Extracts from *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde

The Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde

The artist is the creator of beautiful things.

To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim.

The critic is he who can translate into another manner or a new material his impression of beautiful things.

The highest, as the lowest, form of criticism is a mode of autobiography.

Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.

Those who find beautiful meanings in beautiful things are the cultivated. For these there is hope. They are the elect to whom beautiful things mean only Beauty.

There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.

The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban seeing his own face in a glass.

The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.

The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium.

No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved.

No artist has ethical sympathies. An ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style.

No artist is ever morbid. The artist can express everything.

Thought and language are to the artist instruments of an art.

Vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art.

From the point of view of form, the type of all the arts is the art of the musician. From the point of view of feeling, the actor’s craft is the type.

All art is at once surface and symbol. Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.

It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.
Diversity of opinion about a work of art shows that the work is new, complex, and vital.

When critics disagree the artist is in accord with himself.

We can forgive a man for making a useful thing as long as he does not admire it. The only excuse for making a useless thing is that one admires it intensely.

All art is quite useless.

**Extract 1 From Chapter 1**

The studio was filled with the rich odour of roses, and when the light summer wind stirred amidst the trees of the garden, there came through the open door the heavy scent of the lilac [glicine], or the more delicate perfume of the pink-flowering thorn [biancospino].

From the corner of the divan of Persian saddle-bags [bisaccie] on which he was lying, smoking, as was his custom, innumerable cigarettes, Lord Henry Wotton could just catch the gleam [flashing light (splendore)] of the honey-sweet and honey-coloured blossoms of a laburnum [a small tree with hanging bunches of yellow flowers], whose tremulous branches seemed hardly able to bear the burden of a beauty so flamelike as theirs; and now and then the fantastic shadows of birds in flight flitted [to move lightly and quickly] across the long tussore-silk [raw unbleached silk] curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion. The sullen [bad-tempered] murmur of the bees shouldering [pushing] their way through the long unmown [uncut] grass, or circling with monotonous insistence round the dusty gilt horns of the straggling woodbine [o giravano con insistenza monotona intorno alle punte dorate e impolverate del caprifoglio rampicante], seemed to make the stillness [the silence and lack of movement] more oppressive. The dim roar [rombo] of London was like the bourdon note [made by the bass stop] of a distant organ.

In the centre of the room, clamped to an upright easel [cavalletto], stood the full-length portrait of a young man of extraordinary personal beauty, and in front of it, some little distance away, was sitting the artist himself, Basil Hallward, whose sudden disappearance some years ago caused, at the time, such public excitement and gave rise to so many strange conjectures.

**Extra materials**

‘There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about and that is not being talked about’

Wilde toned down the more overt references to the homoerotic nature of Basil Hallward’s relationship with Dorian. He cut out his confession in the original manuscript
that ‘the world becomes young to me when I hold his hand’ and Basil saying that he is
going to withhold the painting from London gallery-goers because ‘where there is really
love, they would see something evil, and where there is spiritual passion they would
suggest something vile.’

Basil confesses in the book version that Dorian Gray is ‘absolutely necessary to him’ but
the emphasis is now on how he sees Dorian’s presence as vital to his artistic power and
the source of ‘an entirely new mode of style’; he describes his feelings for him as ‘curious
artistic idolatry’. In other words, in the book version the personal and passionate is
rephrased as the aesthetic - but Basil is still allowed to say that ‘As long as I live, the
personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me’ and the homosexual passion is not
altogether hidden.

Hallward says of Dorian that ‘He has a simple and beautiful nature’

But when Lord Henry asks whether Dorian is fond of him, ‘The painter considered for a
few moments. “He likes me,” he answered after a pause; “I know he likes me. Of course I
flatter him dreadfully. I find a strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall
be sorry for having said. As a rule, he is charming to me, and we sit in the studio and talk
of a thousand things. Now and then, however, he is horribly thoughtless, and seems to
take a real delight in giving me pain. Then I feel, Harry, that I have given away my whole
soul to some one who treats it as if it were a flower to put in his coat, a bit of decoration
to charm his vanity, an ornament for a summer’s day.”

**Extract 2 From Chapter 2**

After a few moments he said to him, ‘Have you really a very bad influence, Lord Henry?
As bad as Basil says?’

‘There is no such thing as a good influence, Mr. Gray. All influence is immoral—immoral
from the scientific point of view.’

‘Why?’

‘Because to influence a person is to give him one's own soul. He does not think his
natural thoughts, or burn with his natural passions. His virtues are not real to him. His
sins, if there are such things as sins, are borrowed. He becomes an echo of someone
else’s music, an actor of a part that has not been written for him. The aim of life is self-
development. To realize one's nature perfectly—that is what each of us is here for.
People are afraid of themselves, nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties,
the duty that one owes to one’s self. Of course, they are charitable. They feed the hungry
and clothe the beggar. But their own souls starve, and are naked. Courage has gone out
of our race. Perhaps we never really had it. The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion—these are the two things that govern us. And yet—‘

‘Just turn your head a little more to the right, Dorian, like a good boy,’ said the painter, deep in his work and conscious only that a look had come into the lad’s face that he had never seen there before.

‘And yet,’ continued Lord Henry, in his low, musical voice, and with that graceful wave of the hand that was always so characteristic of him, and that he had even in his Eton [the most famous, prestigious and aristocratic public (that is private) school in England] days, ‘I believe that if one man were to live out his life fully and completely, were to give form to every feeling, expression to every thought, reality to every dream—I believe that the world would gain such a fresh impulse of joy that we would forget all the maladies of mediaevalism, and return to the Hellenic ideal—to something finer, richer than the Hellenic ideal, it may be. But the bravest man amongst us is afraid of himself. The mutilation of the savage has its tragic survival in the self-denial that mars our lives [Wilde/Lord Henry inverts the logic of contemporary thought that saw restraint as advanced rather than primitive]. We are punished for our refusals. Every impulse that we strive to strangle [to kill somebody by squeezing or pressing on their throat and neck] broods [to think a lot about something that makes you annoyed, anxious or upset; (covare) fester like an untreated wound] in the mind and poisons us. The body sins once, and has done with its sin, for action is a mode of purification. Nothing remains then but the recollection of a pleasure, or the luxury of a regret. The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it [give in to it]. Resist it, and your soul grows sick with longing [desire] for the things it has forbidden to itself, with desire for what its monstrous laws have made monstrous and unlawful. It has been said that the great events of the world take place in the brain.

It is in the brain, and the brain only, that the great sins of the world take place also. You, Mr. Gray, you yourself, with your rose-red [beauty] youth and your rose-white [innocence] boyhood, you have had passions that have made you afraid, thoughts that have filled you with terror, day-dreams and sleeping dreams whose mere memory might stain [make you blush] your cheek with shame—‘

‘Stop!’ faltered [showing uncertainty]Dorian Gray, ‘stop! you bewilder [confuse] me. I don’t know what to say. There is some answer to you, but I cannot find it. Don’t speak. Let me think. Or, rather, let me try not to think.’

For nearly ten minutes he stood there, motionless, with parted lips and eyes strangely bright. He was dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him. Yet they seemed to him to have come really from himself. The few words that Basil’s friend had said to him—words spoken by chance, no doubt, and with wilful [deliberate] paradox in them—had touched some secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now vibrating and throbbing [pulsating] to curious pulses.
Extra materials

In chapter 1 Lord Henry tells Basil (paraphrasing Richard III in Shakespeare’s play of that name: "Conscience is but a word that cowards use") that ""Conscience and cowardice are really the same things, Basil. Conscience is the trade-name of the firm. That is all."

From The Proverbs of Hell in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell by William Blake (1757-1827)

He who desires but acts not, breeds pestilence
Chi desidera ma non agisce, alleva pestilenza

Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse [covare] unacted desires.
Sarebbe meglio per te uccider un bimbo nella culla che cullare desideri inattuati

Freud talks of the return of the repressed.

Lord Henry says that talking to Dorian is "like playing with an exquisite violin. He answered to every touch and thrill of the bow." (Chapter 3)

Extract 3 (from Chapter 2)

Dorian has tired of posing and insists on going out into the garden where the conversation between him and Sir Henry continues.

‘...you have the most marvellous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having.’
‘I don't feel that, Lord Henry.’

‘No you don’t feel it now. Some day, when you are old and wrinkled [lines and folds in the skin] and ugly, when thought has seared [to burn into the surface of something] your forehead with its lines, and passion branded your lips with its hideous fires, you will feel it [What?], you will feel it terribly. Now, wherever you go, you charm the world. Will it always be so? . . . You have a wonderfully beautiful face, Mr. Gray. Don't frown [make a puzzled or cross expression]. You have. And beauty is a form of genius— is higher, indeed, than genius, as it needs no explanation. It is of the great facts of the world, like sunlight, or spring-time, or the reflection in dark waters of that silver shell we call the moon. It cannot be questioned. It has its divine right of sovereignty [power to govern]. It makes princes of those who have it. You smile? Ah! when you have lost it you won’t smile. . . . People say sometimes that beauty is only superficial. That may be so, but at least it is not so superficial as thought is. To me, beauty is the wonder of wonders. It is only shallow [opposite of profound] people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible. . . . Yes, Mr. Gray, the gods have been good to you. But what the gods give they quickly take away. You have only a few years in which to live really, perfectly, and fully. When your youth goes, your beauty will go with it, and then you will suddenly discover that there are no triumphs left for you, or have to
content yourself with those mean [little] triumphs that the memory of your past will make more bitter than defeats. Every month as it wanes [as it dies/comes to an end] brings you nearer to something dreadful. Time is jealous of you, and wars against your lilies and your roses. You will become sallow [slightly yellow colour that does not look healthy], and hollow-cheeked [face collapses], and dull-eyed [no longer bright]. You will suffer horribly.... Ah! realize your youth while you have it. Don’t squander [waste] the gold of your days, listening to the tedious [boring], trying to improve the hopeless failure, or giving away your life to the ignorant, the common, and the vulgar. These are the sickly aims, the false ideals, of our age. Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing.... A new Hedonism— that is what our century wants. You might be its visible symbol. With your personality there is nothing you could not do. The world belongs to you for a season.... The moment I met you I saw that you were quite unconscious of what you really are, of what you really might be. There was so much in you that charmed me that I felt I must tell you something about yourself. I thought how tragic it would be if you were wasted. For there is such a little time that your youth will last—such a little time. The common hill-flowers wither [dry and die], but they blossom [flower] again. The laburnum [(laburno) a small tree with hanging bunches of yellow flowers] will be as yellow next June as it is now. In a month there will be purple stars on the clematis, and year after year the green night of its leaves will hold its purple stars. But we never get back our youth. The pulse of joy that beats in us at twenty becomes sluggish [moving, reacting or working more slowly]. Our limbs fail [le nostre membra diventano fiacche], our senses rot. We degenerate into hideous puppets, haunted [persecuted] by the memory of the passions of which we were too much afraid, and the exquisite temptations that we had not the courage to yield to [cedere]. Youth! Youth! There is absolutely nothing in the world but youth!"

Dorian Gray listened, open-eyed and wondering.

**Extra materials**

"Sin is a thing that writes itself across a man's face. It cannot be concealed. People talk sometimes of secret vices. There are no such things. If a wretched man has a vice, it shows itself in the lines of his mouth, the droop of his eyelids, the moulding of his hands even." (Basil Hallward, Chapter 12)

**Extract 4 (from Chapter 2)**

*Hallward announces that the portrait is finished. Lord Henry judges it 'the finest portrait of modern time' and calls Dorian over to look at it.*

Dorian made no answer, but passed listlessly [without energy or enthusiasm] in front of his picture and turned towards it. When he saw it he drew back, and his cheeks flushed [coloured, blushed] for a moment with pleasure. A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he
had recognized himself for the first time. He stood there motionless and in wonder, dimly [weakly] conscious that Hallward was speaking to him, but not catching the meaning of his words. The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before. Basil Hallward’s compliments had seemed to him to be merely the charming exaggerations of friendship. He had listened to them, laughed at them, forgotten them. They had not influenced his nature. Then had come Lord Henry Wotton with his strange panegyric [speech in praise of] on youth, his terrible warning of its brevity. That had stirred [strongly affected] him at the time, and now, as he stood gazing at the shadow of his own loveliness, the full reality of the description flashed across him. Yes, there would be a day when his face would be wrinkled and wizened [shrivelled, dried up and smaller and lined as a result], his eyes dim [weak] and colourless, the grace of his figure broken and deformed. The scarlet would pass away from his lips, and the gold steal [disappear unnoticed] from his hair. The life that was to make his soul would mar [disfigure, ruin] his body. He would become dreadful, hideous, and uncouth [socially unacceptable].

As he thought of it, a sharp pang [a sudden feeling of pain] of pain struck though him like a knife, and made each delicate fibre of his nature quiver [tremble]. His eyes deepened into amethyst [bluish violet], and across them came a mist of tears. He felt as is a hand of ice had been laid upon his heart.

‘Don’t you like it?’ cried Hallward at last, stung [hurt, offended] a little by the lad’s silence, not understanding what it meant.

‘Of course he likes it,’ said Lord Henry. ‘Who wouldn’t like it? It is one of the greatest things in modern art. I will give you anything you like to ask for it. I must have it.’

‘It is not my property, Harry.’

‘Whose property is it?’
‘Dorian’s, of course,’ answered the painter.
‘He’s a very lucky fellow.’

‘How sad it is!’ murmured Dorian Gray with his eyes still fixed upon his own portrait. ‘How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day of June. . . . If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that—for that—I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!’

‘You would hardly care for such an arrangement, Basil,’ cried Lord Henry, laughing. ‘It would be rather hard lines on [unfair on] your work.’

‘I should object very strongly, Harry,’ said Hallward.

Dorian Gray turned and looked at him. ‘I believe you would, Basil. You like your art better than your friends. I am no more to you than a green bronze figure. Hardly as much, I dare say.’
The painter stared in amazement. It was so unlike Dorian to speak like that. What had happened? He seemed quite angry. His face was flushed and his cheeks burning.

‘Yes,’ he continued, ‘I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose. I know, now, that when one loses one’s good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything. Your picture has taught me that. Lord Henry Wotton is perfectly right. Youth is the only thing worth having. When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself.’

Hallward turned pale and caught his hand. ‘Dorian! Dorian!’ he cried, ‘don’t talk like that. I have never had such a friend as you, and I shall never have such another. You are not jealous of material things, are you?— you who are finer than any of them!’

‘I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die. I am jealous of the portrait you have painted of me. Why should it keep what I must lose? Every moment that passes takes something from me and gives something to it. Oh, if it were only the other way! If the picture could change, and I could be always what I am now! Why did you paint it? It will mock me some day—mock me horribly!’ The hot tears welled into his eyes; he tore his hand away and, flinging himself on the divan, he buried his face in the cushions, as though he was praying.

‘This is your doing, Harry,’ said the painter bitterly.

Lord Henry shrugged his shoulders. ’It is the real Dorian Gray— that is all.’

‘It is not.’

‘If it is not, what have I to do with it?’

‘You should have gone away when I asked you,’ he muttered.

‘I stayed when you asked me,’ was Lord Henry's answer.

‘Harry, I can't quarrel with my two best friends at once, but between you both you have made me hate the finest piece of work I have ever done, and I will destroy it. What is it but canvas and colour? I will not let it come across our three lives and mar them.’

Dorian Gray lifted his golden head from the pillow, and with pallid face and tear-stained eyes, looked at him as he walked over to the deal [soft pale wood of fir or pine trees] painting-table that was set beneath the high curtained window. What was he doing there? His fingers were straying [wandering] about among the litter [confusion/mess] of tin tubes and dry brushes, seeking for something. Yes, it was for the long palette-knife, with its thin blade of lithe [flexible] steel. He had found it at last. He was going to rip up [tear up] the canvas.

With a stifled sob [singhiozzo] the lad leaped from the couch, and, rushing over to Hallward, tore the knife out of his hand, and flung [threw] it to the end of the studio. ‘Don’t, Basil, don’t!’ he cried. ‘It would be murder!’
‘I am glad you appreciate my work at last, Dorian,’ said the painter coldly when he had recovered from his surprise. ‘I never thought you would.’

‘Appreciate it? I am in love with it, Basil. It is part of myself. I feel that.’

‘Well, as soon as you are dry, you shall be varnished [verniciato], and framed [incorniciato], and sent home. Then you can do what you like with yourself.’ And he walked across the room and rang the bell for tea. ‘You will have tea, of course, Dorian? And so will you, Harry? Or do you object to such simple pleasures?’

From Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus (1589?)

Was this the face that launch'd a thousand ships,  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?

Goethe’s Faust (Faust Part I 1808; Part II 1832) cries out "Two souls, alas, dwell in my breast".

Extract 5 (from Chapter 7)

As he was turning the handle of the door, his eye fell upon the portrait Basil Hallward had painted of him. He started back as if in surprise. Then he went on into his own room, looking somewhat puzzled. After he had taken the button-hole [flower] out of his coat, he seemed to hesitate. Finally, he came back, went over to the picture, and examined it. In the dim arrested [impeded] light that struggled through the cream-coloured silk blinds [tendine], the face appeared to him to be a little changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth. It was certainly strange.

He turned round and, walking to the window, drew up the blind. The bright dawn flooded the room and swept the fantastic shadows into dusky [dark] corners, where they lay shuddering [shaking with fear (or cold)]. But the strange expression that he had noticed in the face of the portrait seemed to linger [continue to exist for longer than expected] there, to be more intensified even. The quivering [trembling] ardent [fierce] sunlight showed him the lines of cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing.

He winced [to suddenly make an expression with your face that shows that you are feeling pain or embarrassment] and, taking up from the table an oval glass framed in ivory Cupids, one of Lord Henry’s many presents to him, glanced hurriedly into its polished depths. No line like that warped [twisted the natural shape of] his red lips. What did it mean?

He rubbed his eyes, and came close to the picture, and examined it again. There were no signs of any change when he looked into the actual painting, and yet there was no doubt
that the whole expression had altered. It was not a mere fancy [a figment of his imagination] of his own. The thing was horribly apparent.

He threw himself into a chair and began to think. Suddenly there flashed across his mind what he had said in Basil Hallward’s studio the day the picture had been finished. Yes, he remembered it perfectly. He had uttered [expressed] a mad wish that he himself might remain young, and the portrait grow old; that his own beauty might be unaltered [unspoilt], and the face on the canvas bear the burden [the heavy load] of his passions and his sins; that the painted image might be seared [burnt] with the lines of suffering and thought, and that he might keep all the delicate bloom and loveliness of his then just conscious boyhood. Surely his wish had not been fulfilled? Such things were impossible. It seemed monstrous even to think of them. And, yet, there was the picture before him, with the touch of cruelty in the mouth.

Cruelty! Had he been cruel? It was the girl’s fault, not his. He had dreamed of her as a great artist, had given his love to her because he had thought her great. Then she had disappointed him.

Extra materials

Lord Henry’s advice

"I am afraid that women appreciate cruelty, downright cruelty, more than anything else. They have wonderfully primitive instincts. We have emancipated them, but they remain slaves looking for their masters, all the same. They love being dominated."

"But you must think of that lonely death in the tawdry [squalid] dressing-room simply as a strange lurid [too bright in its colours i.e. of exaggerated violence] fragment from some Jacobean tragedy, as a wonderful scene from Webster, or Ford, or Cyril Tourneur. The girl never really lived, and so she has never really died."

"the only way a woman can ever reform a man is by boring him so completely that he loses all possible interest in life."

"...one should never make one’s debut with a scandal. One should reserve that to give interest to one’s old age."

Dorian: "It has been a marvelous experience. That is all. I wonder if life has in store for me anything so marvelous"

Extract 6 (from Chapter 8)

He felt that the time had really come for making his choice. Or had his choice already been made? Yes, life had decided that for him—life, and his own infinite curiosity about life. Eternal youth, infinite passion, pleasures subtle and secret, wild joys and wilder
sins—he was to have all these things. The portrait was to bear the burden of his shame: that was all.

A feeling of pain crept over him as he thought of the desecration that was in store [waiting to happen] for the fair face on the canvas. Once, in boyish mockery of Narcissus, he had kissed, or feigned [pretended] to kiss, those painted lips that now smiled so cruelly at him. Morning after morning he had sat before the portrait wondering at its beauty, almost enamoured of it, as it seemed to him at times. Was it to alter now with every mood to which he yielded [surrendered]? Was it to become a monstrous and loathsome thing, to be hidden away in a locked room, to be shut out from the sunlight that had so often touched to brighter gold the waving wonder of its hair? The pity of it! the pity of it!

For a moment, he thought of praying that the horrible sympathy that existed between him and the picture might cease. It had changed in answer to a prayer; perhaps in answer to a prayer it might remain unchanged. And yet, who, that knew anything about life, would surrender the chance of remaining always young, however fantastic that chance might be, or with what fateful consequences it might be fraught [filled with]? Besides, was it really under his control? Had it indeed been prayer that had produced the substitution? Might there not be some curious scientific reason for it all? If thought could exercise its influence upon a living organism, might not thought exercise an influence upon dead and inorganic things? Nay, without thought or conscious desire, might not things external to ourselves vibrate in unison with our moods and passions, atom calling to atom in secret love or strange affinity? But the reason was of no importance. He would never again tempt by a prayer any terrible power. If the picture was to alter, it was to alter. That was all. Why inquire too closely into it?

For there would be a real pleasure in watching it. He would be able to follow his mind into its secret places. This portrait would be to him the most magical of mirrors. As it had revealed to him his own body, so it would reveal to him his own soul. And when winter came upon it, he would still be standing where spring trembles on the verge of summer. When the blood crept from its face, and left behind a pallid mask of chalk with leaden eyes, he would keep the glamour of boyhood. Not one blossom of his loveliness would ever fade. Not one pulse of his life would ever weaken. Like the gods of the Greeks, he would be strong, and fleet, and joyous. What did it matter what happened to the coloured image on the canvas? He would be safe. That was everything.

He drew the screen back into its former place in front of the picture, smiling as he did so, and passed into his bedroom, where his valet was already waiting for him. An hour later he was at the opera, and Lord Henry was leaning over his chair.

Extract 5 from Chapter 10
When Dorian returns to the library having hidden his portrait, he finds that Lord Henry has sent him a note and rather worn book covered in yellow paper. The note is to tell him that he has also sent Dorian a newspaper in which he has circled a brief paragraph about Sibyl Vane. Dorian reads it and tears it up in disgust and distaste.
His eye fell on the yellow book that Lord Henry had sent him. What was it, he wondered. He went towards the little, pearl-coloured octagonal stand [a table or a vertical structure where things are displayed or advertised, for example at an exhibition] that had always looked to him like the work of some strange Egyptian bees that wrought [worked] in silver, and taking up the volume, flung [threw] himself into an arm-chair and began to turn over the leaves [pages]. After a few minutes he became absorbed. It was the strangest book that he had ever read. It seemed to him that in exquisite raiment [clothing], and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sins of the world were passing in dumb show [mime] before him. Things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which he had never dreamed were gradually revealed.

It was a novel without a plot and with only one character, being, indeed, simply a psychological study of a certain young Parisian who spent his life trying to realize in the nineteenth century all the passions and modes of thought that belonged to every century except his own, and to sum up, as it were, in himself the various moods through which the world-spirit had ever passed, loving for their mere artificiality those renunciations that men have unwisely called virtue, as much as those natural rebellions that wise men still call sin. The style in which it was written was that curious jewelled style, vivid and obscure at once, full of argot [jargon] and of archaisms, of technical expressions and of elaborate paraphrases, that characterizes the work of some of the finest artists of the French school of Symbolistes. There were in it metaphors as monstrous as orchids and as subtle in colour. The life of the senses was described in the terms of mystical philosophy. One hardly knew at times whether one was reading the spiritual ecstasies of some mediaeval saint or the morbid confessions of a modern sinner. It was a poisonous book. The heavy odour of incense seemed to cling about its pages and to trouble the brain. The mere cadence [the rise and fall of the voice] of the sentences, the subtle monotony of their music, so full as it was of complex refrains and movements elaborately repeated, produced in the mind of the lad, as he passed from chapter to chapter, a form of reverie [day dream], a malady of dreaming, that made him unconscious of the falling day and creeping shadows.

Extract 6 (from Chapter 11)

For years, Dorian Gray could not free himself from the influence of this book. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he never sought [tried] to free himself from it. He procured from Paris no less than nine large-paper copies of the first edition, and had them bound [rilegato] in different colours, so that they might suit his various moods and the changing fancies of a nature over which he seemed, at times, to have almost entirely lost control. The hero, the wonderful young Parisian in whom the romantic and the scientific temperaments were so strangely blended, became to him a kind of prefiguring type of himself. And, indeed, the whole book seemed to him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it.

In one point he was more fortunate than the novel’s fantastic hero. He never knew—never, indeed, had any cause to know—that somewhat grotesque dread of mirrors, and
polished metal surfaces, and still water which came upon the young Parisian so early in his life, and was occasioned by the sudden decay of a beauty that had once, apparently, been so remarkable. It was with an almost cruel joy— and perhaps in nearly every joy, as certainly in every pleasure, cruelty has its place—that he used to read the latter part of the book, with its really tragic, if somewhat overemphasized, account of the sorrow and despair of one who had himself lost what in others, and the world, he had most dearly valued.

For the wonderful beauty that had so fascinated Basil Hallward, and many others besides him, seemed never to leave him. Even those who had heard the most evil things against him— and from time to time strange rumours about his mode of life crept through London and became the chatter of the clubs— could not believe anything to his dishonour when they saw him. He had always the look of one who had kept himself unspotted from the world. Men who talked grossly [vulgar] became silent when Dorian Gray entered the room. There was something in the purity of his face that rebuked [reprimanded] them. His mere presence seemed to recall to them the memory of the innocence that they had tarnished [spoilt]. They wondered how one so charming and graceful as he was could have escaped the stain [corruption] of an age that was at once sordid and sensual.

Often, on returning home from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends, or thought that they were so, he himself would creep upstairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul. He would examine with minute care, and sometimes with a monstrous and terrible delight, the hideous lines that seared the wrinkling forehead or crawled [moved gradually] around the heavy sensual mouth, wondering sometimes which were the more horrible, the signs of sin or the signs of age. He would place his white hands beside the coarse bloated [swollen (gonfiato)] hands of the picture, and smile. He mocked [derided] the misshapen body and the failing [weakening] limbs.

There were moments, indeed, at night, when, lying sleepless in his own delicately scented chamber, or in the sordid room of the little ill-famed tavern near the docks which, under an assumed name and in disguise, it was his habit to frequent, he would think of the ruin he had brought upon his soul with a pity that was all the more poignant because it was purely selfish. But moments such as these were rare. That curiosity about life which Lord Henry had first stirred in him, as they sat together in the garden of their friend, seemed to increase with gratification. The more he knew, the more he desired to know. He had mad hungers that grew more ravenous as he fed them.
Extract 7 (from Chapter 13)

He passed out of the room and began the ascent, Basil Hallward following close behind. They walked softly, as men do instinctively at night. The lamp cast fantastic shadows on the wall and staircase. A rising wind made some of the windows rattle.

When they reached the top landing, Dorian set the lamp down on the floor, and taking out the key, turned it in the lock. "You insist on knowing, Basil?" he asked in a low voice. "Yes."

"I am delighted," he answered, smiling. Then he added, somewhat harshly, "You are the one man in the world who is entitled to know everything about me. You have had more to do with my life than you think"; and, taking up the lamp, he opened the door and went in. A cold current of air passed them, and the light shot up for a moment in a flame of murky orange. He shuddered. "Shut the door behind you," he whispered, as he placed the lamp on the table.

Hallward glanced round him with a puzzled expression. The room looked as if it had not been lived in for years. A faded Flemish tapestry, a curtained picture, an old Italian cassone, and an almost empty book-case—that was all that it seemed to contain, besides a chair and a table. As Dorian Gray was lighting a half-burned candle that was standing on the mantelshelf, he saw that the whole place was covered with dust and that the carpet was in holes. A mouse ran scuffling behind the wainscoting. There was a damp odour of mildew.

"So you think that it is only God who sees the soul, Basil? Draw that curtain back, and you will see mine."

The voice that spoke was cold and cruel. "You are mad, Dorian, or playing a part," muttered Hallward, frowning.

"You won't? Then I must do it myself," said the young man, and he tore the curtain from its rod and flung it on the ground.

An exclamation of horror broke from the painter's lips as he saw in the dim light the hideous face on the canvas grinning at him. There was something in its expression that filled him with disgust and loathing. Good heavens! it was Dorian Gray's own face that he was looking at! The horror, whatever it was, had not yet entirely spoiled that marvellous beauty. There was still some gold in the thinning hair and some scarlet on the sensual mouth. The sodden eyes had kept something of the loveliness of their blue, the noble curves had not yet completely passed away from chiselled nostrils and from plastic throat. Yes, it was Dorian himself. But who had done it? He seemed to recognize his own brushwork, and the frame was his own design. The idea was monstrous, yet he felt afraid. He seized the lighted candle, and held it to the picture. In the left-hand corner was his own name, traced in long letters of bright vermilion.

It was some foul parody, some infamous ignoble satire. He had never done that. Still, it was his own picture. He knew it, and he felt as if his blood had changed in a moment from fire to sluggish ice. His own picture! What did it mean? Why had it altered? He
turned and looked at Dorian Gray with the eyes of a sick man. His mouth twitched, and his parched tongue seemed unable to articulate. He passed his hand across his forehead. It was dank with clammy sweat.

The young man was leaning against the mantelshelf, watching him with that strange expression that one sees on the faces of those who are absorbed in a play when some great artist is acting. There was neither real sorrow in it nor real joy. There was simply the passion of the spectator, with perhaps a flicker of triumph in his eyes. He had taken the flower out of his coat, and was smelling it, or pretending to do so.

“What does this mean?” cried Hallward, at last. His own voice sounded shrill and curious in his ears.

“Years ago, when I was a boy,” said Dorian Gray, crushing the flower in his hand, “you met me, flattered me, and taught me to be vain of my good looks. One day you introduced me to a friend of yours, who explained to me the wonder of youth, and you finished a portrait of me that revealed to me the wonder of beauty. In a mad moment that, even now, I don’t know whether I regret or not, I made a wish, perhaps you would call it a prayer....”

“I remember it! Oh, how well I remember it! No! the thing is impossible. The room is damp. Mildew has got into the canvas. The paints I used had some wretched mineral poison in them. I tell you the thing is impossible.”

“Ah, what is impossible?” murmured the young man, going over to the window and leaning his forehead against the cold, mist-stained glass.

“You told me you had destroyed it.”
“I was wrong. It has destroyed me.”
“I don’t believe it is my picture.”
“Can’t you see your ideal in it?” said Dorian bitterly.
“My ideal, as you call it...”
“As you called it.”
“There was nothing evil in it, nothing shameful. You were to me such an ideal as I shall never meet again. This is the face of a satyr.”
“It is the face of my soul.”

“Christ! what a thing I must have worshipped! It has the eyes of a devil.”

“Each of us has heaven and hell in him, Basil,” cried Dorian with a wild gesture of despair.

Hallward turned again to the portrait and gazed at it. “My God! If it is true,” he exclaimed, “and this is what you have done with your life, why, you must be worse even than those who talk against you fancy you to be!” He held the light up again to the canvas and examined it. The surface seemed to be quite undisturbed and as he had left it. It was from within, apparently, that the foulness and horror had come. Through some strange
quickening of inner life the leprosies of sin were slowly eating the thing away. The
rotting of a corpse in a watery grave was not so fearful.

His hand shook, and the candle fell from its socket on the floor and lay there sputtering.
He placed his foot on it and put it out. Then he flung himself into the rickety chair that
was standing by the table and buried his face in his hands.

“Good God, Dorian, what a lesson! What an awful lesson!” There was no answer, but he
could hear the young man sobbing at the window. “Pray, Dorian, pray,” he murmured.
“What is it that one was taught to say in one’s boyhood? ‘Lead us not into temptation.
Forgive us our sins. Wash away our iniquities.’ Let us say that together. The prayer of
your pride has been answered. The prayer of your repentance will be answered also. I
worshipped you too much. I am punished for it. You worshipped yourself too much. We
are both punished.”

Dorian Gray turned slowly around and looked at him with tear-dimmed eyes. “It is too
late, Basil,” he faltered.

“It is never too late, Dorian. Let us kneel down and try if we cannot remember a prayer.
Isn’t there a verse somewhere, ‘Though your sins be as scarlet, yet I will make them as
white as snow’?”

“Those words mean nothing to me now.”

“Hush! Don’t say that. You have done enough evil in your life. My God! Don’t you see that
accursed thing leering at us?”

Dorian Gray glanced at the picture, and suddenly an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for
Basil Hallward came over him, as though it had been suggested to him by the image on
the canvas, whispered into his ear by those grinning lips. The mad passions of a hunted
animal stirred within him, and he loathed the man who was seated at the table, more
than in his whole life he had ever loathed anything. He glanced wildly around. Something
glimmered on the top of the painted chest that faced him. His eye fell on it. He knew
what it was. It was a knife that he had brought up, some days before, to cut a piece of
cord, and had forgotten to take away with him. He moved slowly towards it, passing
Hallward as he did so. As soon as he got behind him, he seized it and turned round.
Hallward stirred in his chair as if he was going to rise. He rushed at him and dug the
knife into the great vein that is behind the ear, crushing the man’s head down on the
table and stabbing again and again.

**Extract 8 (from Chapter 13)**

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“Yes.”

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Extract 9 (from Chapter 20)

As he thought of Hetty Merton, he began to wonder if the portrait in the locked room had changed. Surely it was not still so horrible as it had been? Perhaps if his life became pure, he would be able to expel every sign of evil passion from the face. Perhaps the signs of evil had already gone away. He would go and look.

He took the lamp from the table and crept upstairs. As he unbarred the door, a smile of joy flitted across his strangely young-looking face and lingered for a moment about his lips. Yes, he would be good, and the hideous thing that he had hidden away would no longer be a terror to him. He felt as if the load had been lifted from him already.

He went in quietly, locking the door behind him, as was his custom, and dragged the purple hanging from the portrait. A cry of pain and indignation broke from him. He could see no change, save that in the eyes there was a look of cunning and in the mouth the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite. The thing was still loathsome—more loathsome, if
possible, than before—and the scarlet dew that spotted the hand seemed brighter, and more like blood newly spilled. Then he trembled. Had it been merely vanity that had made him do his one good deed? Or the desire for a new sensation, as Lord Henry had hinted, with his mocking laugh? Or that passion to act a part that sometimes makes us do things finer than we are ourselves? Or, perhaps, all these? And why was the red stain larger than it had been? It seemed to have crept like a horrible disease over the wrinkled fingers. There was blood on the painted feet, as though the thing had dripped—blood even on the hand that had not held the knife. Confess? Did it mean that he was to confess? To give himself up and be put to death? He laughed. He felt that the idea was monstrous. Besides, even if he did confess, who would believe him? There was no trace of the murdered man anywhere. Everything belonging to him had been destroyed. He himself had burned what had been below-stairs. The world would simply say that he was mad. They would shut him up if he persisted in his story.... Yet it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement. There was a God who called upon men to tell their sins to earth as well as to heaven. Nothing that he could do would cleanse him till he had told his own sin. His sin? He shrugged his shoulders. The death of Basil Hallward seemed very little to him. He was thinking of Hetty Merton. For it was an unjust mirror, this mirror of his soul that he was looking at. Vanity? Curiosity? Hypocrisy? Had there been nothing more in his renunciation than that? There had been something more. At least he thought so. But who could tell? ... No. There had been nothing more. Through vanity he had spared her. In hypocrisy he had worn the mask of goodness. For curiosity’s sake he had tried the denial of self. He recognized that now.

But this murder—was it to dog him all his life? Was he always to be burdened by his past? Was he really to confess? Never. There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The picture itself—that was evidence. He would destroy it. Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing old. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away, he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy. It had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience. He would destroy it.

He looked round and saw the knife that had stabbed Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened. As it had killed the painter, so it would kill the painter’s work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-life, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and stabbed the picture with it.

There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke and crept out of their rooms. Two gentlemen, who were passing in the square below, stopped and looked up at the great house. They walked on till they met a policeman and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but
there was no answer. Except for a light in one of the top windows, the house was all
dark. After a time, he went away and stood in an adjoining portico and watched.

“Whose house is that, Constable?” asked the elder of the two gentlemen.

“Mr. Dorian Gray’s, sir,” answered the policeman.

They looked at each other, as they walked away, and sneered. One of them was Sir Henry
Ashton’s uncle.

Inside, in the servants’ part of the house, the half-clad domestics were talking in low
whispers to each other. Old Mrs. Leaf was crying and wringing her hands. Francis was as
pale as death.

After about a quarter of an hour, he got the coachman and one of the footmen and crept
upstairs. They knocked, but there was no reply. They called out. Everything was still.
Finally, after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof and dropped down on
to the balcony. The windows yielded easily—their bolts were old.

When they entered, they found hanging upon the wall a splendid portrait of their master
as they had last seen him, in all the wonder of his exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on
the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a knife in his heart. He was withered,
wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they
recognized who it was.