonders if life will give him anything more marvellous and Henry assures him that it will. He wonders what will happen when he gets old and ugly. Henry tells him that then he will have to fight for his victories. Dorian decides he will join Lord Henry at the opera after all. Lord Henry departs.

When he is alone, Dorian looks again at the portrait. He sees that it hasn't changed since he last saw it. He thinks of poor Sibyl and revels in the romance of it all. He decides that he will embrace life and the portrait will bear the burden of his shame. He is sad to think of how the beautiful portrait will be marred. He thinks for a minute about praying that the strange sympathy that exists between him and the picture would disappear, but he realizes that no one would give up the chance at being forever young. Then he decides that he will get pleasure out of watching the changes. The portrait would be a magic mirror for him, revealing his soul to him. He pushes the screen back in front of it and dresses for the opera.

Notes

Chapter 8 reveals that Dorian will choose to stifle his moral sense of responsibility in favour of pleasure. Wilde chooses to have Lord Henry go to Dorian the next morning when the news of Sibyl Vane's death has been announced in the papers, rather than Basil Hallward. Lord Henry convinces Dorian that what has happened is not a tragedy at all, but a farce. He accomplishes this persuasive aim by the use of misogynist aphorisms (anti-woman statements). He decides by the end of the chapter that the strange magic of the portrait will be good for him. He will be able to ignore it as a conscience while enjoying his everlasting youth.

CHAPTER 9

Summary

The next morning after the opera, Dorian is visited by Basil Hallward. Basil assumes that he really didn't go to the opera the night before and is shocked to find out that he did so after all. He can't believe that Dorian is so unfeeling when Sibyl isn't even buried yet. Dorian tells him he doesn't want to hear about it because it's in the past. He thinks if he is a strong man, he should be able to dominate his feelings and end them when he wants to end them. Basil blames Dorian's lack of feeling on Lord Henry. Dorian tells Basil that it was he who taught him to be vain. Basil is shocked to find out that Sibyl killed herself. Dorian tells him it is fitting that she did, more artistic. "Her death has all the pathetic uselessness of martyrdom, all its wasted beauty." He tells Basil that he has suffered, that he was suffering terribly yesterday around five or six o'clock. He says he no longer has these emotions and it would be nothing but empty sentimentality to try to repeat the feelings that have passed. He asks

Basil to help him see the art in it rather than to try to make him feel guilt over it. He begs Basil not to leave him but to stop quarrelling with him.

Basil is moved by Dorian's speech and decides Dorian might be passing through a momentary lapse of feeling and should be berated for it. He agrees not to speak to Dorian again of Sibyl. Dorian asks him, however, to draw him a picture of Sibyl. Basil agrees to do so and urges Dorian to come sit for him again, saying he can't get on with his painting without Dorian. Dorian starts and says he will never be able to sit for Basil again. Basil is shocked and then looks around to see if he can see the portrait he gave Dorian. He is annoyed to find that it is hidden behind a screen and goes toward it. Dorian jumps up and stands between him and the screen keeping him away from it. He makes Basil promise never to look at it again and not to ever ask why. Basil is surprised but agrees to do so, saying that Dorian's friendship is more important to him than anything. He tells Dorian he plans to show the portrait in an exhibit. Dorian remembers the afternoon in Basil's studio when Basil said he would never show it. He remembers Lord Henry telling him to ask Basil one day about why. He does so now.

Basil explains to him reluctantly that he was fascinated with him and dominated by his personality from the first moment he saw him. He painted every kind of portrait of him, putting him in ancient Greek garb and in Renaissance garb. One day he decided to paint Dorian as he was, and as he painted each stroke, he became fascinated with the idea that the portrait was revealing his idolatry of Dorian. He swore then that he would never exhibit it. However, after he gave the portrait to Dorian, the feeling passed away from him. He realized that "art conceals the artist far more

completely than if ever reveals him." That was when he decided to exhibit the portrait as a centrepiece.

Dorian takes a breath. He realizes he is safe for the present since Basil clearly doesn't know the truth about the painting. Basil thinks Dorian sees what he saw in the portrait, his idolatry of Dorian. He tries to get Dorian to let him see the portrait, but Dorian still refuses. Basil leaves and Dorian thinks over what he had said to him. He calls his servant, realizing that the portrait has to be put away where he won't run the risk of guests trying to see it.

Notes

Wilde structures the novel like a play. First, the three men go to the play together and witness the destruction of Sibyl Vane's acting talent. Next, Dorian scorns her and she kills herself. The next morning, one of his admirers comes to him and convinces him to feel no guilt. The next morning after that, his other admirer comes to him and is shocked that he feels no guilt, but is led to forgive him for it. Wilde continues to play the triangular relationship with symmetrical precision.

The portrait is here taken to another level. Dorian hides it desperately, sure that anyone who looks at it will see his shame. Basil Hallway, who himself once swore that he would never exhibit the painting for fear that everyone would be able to see his idolatry of Dorian Gray, now feels that art is after all abstract, nothing but form and colour.

CHAPTER 10

Summary

Dorian is in his drawing room when his manservant Victor enters. He scrutinizes Victor to see if Victor has looked behind the curtain at the portrait. He watches Victor in the mirror to see if he can see anything but can see nothing but "a placid mask of servility." He sends for the housekeeper. When she arrives, he asks her to give him the key to the old schoolroom. She wants to clean it up before he goes up to it, but he insists he doesn't need it cleaned. She mentions that it hasn't been used for five years, since his grandfather died. Dorian winces at the mention of his grandfather, who was always mean to him.

When she leaves, he takes the cover off the couch and throws it over the portrait. He thinks of Basil and wonders if he shouldn't have appealed to Basil to help him resist Lord Henry's influence. He knows Basil loves him with more than just a physical love. However, he gives up on the thought of asking Basil for help, deciding that the future is inevitable and the past can always be annihilated.

He receives the men from the frame maker's shop. The frame maker himself, Mr. Hubbard, has come. He asks the two men to help him carry the portrait upstairs. He sends Victor away to Lord Henry's so as to get him out of the way in order to hide the operation from him. They get the portrait upstairs with some trouble and he has them lean it against the wall and leave it. He hates the idea of leaving it in the dreaded room where he was always sent to be away from his grandfather who didn't like to see him, but it's the only room not in use in the house. He wonders what the picture will look like over time. He thinks with repulsion of how its image will show the signs of old age.

When he gets back downstairs to the library, Victor has returned from Lord Henry's. Lord Henry had sent him a book and the paper. The paper is marked with a red pen on a passage about the inquest into Sibyl Vane's death. He throws it away annoyed at Lord Henry for sending it and fearing that Victor saw the red mark. Then he picks up the book Lord Henry sent him. It is a fascinating book from the first page. It is a plot-less novel, a psychological study of a young Parisian who spends all his life trying to realize all the passions and modes of thought of previous ages. It is written in the style of the French Symbolists². He finds it to be a poisonous book. He can't put it down. It makes him late to dinner with Lord Henry.

Notes

Here, Dorian Gray sinks into paranoia in regard to the portrait. He begins to suspect his manservant Victor of sneaking around the portrait. He wonders if Victor will even extort money from him for his secret knowledge of the portrait.

At the end of the chapter, Lord Henry's influence finds another inroad. He sends Dorian a book by a French Symbolist writer. Dorian finds it poisonous like Lord Henry's ideas, but he is as fascinated with it as he is with Lord Henry. At one point early in the chapter, Dorian wonders if he shouldn't have confessed to Basil about the

² Symbolist Movement: A group of late 19th-century French writers, including Arthur Rimbaud and Stéphane Mallarmé, who favoured dreams, visions, and the associative powers of the imagination in their poetry. They rejected their predecessors' tendency toward naturalism and realism, believing that the purpose of art was not to represent reality but to access greater truths by the "systematic derangement of the senses," as Rimbaud described it. The translated works of Edgar Allan Poe influenced the French Symbolists.

portrait and begged him to save him from the influence of Lord Henry. By the end of the chapter, it is clear that Dorian is far from Basil Hallward's influence.

CHAPTER 11

Summary

For years afterwards, Dorian Gray continues to feel the influence of the book Lord Henry gave him. He gets more copies of the book from Paris and has them bound in different colours. He thinks of the book as containing the story of his life. He feels himself lucky to be different from the novel's hero in respect to aging. While the novel's hero bemoans his loss of youthful beauty, Dorian Gray never loses his youth. He reads the passages over and over again revelling in his difference from the hero in this respect.

People in his social circle often hear dreadful things about Dorian Gray, but when they look at him and see his fresh, young looks, they dismiss the rumours as impossible. Dorian is often gone from home for long periods of time and never tells anyone where he has gone. He always returns home and goes straight upstairs to see the portrait's changes. He grows more and more in love with his own beauty. He spends much time in a sordid tavern near the docks and thinks with pity of the degradation he has brought on his soul. Most of the time, though, he doesn't think of his soul. He has "mad hungers that [grow] more ravenous as he [feeds] them."

He entertains once or twice a month with such lavish fare and such exquisite furnishings that he becomes the most popular of London's young men. He is admired by all the men who see him as a type of man who combines the real

culture of a scholar with the grace of a citizen of the world. He lives his life as if it were an art work. His style of dressing sets the standard of all the fashionable shops.

He worships the senses in many different forms. He lives the new Hedonism, that Lord Henry has told him of. He enjoys the service of the Catholic Church for its ritual and its pathos. Yet, he never embraces any creed or system of thought because he refuses to arrest his intellectual development. He studies new perfumes and experiments with them endlessly. He devotes himself for long periods to the study of all kinds of musical forms from all over the world. He even studies the stories written about the music, the stories of magic and death. He takes of the study of jewels for a while, collecting rare and precious jewels from all over the world for the pleasure of looking at them and feeling them. He collects stories about jewels as part of animals and stories of jewels which caused death and destruction. For a time, he studies embroideries of all sorts and the stories that attach to them. He collects embroideries and tapestries from all over the world. He especially loves ecclesiastical vestments. The beautiful things he collects are part of his methods of forgetfulness. He wants to escape the fear that sometimes seems to overwhelm him.

After some years, he becomes unable to leave London for any purpose because he cannot bear to be away from the portrait for any length of time. Often when he's out with friends, he breaks off and rushes home to see if the portrait is still where it should be and to ensure that no one has tampered with the door. He develops a desperate fear that someone might steal the portrait and then everyone would know about him.

Most people are fascinated with Dorian Gray, but some people are distrustful of him. He is almost banned from two clubs. He is ostracized by some prominent men. People begin to tell curious stories about him hanging around with foreign sailors in run down pubs and interacting with thieves and coiners. People talk about his strange absences. He never takes notice of these looks people give him. Most of them see his boyish smile and can't imagine that the stories could be true. Yet the stories remain. Sometime people notice women, who at one time adored him, blanch when he walks in a room in shame or horror. To most people, the stories only increase his mysterious charm. According to Lord Henry, society doesn't care about morality in its aristocratic members, only good manners.

Dorian Gray can't imagine why people reduce human beings to a single, "simple, permanent, reliable essence." For Dorian, people enjoy myriad lives and sensations; they change radically from time to time. Dorian likes to look at the portrait gallery of his country house. He wonders about his ancestors and how their blood co-mingled with his own. He looks at Lady Elizabeth Devereaux in her extraordinary beauty and realizes her legacy to him is in his beauty and in his love of all that is beautiful.

He also thinks of his ancestors as being in literature he has read. These characters have influenced him more even than his family members have. The hero of the central novel of his life has certainly been his greatest influence. He also loves to think of all the evil heroes about whom he has read: Caligula, Filippo, Due of Milan, Pietro Barbi, the Borgia, and many more. He feels a "horrible fascination" with all of them. He knows he has been poisoned by the French Symbolist book. He thinks of evil as nothing more than a mode of experiencing the beautiful.

Notes

Chapter 11 is a sort of "time passes" chapter. It covers several years in Dorian Gray's life, summarizing his series of aesthetic interests from fine embroidery to the collection of exquisite jewels, and hinting at his debaucheries. The final sentence of the chapter encapsulates the ethos of Dorian Gray's pursuit of the beautiful: "There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful." It seems that in dismissing the deal of Sibyl Vane as nothing more than a playing out of the aesthetic (the beautiful) in life, as nothing to do with his own culpability, he has turned his back completely on the idea of goodness. Dorian's pursuit of the beautiful in life becomes a pursuit of the aesthetics of evil.

Yet, Dorian remains tied to the portrait to the extent that he can't leave London any more even for traveling. The portrait image grows old and ugly and he remains beautiful and innocent-looking. His greatest fear becomes the possibility that the portrait will be stolen. Dorian seems to believe that it is only the portrait's degradation that allows him carte blanche to continue cutting himself off from moral constraints.

CHAPTER 12

Summary

It is the ninth of November, not long before Dorian Gray will turn 38 years old. He is walking home late one night when he sees Basil Hallward. He becomes suddenly afraid to have contact with his old friend whom he hasn't seen in many months, but Basil sees him and stops him. Basil says he's been waiting for him all evening and has just given up.

He insists on coming back inside with Dorian because he says he has something important to tell him.

Inside, Dorian acts as though he's bored and wants to go to bed. Basil insists on talking. He says he is going to Paris in one hour's time and will be taking a studio there for six months. He tells Dorian that he is always having to defend Dorian's name wherever he goes. He thinks Dorian must be a good person because he looks so beautiful. He says he knows sin tells on people's faces after a while, so he has a great deal of trouble believing the stories. However, the evidence has piled up and is quite compelling. He names several young men who have lost very promising reputations after being extremely close to Dorian. He names several young women, including Lord Henry's sister, who have lost their reputations. Lady Gwendolyn, Lord Henry's sister, has suffered such a fall that she is not even allowed to see her own children any more. He mentions the stories of people who have seen Dorian spending time in "dreadful houses" and in "the foulest dens in London." He mentions the stories of what happens at Dorian's country house.

Basil urges Dorian to have a good influence on people instead of a bad one. He tells Dorian that it is said that he corrupts everyone with whom he becomes intimate. He has even seen a letter shown to him by Lord Gloucester, one of his best friends that his wife wrote to him on her death bed. It implicated Dorian Gray in her debasement. Basil sums up by saying that he doesn't know that he even knows Dorian any more. He says that he can't say without seeing Dorian's soul and only God can do that.

At his last words, Dorian goes white with fear and repeats the words "To see my soul!" He laughs bitterly and tells Basil that he will see his soul that very night. He will let

Basil look on the face of corruption. Basil is shocked and thinks Dorian is being blasphemous. He stands over Basil and tells him to finish what he has to say to him. Basil says Dorian must give him a satisfactory answer to all the stories about him that very night. Dorian just tells him to come upstairs with him. He says he has written a dairy of his life from day to day and that it never leaves the room in which it is written.

Notes

A possible turning point occurs in this chapter in which Dorian meets Basil Hallward after many years. He is now 38 years old and, as Basil tells him, has caused so many scandals and ruined so many young men and women's reputations that Basil has begun to question his integrity. Basil, the artist, is sure that a man cannot sin as Dorian is reputed to have sinned and remain beautiful. For Basil, morality is visible on the surface of the skin. Beautiful people must be pure people and ugly people must be immoral. Basil's view of beauty and goodness accords with the assumptions behind the story of the novel. Here, Dorian will show him his portrait. The reader must wonder if Basil will be able to see the ugliness that Dorian sees in the portrait or if the changes in the portrait have only been a figment of Dorian's guilt-ridden imagination.

CHAPTER 13

Summary

The two men climb the stairs and Dorian lets Basil in the room upstairs. He lights the lamp and asks Basil again if he really wants an answer to his question. Basil does, so Dorian pulls the curtain from the portrait and shines the light on it, saying he is delighted to show Basil because Basil is the only man in the world entitled to know all about him. Basil cries out in horror when he sees the

portrait. He stares at it for a long time in amazement, not believing at first that it is the same portrait he painted all those years ago.

Dorian is leaning against the mantle shelf watching Basil's reaction with something like triumph expressed on his face. Dorian tells him that years ago when he was a boy, Basil had painted this portrait of him, teaching him to be vain of his looks. Then he had introduced him to Lord Henry who explained to him the wonder of youth. The portrait had completed the lesson in the beauty of youth. When he had seen it in the first moment, he had prayed that he should change places with it, never changing and aging, but letting the picture do so. Basil remembers the prayer. He thinks, however, that it must be impossible. He tries to find some logical explanation for the degradation of the beauty of the portrait. He thinks perhaps the room was damp or that he had used some kind of poor quality paints. He says there was nothing evil or shameful in his ideal that he painted that day. This, instead, is the face of a satyr. Dorian says it is the face of his soul.

Basil begins to believe it is true and then realizes what it means. It means that all that is said of Dorian is true and that his reputation isn't even as bad as he is. He can hear Dorian sobbing as he begins to pray. He asks Dorian to join him in prayer. He says Dorian worshipped himself too much and now they are both punished. Dorian tells him it's too late. Basil insists that it isn't. He begins to pray. Dorian looks at the picture and suddenly feels an overwhelming hatred for Basil. He sees a knife lying nearby and picks it up. He walks over and stands behind Basil and stabs him in the neck several times. When he is finished, he hears nothing but blood dripping. He goes to the door and locks it. He is horrified to look at Basil's body.

He goes to the window and sees a policeman outside and an old woman. He tries not to think about what has happen. He picks up the lamp because he knows the servant will miss it from downstairs, and he goes downstairs, locking the door behind him. Everything is quiet in the house. He remembers that Basil was supposed to leave for Paris that night and had even sent his heavy things ahead of him. No one had seen him come back inside after he left his house earlier that evening. No one will begin to wonder about him for months to come. He puts Basil's bag and coat in a hiding place, the same place where he hides his disguises. Then he puts on his own coat, goes outside, and knocks on the door. His servant opens the door and he asks him what time it is. Then he tells him to wake him at nine the next morning. The servant tells him Mr. Hallward came by and Dorian exclaims over having missed him.

Inside his library again, he picks up the Blue Book and finds the name of Alan Campbell. He says this is the man he wants.

Notes

The subject of the portrait kills the artist. Here, the fateful triangle among the three main characters of the novel is broken when Dorian Gray murders Basil Hallward. Basil, as much as the portrait, has served as Dorian's conscience. Dorian has avoided Basil over the years of his explorations of the aesthetics of evil. Here, Basil finally comes to him to confront him. The reader finds out all the specific charges against Dorian. He has ruined the reputations of young men and women, some of whom have even committed suicide. He is ostracized by all the best families of London.

Dorian seems relieved to be able to share the horror of the portrait with Basil, but when Basil sees it, recognizing

what it means about Dorian, he wants Dorian to change his ways and repent. Dorian cannot face this possibility and kills Basil instead.

CHAPTER 14

Summary

Dorian Gray wakes with a smile the next morning at nine o'clock, feeling well rested. He gradually recalls the events of the night before. He feels sorry for himself and loathing for Basil. Then he realizes that Basil's body remains upstairs in his room. He fears that if he thinks too much on what happened he will go crazy. He gets up and spends a long time choosing his outfit and his rings. He has a leisurely breakfast and reads his mail, throwing away a letter from a lover, remembering one of Lord Henry's misogynist sayings about women, that they have a awful memory. He writes two letters and sends one to Mr. Alan Campbell by his manservant.

He smokes a cigarette and sketches for a while, but every face he sketches looks like Basil's. He lies down on the sofa and tries to read Gautier's *Emaux et Camees*. He enjoys the images in the book of the beauties of Venice. It reminds him of his visit there. He was with Basil and he remembers Basil's joy over the work of Tintoret. He tries to read again and then begins to worry that Alan Campbell might be out of town.

Five years ago, he and Alan had been great friends. Now they never speak. Alan always leaves the room when Dorian comes in at any party they both attend. Alan is a scientist, but when he and Dorian were together, he was also in love with music. They were inseparable for a year and a half. Then they quarrelled and have not spoken since. Alan has

given up music in favour of science. Dorian becomes hysterical with anxiety as he waits. Finally, the servant announces that Mr. Campbell has arrived.

Dorian loses all anxiety and plays the part of the gracious host. Alan Campbell is stiff with disapproval and hatred. He wants to know why Dorian has called him. Dorian tells him there is a dead body in a room at the top of the stairs and he needs Campbell to dispose of it. Alan tells him to stop talking. He says he will not turn him in, but that he will not have anything to do with it. Dorian tells him he wants him to do it because of Alan's knowledge of chemistry. He wants him to change the body into a handful of ashes. He at first says it was a suicide, but then admits that he murdered the man upstairs. Dorian begs him to help and Alan refuses to listen. Finally, when he is sure he can't convince him, Dorian writes something down and tells Alan to read it. Alan is shocked at what he reads. Dorian says if Alan won't help him, he will send a letter to someone and ruin Alan's reputation. He tells Alan he is terribly sorry for him for what he will have to do, but tries to console him by saying he does this sort of thing all the time for the pursuit of science so it shouldn't be too horrible for him.

Finally, Alan says he needs to get things from home. Dorian won't let him leave. He makes him write down what he needs and sends his servant to get the equipment. Then when it arrives, he sends his servant away for the day to get some orchids in another city. He and Alan carry the equipment upstairs. At the door, Dorian realizes he has left the portrait uncovered for the first time in years. He rushes over to it to cover it. He sees that on the hands, there is a red stain. He covers it and then leaves the room to Alan without looking at the body.

Long after seven o'clock that evening, Alan comes downstairs and says it is finished. He says he never wants to see Dorian again. Dorian thanks him sincerely, saying he saved him from ruin. When Campbell leaves, Dorian rushes upstairs and sees there is no trace of the body.

Notes

The psychology of Dorian Gray is perhaps best revealed in this chapter. He wakes up the morning after murdering one of his best friends feeling calm and pleasant. When he remembers what he did, he dreads seeing the body again. He doesn't feel remorse. He sends for what was probably an ex-lover and forces him on on the threat of revealing their past relationship, to dispose of the body so that no trace shows. He has no fear of telling Campbell of what he did because he knows he has power over the man. When he returns to the upstairs room to find no trace of Basil Hallward's body remaining, he is relieved. It seems that the portrait takes on not only the look of a sinful man, but also the guilt of one. Dorian is perfectly ruthless.

CHAPTER 15

Summary

That evening, Dorian Gray goes to a dinner party at Lady Narborough's house. He looks perfectly dressed and perfectly at ease. The party is small and the guests boring. Dorian is relieved when he hears that Lord Henry will be coming. When Lord Henry arrives late, he carries on in his usual way with one aphorism after another much to Lady Narborough's amusement. Dorian, for his part, cannot even eat. He is noticeably distracted. Lady Narborough asks him several times what is the matter and when the men are left alone after dinner for their cigars, Lord Henry questions him. Lord Henry asks him where he went the night before since he left the party early. Dorian first says he went

home, then he says he went to the club, then he corrects himself again and says he walked around until half past two when he got home and had to ask his servant to let him in.

The two men chat a little longer. Dorian is planning a party at his country house the next weekend and they discuss the guest list. Dorian is interested in a Duchess and has invited her and her husband. Lord Henry warns him against her, saying she is too smart, and that women are best when they are weak and ignorant.

Dorian finally says he must leave. He goes home and opens the hiding place where he has put Basil Hallward's coat and bag. He puts them on the fire and waits until they are completely burned up. Then he sits and looks at a cabinet for a long time fascinated. Finally, he gets up and gets a Chinese box out of it. He opens it and finds inside a green paste with a heavy odor. He hesitates with a strange smile and then puts the box back and closes the cabinet. He gets dressed and leaves the house. He hails a cab telling the man the address. The cab driver almost refuses since it is too far, but Dorian promises him a huge tip and they drive off toward the river.

Notes

Dorian seems, after all, not to have left his conscience upstairs in the room. He is nervous and distracted unable to focus on anything but what has happened. He tries to enjoy himself at the dinner party, but he can't even eat. If he has gone to the dinner party to allay future suspicion, he has ended up doing just the opposite.

CHAPTER 16

Summary

It is raining and cold as Dorian rides to the outskirts of the city. The ride is extraordinarily long. He hears over and over again Lord Henry's saying that one can cure the soul by means of the sense and can cure the sense by means of the soul. He heard Lord Henry say that on the first day he met him. He has repeated it often over the years. Tonight it is all he can think of to calm himself through the long drive. The roads get worse and worse. People chase the cab and have to be whipped away by the driver. Finally, they arrive and Dorian gets out.

He goes into a building and passes through several dirty and poor rooms. He passes through a bar where a sailor is slumped over a table and two prostitutes are jeering at a crazy old man. He smells the odour of opium and feels relieved. However, when he goes into the opium den, he is unhappily surprised to see Adrian Darlington. Adrian tells him he has no friends anymore and doesn't need them as long as he has opium. Dorian doesn't want to be in the same place with the young man about whom Basil Hallway had just spoken the night before. He buys Adrian a drink and is bothered by a prostitute. He tells her not to speak to him and gives her money to leave him alone. He tells Adrian to call on him if he ever needs anything and then he leaves. As he is leaving, one of the prostitutes calls out to him "There goes the devil's bargain." He curses her and she says, "Prince Charming is what you like to be called, ain't it?" As she says this the sailor who has been asleep jumps up and runs after Dorian.

Outside, Dorian is wishing he hadn't run into Adrian Singleton and cursing fate. He hurries along when he is suddenly grabbed from behind and shoved against the wall.

A gun is shoved into his face. Dorian calls out and the man tells him to be quiet. The man tells him to make his peace with God before he dies. He says he is James Vane, brother of Sibyl Vane, who killed herself after Dorian ruined her. He plans to leave for India that night and will kill Dorian before he goes. Dorian suddenly thinks of a way out. He asks James when his sister died. James tells him it was eighteen years ago. Dorian tells James to look at his face under the light. James drags him to the street light and looks at him. He sees a face that is too young to have been a young lover eighteen years ago. He releases Dorian feelings shocked that he might have killed the wrong man.

After Dorian is gone, the prostitute comes out of the darkness and tells James he should have killed the man. She says he has made a bargain with the devil to remain looking young. She says the same man had ruined her eighteen years ago and left her to become a prostitute. He is nearly forty years old now. She swears she is telling the truth. He runs away from her but sees no trace of Dorian Gray.

Notes

The resolution of the plot begins to form here, as Dorian happens to meet up with James Vane, Sibyl Vane's brother. It is the first time the reader has been taken directly to one of the places only hinted at before. The gossip about Dorian Gray is that he spends time in the most disreputable of places. Here, we see Dorian going to an opium den. Once he arrives, he is unhappily met by Adrian Singleton, the same young man about whom Basil Hallward had been questioning him. Basil had heard from Adrian's father that Dorian ruined him and left him to his own devices. Here, only one day after Dorian killed Basil, he sees the evidence of what Basil said. Adrian Singleton is an

opium addict, cut off from all his friends. it is clear that Dorian feels the weight of guilt about Adrian because he tells the younger man to call him for any help he needs and he leaves the place to find another.

The twist of fate that brings Dorian Gray and James Vane together at first seems much too contrived for the novel. A prostitute calls him Prince Charming, waking James out of his stupor to run after Dorian and threaten to kill him. However, after James releases Dorian, thinking him too young to have been his sister's young lover eighteen years before, the prostitute who called him the name tells James that Dorian has been coming to the place for eighteen years and that he is responsible for her present sorry state. Thus, Oscar Wilde makes the bizarre happenstance that James would connect Dorian Gray to his sister's Prince Charming seem plausible.

CHAPTER 17

Summary

It is one week later and Dorian Gray is entertaining guests at his country estate, Selby Royal. He is chatting with the Duchess of Monmouth when Lord Henry interrupts them. Lord Henry has decided to begin calling everyone Gladys as a means to combat the ugliness of names in the modern world. He engages the Duchess in a witty repartee about women and about values in general. The Duchess at one point mentions that Dorian's colour is very poor. He seems not to be feeling well. Dorian tries but does not do well in keeping up with their conversation. Finally, he volunteers to go to the conservatory to get her some orchids for her dress that evening.

When he is gone, Lord Henry tells the Duchess that she is flirting disgracefully with Dorian. She jokes with him in return. He teases her that she has a rival in Lady

Narborough. She asks Lord Henry to describe women as a sex. He says women are "Sphinxes without secrets." She notices that Dorian is taking a long time and suggests going to find him when they hear a crash. They rush into the conservatory to find Dorian fainted away on the floor. They carry him in to the sofa and he gradually comes awake. He asks Lord Henry if they are safe inside. Lord Henry tells him he just fainted and must stay in his room instead of coming down to dinner. Dorian insists he will come down to dinner. At dinner, he is wildly gay. Every once in a while, he feels a thrill of terror as he recalls the face of James Vane looking at him through the window of the conservatory.

Notes

James has apparently caught up with Dorian at his country estate. Dorian seems to have lost all ability to leave behind past sins with present enjoyments. He remains distracted and nervous in company.

CHAPTER 18

Summary

The next day, Dorian Gray remains in his house afraid to leave it for fear of being shot by James Vane. The second day brings its own fears as well, but on the third day, Dorian wakes up and feels that he has been imagining things. He tells himself that James Vane has sailed away on his ship and will never find him in life.

After breakfast, he talks to the Duchess for an hour in the garden and then he drives across the park to join the shooting party. When he gets close, he sees Geoffrey Clouston, the Duchess's brother. He joins Geoffrey for a stroll. Suddenly, a rabbit appears out of the bush and Geoffrey aims for it. Dorian tells him not to shoot it, but

Geoffrey shoots anyway. Instead of the rabbit falling, a man who was hidden by the bush falls. The two men think it was one of the beaters (the men hired to beat the bushes so the wildlife will run and the hunters will be able to shoot at it). Geoffrey is annoyed at the man for getting in front of the gunfire. Lord Henry comes over and tells Dorian they should call off the shooting for the day to avoid appearing callous. Dorian is awfully upset by the shooting. Lord Henry consoles him, saying the man's death is of no consequence, though it will cause Geoffrey some inconvenience. Dorian thinks of it as a bad omen. He thinks he will be shot. Lord Henry laughs his fears away, telling him there is no such thing as destiny.

They arrive at the house and Dorian is greeted by the gardener who has a note from the Duchess. He receives it and walks on. They discuss her. Lord Henry says the Duchess loves him. Dorian says he wishes he could love but that he's too concentrated on himself to love anyone else. He says he wants to take a cruise on his yacht where he will be safe. As they talk, the Duchess approaches them. She is concerned about her brother. Lord Henry says it would be much more interesting if he had murdered the man on purpose. He says he wishes he knew someone who had committed murder. Dorian blanches and they express concern for his health. He says he will go lie down to rest.

Lord Henry and the Duchess continue their talk. He asks her if she is in love with Dorian. She avoids answering. He asks if her husband will notice anything. She says her husband never notices and she wishes he would sometimes.

Upstairs in his room, Dorian lies on his sofa almost in a faint. At five o'clock he calls for a servant and tells him to prepare his things for his leave-taking. He writes a note to Lord Henry asking him to entertain his guests. Just as

he is ready to leave, the head keeper is announced. He says the man who was shot was not one of the beaters, but seems to have been a sailor. No one knew the man. Dorian is wildly excited at the thought that it might be James Vane. He rushes out to go and see the body. When the cloth is lifted from the face, he cries out in joy because it is the face of James Vane. He rides home with tears of joy knowing he's safe.

Notes

Dorian Gray is naive enough at the end of this chapter to think that the death of James Vane means the end of his fears for his own life. The reader probably suspects by now that Dorian Gray's fears will remain with him because his guilt over killing his friend Basil Hallward will not go away. Dorian Gray's implacable facade has already cracked. It is only a matter of time until his career in the pursuit of pleasure at the expense of others is over.

It seems that Oscar Wilde is an imminently moral writer after all.

CHAPTER 19

Summary

Lord Henry tells Dorian he doesn't believe him when he says he is now going to be good. He says Dorian is already perfect and shouldn't change at all. Dorian insists that he has done many terrible things and has decided to stop that and become a good person. He says he's been staying in the country lately and has resolved to change. Lord Henry says anyone can be good in the country. Dorian says he has recently done a good thing. He wooed a young girl as beautiful as Sibyl Vane was and loved her. He has been going to see her several times a week all month. They were planning to run away together and suddenly he decided to leave her with her innocence. Lord Henry says the novelty of the emotion must have given Dorian as much pleasure as he used to get in stealing the innocence of girls. Dorian begs Henry not to make jokes about his reform. Lord Henry asks him if he thinks this girl will now ever be able to be happy after she was loved by someone as beautiful and graceful as he is. Now she will be forever dissatisfied with love. He wonders if the girl will even commit suicide.

Dorian begs Henry to stop making fun of him. He tells him he wants to be better than he has been in life. After a while, he brings up the subject of Basil's disappearance. He asks Henry what people are saying about it and wonders if anyone thinks foul play was involved. Henry makes light of it. He imagines that Basil fell off a bus into the Seine and drowned. Dorian asks Henry what he would think if he said he had killed Basil. Henry laughs at the idea, saying Dorian is too delicate for something as gross as murder. Lord Henry says he hates the fact that Basil's art had become so poor in the last years of his life. After Dorian stopped sitting for him, his art became trite.

Lord Henry begs Dorian to play Chopin for him and talk to him. Dorian begins playing and remembers a line from Hamlet that reminds him of the portrait Basil painted of him: "Like the painting of a sorrow, / A face without a heart." He repeats the line over again thinking how much it suits the portrait Basil painted of him. Lord Henry thinks of a line he heard when he passed by a preacher in the park last Sunday: "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Dorian is shocked at the saying and wonders why Henry would ask him this question. Henry laughs it off and moves on to another topic.

Henry urges Dorian to stop being so serious. He tells him he looks better than he ever has and wonders what his secret is for warding off old age. He revels in the exquisite life Dorian has led and wishes he could change places with him. He tells Dorian his life has been a work of art. Dorian stops playing and tells Lord Henry that if he knew what he had done in life, he would turn from him.

Lord Henry urges Dorian to come to the club with him. He wants to introduce him to Lord Poole, Bournemouth's eldest son who has been imitating Dorian and wants to meet him terribly. He then suggests that Dorian come to his place the next day and meet Lady Baranksome who wants to consult him about some tapestry she is going to buy. He asks Dorian why he no longer sees the Duchess and guesses that the Duchess is too clever, one never liking being around clever women.

Finally, Dorian leaves after promising to come back later.

Notes

Dorian spends his last evening with his friend Lord Henry. He tells Lord Henry that he plans to reform himself and asks his friend not to speak to him any more with his

characteristic sneer. This chapter serves to convey some important information to the reader and to show Dorian in his submissive relation to Lord Henry one last time. The reader finds out that people are still talking about the disappearance of Basil Hallward, but no one suspects foul play. Since Basil was in the habit of never telling people where he was going when he went on trips, people assume he is doing the same now. The reader also finds out that Alan Campbell has committed suicide. Dorian's one accomplice in the death of Basil Hallward is now gone. He is completely safe from detection.

The second function of this chapter, to show Dorian continuing to be dominated by Lord Henry, is only fully revealed in the last chapter. Dorian tries to convince Lord Henry that he will now reform himself and be good. He gives the evidence of his change when he tells of his recent flirtation of a country girl named Hetty. Just when she was ready to run away with him, he left her. Lord Henry tells him it is not a reform, but just another kind of pleasure, the pleasure in renouncing pleasure. He says Dorian didn't do it for the moral worth of it, but for his own ego.

CHAPTER 20

Summary

The night is beautiful. Dorian walks home from Lord Henry feeling good about himself. He passes some young men who whisper his name. He no longer feels the thrill he used to feel when he is spoken of with such reverence by young men. He wonders if Lord Henry is right, that he can never change. He wishes he had never prayed that the portrait bear the burden of his age. He knows that his downfall has come because he has never had to live with the consequences of his actions.

He gets home and looks in a mirror. He feels sickened by the idea that youth spoiled his soul. He throws down the mirror smashing it on the floor. He tries not to think of the past. Nothing can change it. He knows Alan Campbell died without telling anyone of Dorian's secret. He doesn't even feel too badly about the death of Basil. He doesn't forgive Basil for painting the portrait that ruined his life. He just wants to live a new life.

He thinks of Hetty Merton and he wonders if the portrait upstairs has changed because of his good deed toward her. He gets the lamp and rushes up the stairs, hopeful that the portrait will have already begun to change back to beauty. When he gets there, he is horrified to see that the portrait looks even worse. Now the image has an arrogant sneer on its face. More blood has appeared on its hands and even on its feet.

Dorian wonders what he should do. He wonders if he will have to confess the murder before he will be free of the guilt of it. He doesn't want to confess because he doesn't want to be put in jail. He wonders if the murder will follow him all his life. Finally, he decides to destroy the portrait. He finds the knife he used to kill Basil. He rushes to the portrait and stabs at it.

Downstairs on the street below, two men are passing by when they hear a loud scream. They rush for a policeman who knocks on the door, but no one comes. The men ask the policeman whose house it is. When they hear it is Dorian Gray's, they sneer and walk away. Inside, the servants rush up to the room from whence the sound came. They try the door but it's locked. Two of them go around by way of the roof to get in through the window. When they get inside, they find Dorian Gray stabbed in the heart and above him a glorious portrait of him hanging on the wall. The man

stabbed on the floor is wrinkled and ugly. They don't even recognize him until they see the rings on his fingers.

Notes

The novel ends with the conflation of the art and the subject. Dorian stabs the portrait, trying to destroy it, and the effect is that he kills himself. The mystery of the novel is kept intact. The reader never knows if the portrait magically transformed itself, or if it was a figment of Dorian's—and later, Basil's imagination. When people who are not at all attached to the portrait see it in the end, they see nothing more than the beautiful portrait of Dorian Gray as young man.

