

Name: Anonymous
School: Yorba Linda High School
Grade: Senior
Book title: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*
Book author: Oscar Wilde
Rating: 4/5

The Picture of Dorian Gray has a very interesting premise. The story centers around a young man named Dorian Gray. He's a young, wealthy London socialite who is known for his incredibly good looks. In the very first scene of the book, Dorian is sitting for his portrait for an artist named Basil Hallward. Basil calls Dorian his artistic muse and likens Dorian to the world's greatest natural and artistic beauties. Then, a friend of Basil arrives, Lord Henry. Lord Henry is a radical intellectual who believes in hedonism or living for the sake of pleasure only. As Basil and Lord Henry talk about Dorian, Basil issues a warning to Lord Henry that he shouldn't corrupt Dorian's innocent soul—a harrowing foreshadow of the events in the rest of the book. When Basil finishes the painting of Dorian, Lord Henry has already placed creeping thoughts about the shortness of youth in Dorian's head. An upset Dorian wishes that he could stay young forever while his portrait ages instead, setting up the book's main conflict.

I really enjoyed reading *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It's a very thought-provoking book that asks what's at stake in pursuing only pleasures in life. Many philosophers have struggled over this same debate for centuries. While Oscar Wilde seems to be arguing that a virtuous life requires restraint, Jeremy Bentham of the utilitarian philosophical movement thinks a "pushpin is as good as poetry," meaning all pleasures are equal in value. My favorite character was Basil. He's a dedicated character who tries to look over Dorian even when it's to his own harm, which is a very admirable quality.

Overall, I would recommend *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to any high school student, particularly one interested in Gothic literature. Unlike other Gothic works like *Wuthering Heights*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* doesn't have any wild family trees or complicated relationships. It only explores the topics of hedonism, art, beauty, and youth in a particularly enrapturing plot.