



# Film Worksheet 2.8

## *Dorian Gray*

### Knowledge base

1. Review your knowledge of the novel.
  - a. Read the brief summary of the storyline.
  - b. Name all the people who die in the course of the story and how their deaths occur.

### Summary

*Dorian Gray, a young handsome aristocrat, on seeing the beautiful portrait that his friend the artist Basil Hallward has painted of him, and deeply influenced by the words of the artist's friend, Lord Henry Wotton, wishes he could remain forever young while the picture grows old. His wish is supernaturally granted and he begins to live a life of increasing immorality and criminal activity in London's dark and iniquitous underworld. He falls in love with a young actress called Sybil Vane but his feelings are not genuine and the young girl, abandoned by Dorian, commits suicide. Her brother, James Vane, is determined to revenge her death.*

*Dorian decides to hide the portrait in an abandoned room of his house because it not only bears the sign of his aging but also of his debauchery and crimes. He shows the changed portrait to Hallward but then, in a fit of hatred, murders him. One of Dorian's friends, Alan Campbell, helps him to get rid of the body. He, too, later kills himself because he feels so guilty about what he has done.*

*Dorian eventually decides to destroy the portrait which stands as a silent witness to his immoral life. He takes a knife and stabs the picture. However, in trying to destroy the picture, Dorian destroys himself. When his servants manage to get into the room, they find the picture which now shows Dorian as young and handsome while on the floor lies a old and disgusting creature. He is only recognisable as Dorian from the rings on his fingers.*

2. The clip you will watch concerns the moment when Dorian's portrait is completed.

- a. Which characters will appear in the scene?
- b. What will Dorian wish for?

3. Read the script which corresponds roughly to the text on pages 251-253 of your book.

- a. How does the script differ from the dialogue in the novel?
- b. Which characters take on more active and more passive roles in the scene?
- c. What kind of tone did you use for each of the three characters?

LORD HENRY: Well Basil. It's quite the best thing you've done. You will be the talk of the town, both of you. *[Pause.]* Speak up boy. You will hurt his feelings

DORIAN: Is that really how I look? It's just so... lifelike.

LORD HENRY: Better than life. It'll always look like that. You, Mr Gray, I'm afraid will not. In time Mother Nature will come a very poor second to 'Father Basil'.

### First impressions

- BASIL: Some things are more precious because they do not last.
- 10 LORD HENRY: Poppycock! We wither and scar because the gods are cruel and hateful.
- DORIAN: Well, perhaps I should nail my soul to the devil's altar.
- LORD HENRY: And remain as you are? Fair trade.
- BASIL: How about another gin, instead?
- LORD HENRY: All that hocus pocus, endless conjurations, books bound in skin, tentacles of fire, bathing in blood of virgins... Dorian wouldn't really part with his soul. Would you Dorian? Would you?
- DORIAN: Yes.



### Dorian Gray

(see film clip  
on the Class Video DVD)

## In more detail

### Shots, angle and focus

#### 4. Watch the clip for the first time.

Did the film version match your expectations in terms of the tone of delivery of the speeches?

#### 5. Watch the clip again.

- How do the shots in the sequence infer the continual insidious influence of Lord Henry on Dorian?
- When Dorian looks closely at the portrait, from which angle is he filmed and to what effect?
- What technique is used at the end of the sequence just after Dorian says "Yes"? What does the technique want to transmit to the viewer?

## Conclusions

#### 6. Read the information about the film adapted from *Wikipedia* and answer the questions.

- Where was *Dorian Gray* filmed?
- What kind of reviews has it received?



**Dorian Gray** is a British film adaptation of Oscar Wilde's 1891 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. This version is directed by Oliver Parker, written by Toby Finlay, and stars Ben Barnes as Dorian Gray and Colin Firth as Lord Henry Wotton.

The film, which was released in the United Kingdom on 9 September 2009, was nominated for Best Film at the 2009 Sitges - Catalan International Film Festival. It was filmed at Ealing Studios and locations across London and received £500,000 of National Lottery funding via the UK Film Council's Premiere Fund.

The film adaptation often differs from the original novel and has received mixed reviews. Changes in the storyline include important moments such as the motivation for Dorian abandoning Sibyl Vane. Colin Firth has been praised for his interpretation of Lord Henry while Ben Barnes' has been described as a lack-lustre performance.

#### 7. When a literary work is adapted for film, do you think it should be faithful to the original or that directors and screenplay writers should feel free to move away from the original?