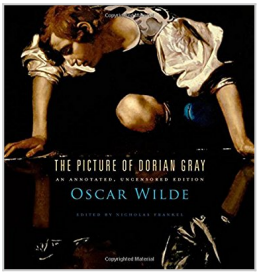

The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition

By Oscar Wilde

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The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition By Oscar Wilde

The Picture of Dorian Gray altered the way Victorians understood the world they inhabited. It heralded the end of a repressive Victorianism, and after its publication, literature had—in the words of biographer Richard Ellmann—"a different look." Yet the *Dorian Gray* that Victorians never knew was even more daring than the novel the British press condemned as "vulgar," "unclean," "poisonous," "discreditable," and "a sham." Now, more than 120 years after Wilde handed it over to his publisher, J. B. Lippincott & Company, Wilde's uncensored typescript is published for the first time, in an annotated, extensively illustrated edition.

The novel's first editor, J. M. Stoddart, excised material—especially homosexual content—he thought would offend his readers' sensibilities. When Wilde enlarged the novel for the 1891 edition, he responded to his critics by further toning down its "immoral" elements. The differences between the text Wilde submitted to Lippincott and published versions of the novel have until now been evident to only the handful of scholars who have examined Wilde's typescript.

Wilde famously said that Dorian Gray "contains much of me": Basil Hallward is "what I think I am," Lord Henry "what the world thinks me," and "Dorian what I would like to be—in other ages, perhaps." Wilde's comment suggests a backward glance to a Greek or Dorian Age, but also a forward-looking view to a more permissive time than his own, which saw Wilde sentenced to two years' hard labor for gross indecency. The appearance of Wilde's uncensored text is cause for celebration.

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The Picture of Dorian Gray: An Annotated, Uncensored Edition By Oscar Wilde Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #570807 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press
- Published on: 2011-04-11
- Released on: 2011-05-11
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.20" h x 9.40" w x 9.60" l, 2.16 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 304 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
A lush, cautionary tale of a life of vileness and deception or a loving portrait of the aesthetic impulse run rampant? Why not both? After Basil Hallward paints a beautiful, young man's portrait, his subject's frivolous wish that the picture change and he remain the same comes true. Dorian Gray's picture grows aged and corrupt while he continues to appear fresh and innocent. After he kills a young woman, "as surely as if I had cut her little throat with a knife," Dorian Gray is surprised to find no difference in his vision or surroundings. "The roses are not less lovely for all that. The birds sing just as happily in my garden."

As Hallward tries to make sense of his creation, his epigram-happy friend Lord Henry Wotton encourages Dorian in his sensual quest with any number of Wildean paradoxes, including the delightful "When we are happy we are always good, but when we are good we are not always happy." But despite its many languorous pleasures, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is an imperfect work. Compared to the two (voyeuristic) older men, Dorian is a bore, and his search for ever new sensations far less fun than the novel's drawing-room discussions. Even more oddly, the moral message of the novel contradicts many of Wilde's supposed aims, not least "no artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style." Nonetheless, the glamour boy gets his just deserts. And Wilde, defending Dorian Gray, had it both ways: "All excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its own punishment."

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. First published in 1890 in Lippincott's Monthly Magazine and the following year in novel form, The Picture of Dorian Gray categorically changed Victorian Britain and the landscape of literature. An ostentatious, self-confessed aesthete, known for his wit and intellect, Wilde not only had to endure his prose being labeled "poisonous" and "vulgar," but also suffer its use as evidence in the ensuing trial, resulting in his eventual imprisonment for crimes of "gross indecency." Frankel's introduction provides a deft preliminary analysis of the novel itself—exploring etymology and extensive editorial alterations (both accidental and deliberate)—and offers valuable insight into the socio-cultural juxtaposition of aristocratic Victorian society and the London underworld. The original typescript provides the unique opportunity to examine what was considered acceptable in both the US and UK at the time. Intriguing annotations allude to Wilde's influences and enterprising range of reference, incorporating art, poetry, literature, Greek mythology, philosophy, and fashion (certain to inspire further reading; an appendix is provided). Comparisons are drawn between Dorian Gray and Wilde's other literary output, as well as to the work of Walter Pater. Numerous illustrations subtly compliment Frankelÿs inferences. A fine contextualization of a major work of fiction profoundly interpreted, ultimately riveting. (Mar.)

From School Library Journal
Grade 10 Up-"The Whole Story" format provides illustrations and annotations to the classic text. Ross's lively and sophisticated cartoons add interest, and historical information helps readers place the novel in proper context and gives insight into its characters. The problem with this attractive, glossy layout, however, is that the text and the quotes pulled from it are not always on the same page. Further, some illustrations and notations visually cut into the narrative and may distract readers. For example, a drawing appears on the first page along with the passage, "In the centre of the room, clamped to an upright easel, stood the full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty," but that quote does not appear until the second page of the story. Useful as a supplement to the original novel, but not a replacement for it.
Karen Hoth, Marathon Middle/High School, FL

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Maurice Miller:

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