



ESSAY QUESTIONS

THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY



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Write an essay in which you examine the influence the portrait had on Dorian's freedom. Consider whether the bargain he made freed him or entrapped him throughout his life up until his death. [25]

How did the portrait influence Dorian's freedom?

How did the portrait free him?

Introduction

How did the portrait trap him?

What were the consequences?

How did the portrait influence Dorian's freedom?

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Introduction: The portrait did indeed free Dorian in a certain sense, but ultimately it completely trapped him. Dorian's failure to understand eventually led to his death.

How did the portrait free him?

- The picture freed Dorian in the sense that the portrait carried the brunt of the consequences for his actions.
- Dorian could be as mean spirited against others as he wanted to and none of that disgust would show up on his face. Consider as an example the malice he showed Sibyl Vane and that the portrait ended up with a malicious sneer.
- Dorian could abuse Opium as much as he felt like but his youthful face stayed exactly the same. The portrait showed signs of intense aging and abuse.
- The bargain also saved his life when James Vane wanted to kill him outside in the Opium Den. James backed away from that murder because he felt that Dorian was much too young to be the man who broke Sibyl's heart. In this case, the portrait and his bargain quite literally freed him from death.

How did the portrait trap him?

- The portrait also trapped Dorian. His growing paranoia that someone would find out that he has this grotesque portrait locked away in his attic frequently kept him from social gatherings. As an example of this, he left his own party at his estate after the death of James Vane because he was afraid that someone would break into his attic and steal the portrait.

What were the consequences?

Conclusion: Ultimately the entrapment of the painting led to Dorian's death. Dorian never intended to kill himself, as the quote in the question shows he merely wanted to be free from the confines of having his soul trapped in the portrait. However Dorian failed to understand the extent of that entrapment. **Downloaded from eduresourceza.com**

In the Picture of Dorian Gray, each of the three main characters is responsible, to some degree, for Dorian Gray's moral corruption. In a well-constructed essay, critically discuss the validity of this statement, providing evidence to support your view. [25]

Who are the three main characters?

How is each character responsible for Dorian's corruption?

Introduction

To what extent is this statement valid?

**Conclusion:
What is your judgement?**

Who are the main characters?

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Introduction: Basil, Lord Henry and Dorian Gray are all responsible for the decay of Dorian's character.

BODY:

How is each character responsible for Dorian's corruption?

Dorian Gray

- In the beginning, Dorian is a remarkably good-looking but innocent man
- Basil is guilty of admiring/worshipping Dorian
- Basil makes Dorian aware of his beauty by complementing and praising his looks
- Dorian says to Basil, "you met me, flattered me, and taught me to be vain"
- It is Basil's portrait that makes Dorian fall in love with his own beauty
- It encourages his narcissism/self-love "The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation"
- The innocent Dorian became a narcissist
- Basil is indirectly responsible for introducing Dorian to Lord Henry, although he asked Lord Henry not to influence Dorian
- But under the influence of Lord Henry, Dorian commits to a life of overindulgence in sensual pleasures
- He changes significantly after falling under Lord Henry's spell
- He becomes a murderer; he kills Basil Hallward
- He causes the suicide of Sibyl Vane because he was influenced by Lord Henry and rejected Sibyl cruelly when she performed badly
- After Sibyl's suicide the first change in the picture occurs: the struggle within Dorian is shown in his reaction to this change
- And Allan Campbell
- Dorian's first change is noticeable in his ill-treatment of Sibyl Vane
- He also gets involved in the underworld, visiting the opium den
- He becomes self-destructive

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Lord Henry
Downloaded from eduresourceza.com • He is an unprincipled, dishonest human being • He is callous and uncaring • He lives vicariously (experiencing life through the feelings or actions of other people) • He voices his opinions strongly and in a witty way • His ideas are dangerous • Sibyl tried to warn Dorian against Lord Henry’s “wrong, fascinating, poisonous and delightful theories” • He tempted Dorian to lead a life of overindulging in sensual pleasures • Lord Henry exposes Dorian to his twisted ideas about life and the importance of sensual pleasure • Dorian is totally overwhelmed and feel Lord Henry has “revealed him to himself” • In the beginning Dorian feared Lord Henry as if he could predict that Lord Henry’s influence will be harmful • Lord Henry convinces Dorian of the importance of youth and beauty • This changes his life as he becomes obsessed with staying young and feared to age
Basil Hallward
• He remains the same • He is very disappointed in Dorian for allowing Lord Henry to influence him • He is the painter • The picture of Dorian Gray is Basil’s Masterpiece • It is Basil’s portrait that makes Dorian fall I love with his own beauty
CONCLUSION:
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INTRODUCTION	- Dorian Gray's rejection of Sibyl Vane can be seen as rejection of life as illustrated by the following events:
BODY:	Downloaded from eduresourceza.com
•	Dorian Gray is a young man who, under Lord Henry's guidance, values art and beauty above everything else.
•	Lord Henry has taught him to see real life as without beauty: it often happens that the real tragedies of life occur in such an inartistic manner that they hurt us by their crude violence, their absolute incoherence, their absurd want of meaning, their entire lack of style (page 117).
•	After meeting Lord Henry, Dorian becomes devoted to the pursuit of beauty through sensory sensation and through art.
•	He falls in love with Sibyl Vane because of her artistry: her ability to transform reality and to transport her audience into an imaginary world.
•	He says she has the ability to 'spiritualise' (page 96) the 'common rough people, with their coarse faces and brutal gestures' (page 95).
•	He does not see her as a real person, but as somebody to 'place ... on a pedestal of gold' (page 90).
•	When Lord Henry asks when Sibyl is merely Sibyl Vane, Dorian replies proudly, 'Never' (page 64). He does not want to have anything to do with the ordinary Sibyl.
•	Dorian sees their love as a stage romance. For example, he wants to make Romeo jealous (page 65).
•	Sibyl seems equally romantic and unrealistic to begin with. As Dorian says, she sees him only as a 'person in a play. She knows nothing of life' (page 63). To him, this is one of her attraction.
•	When Sibyl falls in love with Dorian, and experiences real life, she realises she has been living in an unreal world, which she rejects with words similar to those of Lady Shalott in Tennyson's poem 'I have grown sick of shadows' (page 101).
•	Dorian rejects her, because the reality she want to live with him is less valuable to him than the art she created: I loved you because you were marvellous. because you had genius and intellect ... and gave shape and substance to the shadows of art ...

• Dorian is persuaded by Lord Henry to see Sibyl's suicide as a dramatic act.
• Real life is too ugly for Dorian. He does not want to read of the inquest into Sibyl's death because, 'How ugly it all was! And how horribly real ugliness made things!' (page 144).
• Dorian becomes a spectator of his own life. He excludes all ugliness and avoids life's pain. He comes to see that 'Life itself was the first, the greatest, of the arts' (page 149).
• Near the end, Lord Henry tells him: 'Life has been your art' (page 251).
• The final irony for Dorian is that: Ugliness that had once been hateful to him because it made things real became dear to him now that very reason. Ugliness was the one reality. (page 215)
• Art, music and all the beautiful things he once valued, are no longer real to him.
• The beauty of his life was always an illusion, and in the end, the reality of his life is revealed in his death.
CONCLUSION:

To what extent is this statement valid?

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After the picture started changing Dorian tried to better his life, but is again influenced by Lord Henry.

- Dorian denies responsibility
- He embarks on a life of sensual pleasure and evil
- Lord Henry sees Dorian as an experiment: he observes him but never controls him
- Basil wanted to intervene to save Dorian but it is too late
- Dorian's greatest evil is the murder of his friend, Basil
- Basil and Lord Henry contribute to Dorian's corruption
- Dorian himself makes the choice and indulge in the depravity/immorality/wickedness that results in the corruption of his soul

Conclusion:

What is your judgement?

- Even if Lord Henry and Basil contribute to Dorian's corruption, he cannot entirely blame them. Every human being has the power to choose between bad and evil. As the evidence has shown, Dorian had enough time to repent but chose to work against his conscience, which eventually led to his death including several other innocent characters.

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In Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the author alludes to the story of Narcissus, a young man in Greek mythology who, upon seeing his own image in a pool of water, fell in love with himself and died because he refused to be parted from his beloved. In a well-constructed essay, discuss to what extent this myth fits the story of the novel? Is Dorian Gray a modern Narcissus? Support your argument with details from the book. [25]

Who is Narcissus?

To what extent does this myth fit the story of the novel?

Introduction

Is Dorian Gray a modern Narcissus?

**Conclusion:
What is your judgement?**

INTRODUCTION: Who is Narcissus?

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- In Greek mythology, Narcissus is a young man of extraordinary good looks. One day, while gazing into a pool of water, he fell in love with his reflected image. He was so in love with what he saw that he was unable to turn his gaze away. His obsession with his reflection led to his demise.

BODY: To what extent does this myth fit the story of the novel?

- The Picture of Dorian Gray is the story of a beautiful, innocent young man. Dorian Gray is the subject of a painting by the artist Basil Hallward. After ending up with his portrait by Basil Hallward, he falls in love with it. The portrait led to his demise.
- Lord Henry surrounds himself with beautiful and intelligent people. He describes Dorian as “a Narcissus” who “looks as if he was made out of ivory and rose-leaves”. Dorian is both young and beautiful, traits that were highly valued by Victorian society. Dorian is unaware of his beauty until Lord Henry makes him aware of it. After he sees his portrait painted by Basil “these sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before”.
- Sibyl Vane can be compared to the mountain nymph, Echo, who falls deeply in love with Narcissus. When Echo finally reveals herself to Narcissus, he rejects her and sends her away. Similarly, Sibyl reveals herself to Dorian through her confession of love by saying: “My love! My love! Prince Charming! Prince of life! ... You are more to me than all art can ever be”. Once Sibyl confesses her love to Dorian, he rejects her.
- Like Narcissus, Dorian is “indifferent” to a woman’s love. His response to her confession of love is: “you have killed my love. ... You are shallow and stupid. My God! How mad I was to love you! What a fool I have been! You are nothing to me now ...” while Dorian differs from Narcissus in that he at one point did love did love Sibyl, his love is based on shallow traits; her intellect, beauty, and genius. Dorian’s rejection leads Sibyl to commit suicide, similar to Echo who fades into nothingness.
- Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection that he sees in a pool and eventually kills himself because he cannot obtain the object of his desire. Similarly, Dorian is obsessed with his portrait. Dorian says towards the end of the novel: “I wish I could love, ... But I seem to have lost the passion, and forgotten the desire. I am too much concentrated on myself.”

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• Dorian is obsessed with his image as he constantly looks at it and checks on it. As the image begins to deteriorate Dorian begins to despair and attempts to be “good” in order to reverse the deterioration.
• When his attempts to be good do not alter the portrait he tries to destroy it, ultimately killing himself. “Oh, that I might be parted from my own body! And, strange prayer for a lover, I would that what I love were absent from me! ... Death is nothing to me, for in death I shall leave my troubles; and I would he that is loved might live longer; but as it is, we too shall die together in one breath.”
CONCLUSION:

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“true friends stab you in the front” Oscar Wilde Discuss the truth of this statement, in relation to the novel, paying particular attention to the nature of the various relationships in the novel. Your essay should be 400-450 words (2-2½ pages)

What are the various relationships in the novel?

Which relationships show treachery/friends stab each other in the back?

Introduction

Which relationships show friends stabbing each other in front?

**Conclusion:
What is your judgement?**

What are the various relationships in the novel?

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Introduction: There are various relationships in the novel where trust and loyalty is betrayed. The following examples provide evidence:

BODY: Which relationships show friends stabbing each other in the back?

Friendship between Basil and Lord Henry- which is based on a long shared history. Basil seems intensely loyal and discusses his concerns about the friendship openly (e.g. Lord Henry's influence over Dorian Gray), whilst Lord Henry openly goes against the wishes of Basil and is quick to toss him over when he is interested in Dorian Gray. The friendship is quickly neglected from his side.

Friendship between Basil and Dorian Gray – Dorian feels no loyalty at all and betrays any bond between himself and Basil with little forethought or consideration. He knows how pivotal he is in Basil's life (as a muse and inspiration "he is my whole life", yet distances himself and comes between Basil and Lord Henry. He moves from being exceptionally close to him, to distancing himself and finally murdering Basil.

Basil, on the other hand, never wavers in his loyalty to Dorian – he constantly enquires after his wellbeing, acts as his voice of conscience and in the final act, tries to get Dorian to repent, which leads to B's death.

Dorian Gray and Sibyl Vane – Dorian backstabs her by engaging her to be married but then ending it on a whim. He is, in his defence, unaware of the fact he is in love with her as art and not her as woman and the last time we see any conscience in him is when he undertakes to make amends with her, unaware of the fact that she has committed suicide.

Dorian Gray and myriad named and unnamed characters – we are made aware of how he has ruined many people and tarnished their names but never get details. It is clear that all the betrayal is unexpected though, as the characters never seem to recover, which implies that it was back stabbing or disloyalty and that there was no openness in his relationships with them.

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Which relationships show friends stabbing each other in front?

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- **Lord Henry stabs people in the front** – he is unflinchingly honest about his lack of loyalty, lack of interest in the longevity of friendships and how he sees Dorian as nothing more than a scientific experiment. He is open about his lacklustre marriage.

Conclusion:

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The friendship between Dorian Gray, Lord Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward leads to the moral corruption and death of Dorian Gray. Discuss the validity of this statement, providing evidence to support your view, in a well-constructed essay of 400-450 words (2-2½ pages). [25]

How does the friendship between the three lead to moral corruption and death of Dorian Gray?

What is the validity of this statement?

Introduction

**Conclusion:
What is your judgement?**

Introduction:

The friendship between Dorian Gray, Lord Henry Wotton and Basil Hallward leads to the moral corruption and death of Dorian Gray as shown by the following evidence:

BODY: How does the friendship between the three lead to moral corruption and death of Dorian Gray?

Dorian Gray

- At the opening of the novel, Dorian Gray exists as something of an ideal: he is the archetype of male youth and beauty. As such, he captures the imagination of Basil Hallward, a painter, and Lord Henry Wotton, a nobleman who imagines fashioning the impressionable Dorian into an unrelenting pleasure-seeker.
- Dorian is exceptionally vain and becomes convinced, in the course of a brief conversation with Lord Henry, that his most salient characteristics – his youth and physical attractiveness – are ever waning.
- The thought of walking one day without these attributes sends Dorian into a tailspin: he curses his fate and pledges his soul if only he could live without bearing the physical burdens of aging and sinning. He longs to be as youthful and lovely (narcissism) as the masterpiece that Basil has painted of him, and he wishes that the portrait could age in his stead. His vulnerability and insecurity in these moments make him excellent clay for Lord Henry’s willing hands.
- Dorian soon leaves Basil’s studio for Lord Henry’s parlour, where he adopts the tenets of “the new Hedonism” and resolves to live his life as a pleasure-seeker with no regard for conventional morality.
- His relationship with Sibyl Vane tests his commitment to this philosophy: his love of the young actress nearly leads him to dispense with Lord Henry’s teachings, but his love proves to be as shallow as he is. When he breaks Sibyl’s heart and drives her to suicide, Dorian notices the first change in his portrait – evidence that his portrait is showing the effects of age and experience while his body remains ever youthful.
- Dorian experiences a moment of crisis, as he weighs his guilt about his treatment of Sibyl against the freedom from worry that Lord Henry’s philosophy has promised. When Dorian decides to view Sibyl’s death as the achievement of an artistic ideal rather than a needless tragedy for which he is responsible, he starts down the steep and slippery slope of his own demise

- As Dorian's sins grow worse over the years, his likeness in Basil's portrait grows more hideous. Dorian seems to lack a conscience, but the desire to repent that he eventually feels, illustrates that he is indeed human.
- Despite the beautiful things with which he surrounds himself, he is unable to distract himself from the dissipation of his soul. His murder of Basil marks the beginning of his end: although in the past he has been able to sweep infamies from his mind, he cannot shake the thought that he has killed his friend. Dorian's guilt tortures him relentlessly until he is forced to do away with his portrait. In the end, Dorian seems punished by his ability to be influenced: if the new social order celebrates individualism, as Lord Henry claims, Dorian falters because he fails to establish and live by his own moral code.

Lord Henry Wotton

- Lord Henry is a man possessed of “wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories”. He is a charming talker, a famous wit, and a brilliant intellect. Given the seductive way in which he leads conversation, it is little wonder that Dorian falls under his spell so completely.
- Lord Henry's theories are radical; they aim to shock and purposefully attempt to topple established, untested, or conventional notions of truth. In the end, however, they prove naïve, and Lord Henry himself fails to realize the implications of most of what he says.
- Lord Henry is a relatively static character – he does not undergo a significant change in the course of the narrative. He is as coolly composed, unshakeable, and possessed of the same dry wit in the final pages of the novel as he is upon his introduction.
- Because he does not change while Dorian and Basil clearly do, his philosophy seems amusing and enticing in the first half of the book, but improbable and shallow in the second.
- Lord Henry muses in Chapter 19, for instance, that there are no immoral books; he claims that “[t]he books that the world calls immoral are books that show the world its own shame”. But since the decadent book that Lord Henry lends Dorian facilitates Dorian's downfall, it is difficult to accept what Lord Henry says as true.

- Although Lord Henry is a self-proclaimed hedonist who advocates the equal pursuit of both moral and immoral experience, he lives a rather staid life. He participates in polite London society and attends parties and the theatre, but he does not indulge in sordid behaviour.
- Unlike Dorian, he does not lead innocent youths to suicide or travel incognito to the city's most despised and desperate quarters. Lord Henry thus has little notion of the practical effects of his philosophy.
- His claim that Dorian could never commit a murder because "[c]rime belongs exclusively to the lower orders" demonstrates the limitations of his understanding of the human soul. It is not surprising, then, that he fails to appreciate the profound meaning of Dorian's downfall.

Basil Hallward

- Basil Hallward is a talented, though somewhat conventionally minded, painter. His love for Dorian Gray changes the way he sees art; indeed, it defines a new school of expression for him.
- Basil's portrait of Dorian marks a new phase of his career. Before he created this masterwork, he spent his time painting Dorian in the veils of antiquity – dressed as an ancient soldier or as various romantic figures from mythology.
- Once he has painted Dorian as he truly is, however, he fears that he has put too much of himself into the work. He worries that his love (worshipping), which he himself describes as "idolatry," is too apparent, and that it betrays too much of himself. Though he later changes his mind to believe that art is always more abstract than one thinks and that the painting thus betrays nothings except form and colour, his emotional investment in Dorian remains constant.
- He seeks to protect Dorian, voicing his objection to Lord Henry's injurious influence over Dorian and defending Dorian even after their relationship has clearly dissolved. Basil's commitment to Dorian, which ultimately proves fatal, reveals the genuineness of his love for his favourite subject and his concern for the safety and salvation of Dorian's soul.

Conclusion:

While both Basil, unknowingly, and Lord Henry, deliberately, contributes to Dorian's corruption, it is Dorian himself who makes the choices and indulges in the depravities that result in the corruption of his soul.

“The Picture of Dorian Gray” is a novel about vanity and a lifestyle influenced by others”. In an essay of 400-450 words discuss how this is an apt description of the novel The Picture of Dorian Gray. [25]

What is vanity?

How is vanity and a lifestyle exposed in the novel?

Introduction

Conclusion:
What is your judgement?

Introduction
Downloaded from eduresourceza.com • Vanity means excessive pride in or admiration of one’s own appearance or achievements. The Picture of Dorian Gray is a novel about vanity and a lifestyle influenced by others.
BODY: How is vanity and a lifestyle exposed in the novel?
• Lord Henry’s influence is certainly palpable in this novel. Basil even suggests that Lord Henry might “spoil” him and is afraid of the influence Henry might have over Dorian. For Basil, he is this fresh, naïve and pure youth. Basil at one point says “your influence would be bad”. This is an understatement.
• As the novel progresses Dorian accepts Lord Henry as mentor and guide to life and its pleasures and this leads to his total downfall. What Lord Henry offers to the young Dorian is his charm, intelligence and wit. He uses these to sway the impressionable Dorian into betraying himself and becoming a hedonistic and pleasure seeking young man who disregards the consequences of his actions on those close to him and society in general.
• The influence of Lord Henry turns out to be primarily negative. This once “unspoiled” young man by tempting him with beauty, immoral beliefs and showing contempt for conventional morality, Lord Henry allows him to spiral into a life of decadence and temptation. Lord Henry does nothing to stop this young man’s selfish lifestyle. This is most evident when Dorian enters into a simple adoring relationship with Sibyl Vane. His simplistic adoration and complete devotion to her and her “beauty” is transformed by Lord Henry to the point where Dorian feels physically sickened to even look at her, let alone listen to her singing.
• Lord Henry as villain prizes individualism and believes in living life boldly and freely. He looks at “youth” as a prize to be treasured, and in this way encourages Dorian to deliberately ignore what makes us moral human beings. Dorian willing becomes his disciple and allows himself to be swayed by Lord Henry’s jaded and unrealistic view of life. Dorian eventually falls into a life of sin and pursues pleasure, ignoring the realities of life. He even begins to neglect his relationship with Basil in favour of the “worldly wise” Lord Henry. Downloaded from eduresourceza.com

• Basil believes that we “shall all suffer for what the gods have given us” and realises that the “ugly and the stupid” have the best in the world. They live lives of indifference. Downloaded from eduresourceza.com Dorian in his quest for vanity and retaining his youth completely disregards the effect he has on others, including Basil and Sibyl.
• Dorian’s mad wish “that he himself might remain young and the portrait grow old” symbolises the decadence and complete disregard of nature and growth. He becomes inured against any regret and can only focus on his own pursuit of happiness – no matter the consequences. He hopes to keep “the delicate bloom and loveliness of ... conscious boyhood” and hopes to negate the suffering. In this way he hopes to enjoy the passions of life without carrying any scars. His vanity is what will lead to his downfall.
• His relationship with Sibyl too becomes little more than an “experiment” and he exclaims at one point “So I have ...murdered her as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife”. Yet he mentions the roses still bloom and the birds sing. He is unaware and uncaring of the consequences of his unfeeling actions.
• His vanity allows Dorian to distance himself from his own life and to live in a world where he seems to be a spectator and cannot be planned for others actions. He remains this selfish man who believes that he is entitled to pleasure and is not responsible for the decisions that he takes.
• Thus, because Lord Henry has instilled within Dorian this belief that “youth” is to be valued above all else, Dorian anticipates the rigours of old age and is determined to remain youthful at any cost. He pledges his soul to corruption and “experience” at the expense of his own humanity and morality. As he becomes more immoral the portrait begins to reveal the evil that resides within him. “For that I would give everything”, and so he does.
• Dorian’s life is devoted to sensuality and he neglects his spiritual and nurturing aspects. He seems to exist on his own without any real friendship and so by indulging in pleasure and sin he manages to destroy any real beauty he possessed and the influence of Lord Henry and his own vanity lead to a man who achieves so little and ends up being alone surrounded by his memories of the indulgences he has shared in. Downloaded from eduresourceza.com
• CONCLUSION:

While Basil is a highly moral character, Lord Henry essentially represents the difference between 'art' and 'culture'. Critically discuss the extent to which you agree with this view of the presentation of Basil and Lord Henry. Your response should take the form of a well-constructed essay of 400-450 words (2-2½ pages). [25]

What is the difference between art and culture?

In what ways is Basil a moral character?

Introduction

How does Lord Henry represent the difference between art and culture?

**Conclusion:
What is your judgement?**

INTRODUCTION: What is the difference between art and culture?

- Art is the expression or application of creative skill and imagination, especially through a visual medium such painting or sculpture. Culture refers to the customs, ideas and social behaviour of a particular people or group. Moral is concerned with the principles of right and bad behaviour. Basil is a highly moral character, while Lord Henry essentially represents the difference between art and culture.

BODY: In what ways is Basil a moral character?

- Basil's true problem is that art is more real to him than life. In an artwork, beauty is always a good thing, but in the real world, it is just not.
- He does not just want life to be like art – he wants life to be art, and vice versa.
- He believes that Dorian must still have some shred of good in him, if he can continue to look like an angel.
- He cannot fathom that there is basically no goodness in his so-called 'friends'.
- Basil Hallward is a talented, though somewhat conventionally minded, painter.
- His love for Dorian Gray changes the way he sees art; indeed, it defines a new school of expression for him.
- Basil's portrait of Dorian marks a new phase of his career. Once he has painted Dorian as he truly is he fears that he has put too much of himself into the work.
- Though he later changes his mind to believe that art is always more abstract than one thinks and that the painting thus portrays nothing except form and colour

How does Lord Henry represent the difference between art and culture?

- Lord Henry is a hedonistic, selfish aristocrat who has the whole world at his fingertips and, rather than doing something good for humanity, he simply goes about his business in a totally self-indulgent manner.
- Nothing seems to have any meaning for Lord Henry except his own pleasure.
- He feels that the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it, otherwise your soul will become sick with longing for things you cannot have/experience.

- Even his so-called friends do not really matter to Henry once he is tired of them. For example, Basil, who is supposedly one of his best friends from university, disappears mysteriously for months on end, but Henry does not even bat an eyelid.
- He is tired of Basil, and after all, the artist has not painted anything really good for a while.
- Henry's totally unfazed by the idea that Basil might be dead in a gutter somewhere; he does not even really think that's a possibility, since, in his view, Basil's too dull to be murdered.

Conclusion:

- People, money, objects, art – everything is just a tool of pleasure to him. That is just how Lord Henry views life:
- Once any given thing stops being fun, he is not interested any more. The one possible exception to this is Dorian himself. After years of “developing” Dorian's personality, Lord Henry feels as though he has created the ideal human being. He admires Dorian profoundly, but more importantly, he admires himself for having made Dorian what he is.