

1: Oscar Wilde Literary Criticism

A selective list of online literary criticism for the Victorian-era Irish playwright and novelist Oscar Wilde, favoring signed articles by recognized scholars and articles published in peer-reviewed sources.

The artist is the creator of beautiful things. 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. 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. 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. Meet Our Authors Although our authors live in different parts of the world, and walk various paths of life, they all share the general conviction that literature is a worth-while endeavor which unifies us as a community. And it is in such a community that literature is most ably produced. Read More What is Literature? The members of The Exiles share the conviction that literature is one of the modes of knowledge through which truth becomes accessible to man. The contemplation of a literary work of art is a vision of that deeper reality which we mean by the term Truth. Read More Who are the Exiles? The Exiles were formally established in June as a literary club in the tradition of the Inklings of Oxford and the Fugitives of Vanderbilt University.

2: The Importance of Being Earnest Literary Analysis - The Paper Guide

Oscar Wilde Was a Strange and Brilliant Man. Whenever someone mentions Oscar Wilde, people usually think of one thing. He was gay. He was actually arrested for homosexual acts back in (yeah, they could arrest you for that back then).

Only *The Importance of Being Earnest* really delighted him. *De Profundis*, written while Wilde was in prison, is perhaps his most personal statement. Wilde liked his less familiar plays better than those that brought him fame and a fleeting period of economic security. *Vera*, written when he was twenty-five, is a flawed play about revolutionary politics in Russia. It is psychologically unconvincing and painfully melodramatic. It had opened in New York in August, 1899, but closed after seven performances that evoked scathing reviews. *The Duchess of Padua* pb. Despite some appealing lines—found to some degree in everything that Wilde wrote—the play is overblown, more suited to the seventeenth century than the nineteenth century stage. The directions for the staging capitalize on every dramatic possibility. The notable personality differences between Herod and Herodias are extremely well presented by deft use of dialogue. Both are evil, but they are evil in markedly different ways, and Wilde projects both convincingly within their individual spheres of evil. In this play, Wilde is at the height of his remarkable ability to reveal his characters through conversation without letting the dialogue degenerate into tedium. In his more popular plays, Wilde borrows heavily from the melodrama of his day, but he does so without descending into melodramatic presentation. Drama is not supposed to be truth in a narrow sense, but, inevitably, like all the other arts, represents Truth in a broader, philosophical sense. Perhaps to understand some of what Wilde is attempting in his social dramas, one has to consider what the French Impressionist artists painting around the same time were trying to achieve. In eschewing photographic realism, they invented a new, profound, and honest, if somewhat stylized, realism. One must remember that Wilde, unlike the French Impressionists, was producing satire within the staid confines of Victorian England. In many ways a classic gothic novel, it was regarded by many as the quintessence of Decadence, an effect that Wilde strove strenuously to achieve. *Dorian Gray*, having had his portrait painted by Basil Hallward, expresses his wish that the portrait age while he remain as he is. Gray gets his wish. The portrait not only ages but also shows the effect of an existence that becomes increasingly depraved and reckless. Gray, no longer able to display the painting, locks it away in the attic, where it gradually turns into a frightening picture of a depraved man made increasingly hideous by the secret activities in his life. Its subject eventually shows the portrait to Basil Hallward, its creator, but then must kill him to protect his dark secret. The portrait evolves into that of a murderer. In this book, Wilde stands conventional morality on its head, as he often did in his writing and living. If contemporary critics called *The Picture of Dorian Gray* immoral, as many did, Wilde could respond with impunity that a book is neither moral or immoral; it is merely well written or badly written. Few could deny that this novel is well written. Play *Lady Windermere* is forced to reconsider her harsh judgments of Mrs. Erlynne unbeknownst to her, her own mother when the latter saves Lady Windermere from disgrace. The mistaken identity remains mistaken, the lost child Lady Windermere never knows that Mrs. Erlynne is her true mother, and the romantic triangle is really not a romantic triangle, but only appears to be. Her husband is giving a ball in honor of the occasion. At first, Lady Windermere does not believe the reports, but the seed of suspicion has been sown. Hoping to prove her husband innocent, she goes to his desk and looks into his checkbook, finding nothing untoward. Her mind is relieved, but then she notices a second checkbook, this one locked. She breaks the lock, opens the checkbook, and, to her horror, finds that Windermere has written large and regular checks to Mrs. Erlynne, a woman with a past. When she confronts her husband with this information, he is horrified that she has broken into his checkbook and defends Mrs. Not only does he defend this fallen woman, but he insists that Lady Windermere invite her to the birthday ball to give her a chance to regain some of her squandered social stature. When Lady Windermere refuses, Windermere himself delivers an invitation to Mrs. Lady Windermere threatens to strike Mrs. Erlynne with her fan, a birthday gift from Windermere, if she comes to the ball. In the next scene, the ball is under way. The butler announces the guests as they enter. He recites a string of names, at the end of

which is Mrs. Erlynne is unaccompanied and untitled. Confronted by this scarlet woman, Lady Windermere drops her fan and bows mechanically. When she overhears Mrs. Erlynne asking Windermere for a large sum of money, she flees from the room. She writes a letter to her husband announcing that she is going to run away with Lord Darlington, a Beau Brummel type who has rooms nearby. Erlynne finds the letter and reads it. As they talk, they hear voices in the hall, those of Windermere and Lord Darlington. Lady Windermere panics, but the resolute Mrs. Erlynne stashes her behind a curtain so that she will not be discovered. In her haste to hide, Lady Windermere leaves her fan behind. Erlynne makes her self-sacrifice at this point, coming into the room and saying casually that she took the wrong fan at the party. The next day, it is Lady Windermere who is charitable toward Mrs. Erlynne; Lord Windermere is condemnatory. Yet the day is saved when Mrs. Erlynne comes by to announce that she is leaving London, and that she is going to marry an elderly, titled admirer. This play is clearly about appearances and about the kinds of moral judgments that Victorian standards encouraged. Its epigrams are spirited, memorable, and profuse. Lady Windermere, who has been accepting of these standards, is now forced to reconsider her stand. Erlynne makes her realize that one cannot divide humanity into those who are good and those who are bad. In this play, Wilde pits his art against the philistinism of the materialistic Victorian age, and he does so with sufficient wit that he avoids the pitfall of lapsing into moral diatribe. He contends that to be understood is to be found out. Obviously, this emphasis is an example of how Wilde frequently sets conventional morality on its head and causes people to rethink their bland acceptance of the status quo. By never revealing to Lady Windermere that Mrs. The Importance of Being Earnest First produced: Play Jack Worthing discovers that his real name is Ernest, making him acceptable to Gwendolen, his lady love, who cannot love anyone who is not named Ernest. A Trivial Comedy for Serious People. Worthing reveals that Mr. To escape from this atmosphere, he has assumed, during his frequent visits to London, the name and generally reprobate behavior of an imaginary brother named Ernest. Meanwhile, both Jack and Algernon are individually consorting with Dr. Lady Bracknell knows the name and insists that Miss Prism be brought to her. It is revealed that, years before, Miss Prism had been nurse to a family to which Lady Bracknell was connected. One day, Miss Prism, in a state of confusion, thoughtlessly placed the manuscript of a book that she had written in the bassinet of the baby in her care and absent-mindedly placed the baby in the handbag that should have held the manuscript. She deposited the handbag in the parcel room of Victoria Station, and the baby was never restored to its rightful family. The play, which opened in London on St. The Importance of Being Earnest succeeded, not in spite of its unbelievable characters, its improbable situations, its stilted dialogue, and its trivial ideas, but because of them. There is a real kinship between the two works despite their obvious differences and the differences of their intended audiences. The Picture of Dorian Gray First published: Novel Dorian Gray, wishing never to age, wants his portrait to age for him and gets his wish. Concerned with little but appearances, he lives a reckless, nonproductive existence. A crucial event in his life comes when Dorian meets Lord Henry Wotton in the studio of Basil Hallward, an artist, who has painted a portrait of the breathtakingly beautiful Dorian, now in his early twenties. Dorian now utters a Faust-like proposition. He expresses a willingness to surrender his soul if he can maintain his youth and physical beauty and have his portrait age in his place. Dorian hardly expects to have his wish granted and thinks little more of it. He is busy courting Sybil Vane, a talented young actress, who falls in love with him. In time, the very ability that first drew Dorian to Sybil has disappeared, and he rejects her unfeelingly. Having lost Dorian and her acting ability simultaneously, Sybil kills herself. When all of this happens, Dorian notices subtle changes in the portrait, which is still on display in his residence. A hint of cruelty, a line near the mouth, forms, but Dorian thinks little of it. Meanwhile, Lord Henry leads Dorian into all kinds of arcane activities that, in the tradition of the gothic novel, are suggested but never revealed explicitly, making them seem, perhaps, more horrible than they actually are. By the time Dorian is thirty-eight years oldâ€”still looking twentyâ€”the portrait has changed so drastically that it must be hidden under lock and key. Then he turns on Basil and stabs him. To conceal the crime, Dorian forces a chemist whom he has ruined to use his knowledge of chemistry to destroy the body. Finally, weeks later, shaken by what he has become, Dorian tells Lord Henry that he is going to reform. On returning home, he looks at the portrait and, seeing further deterioration in the visage before him, grabs the knife that he has plunged into

Basil and sinks it into the grotesque portrait.

3: Oscar Wilde Analysis - www.enganchecubano.com

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Click to share on Pocket Opens in new window The 19th century was fixated on manhood. Much has been written about the constraints on Victorian women but gender expectations for men were no less real, although less pronounced. The debates swarming around Wilde were personal, but they also touched on fundamental questions about what made a man a man. Poetry was a battleground for masculinity, and Wilde had entered the fray. His reply came in the form of *Leaves of Grass*, an poetry collection that sought to establish the nobility of the American working man. Emerson had given much thought to these matters. Here, finally, was an American poet who embraced the totality of man, and celebrated him as a fully embodied individual. For a long time, sexuality had been excluded from literature. The place to do it, he said, was in American literature. To Whitman, the notion felt clankingly old-fashioned. By now Wilde realized that he had to advertise himself—it was a necessity if his lectures were not to be an outright failure. It was then that an enterprising young publisher named Joseph Marshall Stoddart suggested that Whitman and Wilde share an open carriage ride through wintry Philadelphia—a proposition designed to attract maximum publicity. Whitman quickly put an end to that pipe dream. If Whitman read the Philadelphia Press a few days later, he would have noticed the aesthete fawning over him on page 2. I do so hope to meet Mr. The key, this time, was one Wilde had not tried before: The next morning, Whitman loaded a pen with black ink and shot off a quick note inviting Wilde to visit him that afternoon. When he was 11 years old, he and his mother read *Leaves of Grass* together. The book was not then in wide circulation, but Speranza managed to get her hands on one of the earliest copies and made a habit of reading passages aloud to her young son. This boyhood Whitman was probably quite different from the edition which introduced the American poet to most British readers. Little did they know how much had been cut from the American *Leaves of Grass* to make the British version. Walt Whitman am I, of mighty Manhattan the son, Turbulent, fleshy and sensual, eating, drinking and breeding; I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart; Copulation is no more rank to me than death is. The modern ear may hear in these breathless enumerations a more-is-more exuberance. Whitman was a daring choice of reading material for mother and son. I am enamoured of growing outdoors, Of men that live among cattle, or taste of the ocean or woods, Of the builders and steerers of ships, and the wielders of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses, I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out. What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me, Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns, Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me. So long as his adventures remained intellectual and sartorial, he was happy to share them with his mother. As an undergraduate at Trinity College Dublin, he would invite a friend to her salon in Merrion Square. We have founded a society for the suppression of virtue. As a result of a paralytic stroke, he seemed much older than his years. His snow white beard spread down his neck and onto his chest. But on the frontispiece of the most recent edition of *Leaves of Grass*, he appeared to have stopped the clock. There, forever fixed, he still appeared as a cocky year-old workman-dandy—only a few years older than Wilde was now. There was good reason to see them as poetic alter egos, since their writings were, by now, both notorious for indulging in sensuality. The simplest, most natural, and strongest character I have ever met in my life. He was usually stand-offish before he admitted an admirer into his life. As a young journalist in the first half of the 19th century, asking questions had been the backbone of his approach. After leaving school at 11, he learned the printing trade, and by 18 he was working as a newspaper editor and journalist. When he gave up journalism, he transferred his straightforward, vivid reporting style over to the craft of poetry. Often, his poems took the shape of a one-sided conversation, a sort of dialogue between himself and an imaginary interlocutor. No reporters were invited to witness the meeting between Whitman and Wilde. This was a strange choice for two dandyish men who loved self-promotion, but it was a canny one: He seemed to me like a great big, splendid boy. The old poet had let the young aesthete hold forth on the intentions of his school of

art. He had his private doubts about Aestheticism, but he was personally encouraging to Wilde. Whitman opened up about problems he was trying to solve in his own poetry—issues that included sensuality, which he thought essential and his critics thought obscene. What revolutions did he have in store? The white-beard urged the smooth-faced aesthete to have the courage of his opinions. In the newspaper articles that inevitably followed this encounter, the poets endorsed each other. Used with permission of Oxford University Press.

4: Dorian Gray and the Moral Imagination

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content. OSCAR WILDE, HIS CRITICISM AND HIS CRITICS By Bruce Bashford (SUNY at Stony Brook) If you ask colleagues to name some of the valuable treatments of Oscar Wilde's criticism, you are likely to "be told there aren't any.

He is the main character because he responsible to the major plot developments; most action revolves around him: He is a man of mysterious background: He now cares for the grand-daughter of his deceased patron. Therefore, he is able to go to the city whenever he likes. In the city, he is known as Ernest. This becomes complicated when he falls in love with Gwendolen, whom he cannot marry because her aristocratic mother does not approve of his background. Furthermore, she could not love him if his name were anything but Ernest. When Gwendolen appears at his country house, Jack is discovered as a phony. However, he is forgiven and taken back by Gwendolen. At the end of the play he discovers that he is who he was pretending to be all along. He was misplaced at Victoria Station by Miss Prism now the governess of his ward when he was a baby. He is really a man named Ernest, and really is the brother of Algernon. He and Gwendolen are allowed to marry. This movement, while it did not affect poetry in quite the same way, revitalized drama and novels of the late 19th century. This philosophy tended to keep art from preaching about political issues, and serve to entertain and celebrate beauty. Therefore, when analyzing *The Importance of Being Ernest*, one must consider it is a piece of entertainment, which did in fact delight its contemporary audiences. Wilde is not seeking to convey a deep, complex message. Its value stems from the source of its humor-its absurdities, and its criticisms. Elements of this play were comical to its audience for a reason; these reasons can tell us much about the world of s England. Furthermore, she loves him because of his name. Here is the first example of irony. The rising action of the plot occurs throughout Act II, and is the longest part of the plot. The climactic moment is when the women confront the men about what they have discovered by talking-they can not both be Ernest Worthing. The men confess and the women retreat The women easily forgive the men and the denouement arises with a surprise ending. Also in the resolution, is an excellent example of the understatement, which occurs throughout. To Miss Prism, it does not seem to be a grave occurrence that she switched a baby and her novel, losing both priceless items. This play is equipped with many, many epithets-paradoxical, witty phrases. These phrases serve to add to the comedy value of the play. An example if one of these phrases is when Cecily says to Algernon: This is humorous, because to Victorians-as well as to ourselves-it is important to keep business engagements. Yet, this statement is not amusing to the characters in the play.

5: Project MUSE - Oscar Wilde, His Criticism and His Critics

One of the biggest techniques that literary critics have come to relate to Oscar Wilde is his use of aestheticism. He was obviously very into beauty and art which was the basis of his life, and therefore, his writing.

When the church was closed, the records were moved to the nearby St. She then asked Father Fox to baptise her sons. After a few weeks I baptized these two children, Lady Wilde herself being present on the occasion. Henry Wilson, born in , and Emily and Mary Wilde, born in and , respectively, of different maternity to Henry. Sir William acknowledged paternity of his illegitimate children and provided for their education, but they were reared by his relatives rather than by his wife or with his legitimate children. Isola died aged nine of meningitis. Trinity, one of the leading classical schools, placed him with scholars such as R. Mahaffy who inspired his interest in Greek literature. He presented a paper titled "Aesthetic Morality". Magdalen College, Oxford[edit] At Magdalen, he read Greats from to , and from there he applied to join the Oxford Union , but failed to be elected. Neither his father, who threatened to cut off his funds, nor Mahaffy thought much of the plan; but mostly Wilde, the supreme individualist, balked at the last minute from pledging himself to any formal creed. On the appointed day of his baptism, Father Bowden received a bunch of altar lilies instead. Wilde retained a lifelong interest in Catholic theology and liturgy. This attitude resulted in his being rusticated for one term, when he nonchalantly returned to college late from a trip to Greece with Prof. Pater gave Wilde his sense of almost flippant devotion to art, though it was John Ruskin who gave him a purpose for it. Ruskin admired beauty, but believed it must be allied with, and applied to, moral good. Sheppard of the Original Christy Minstrels made it famous and other performers sang it for decades afterwards. She became engaged to Bram Stoker and they married in He had been publishing lyrics and poems in magazines since entering Trinity College, especially in Kottabos and the Dublin University Magazine. In mid, at 27 years old, Poems collected, revised and expanded his poetic efforts. It was bound in a rich, enamel, parchment cover embossed with gilt blossom and printed on hand-made Dutch paper; Wilde presented many copies to the dignitaries and writers who received him over the next few years. The librarian, who had requested the book for the library, returned the presentation copy to Wilde with a note of apology. Wilde journeyed on the SS Arizona , arriving 2 January , and disembarking the following day. Higginson , a cleric and abolitionist, wrote in "Unmanly Manhood" of his general concern that Wilde, "whose only distinction is that he has written a thin volume of very mediocre verse", would improperly influence the behaviour of men and women. While there he met Robert Sherard , whom he entertained constantly. He reportedly entertained the other passengers with " Ave Imperatrix! She happened to be visiting Dublin in , when Wilde was lecturing at the Gaiety Theatre. The couple had two sons, Cyril and Vyvyan Wilde often liked to appear idle, though in fact he worked hard; by the late s he was a father, an editor, and a writer. He enjoyed reviewing and journalism; the form suited his style. He could organise and share his views on art, literature and life, yet in a format less tedious than lecturing. Buoyed up, his reviews were largely chatty and positive. When Charles Stewart Parnell was falsely accused of inciting murder Wilde wrote a series of astute columns defending him in the Daily Chronicle. Two pieces of fiction were usually included, one to be read to children, the other for the ladies themselves. Wilde worked hard to solicit good contributions from his wide artistic acquaintance, including those of Lady Wilde and his wife Constance, while his own "Literary and Other Notes" were themselves popular and amusing. Whilst Wilde the journalist supplied articles under the guidance of his editors, Wilde the editor is forced to learn to manipulate the literary marketplace on his own terms. Wilde published The Happy Prince and Other Tales in , and had been regularly writing fairy stories for magazines. The only evidence for this is two supposed puns within the sonnets themselves. Though containing nothing but "special pleading", it would not, he says "be possible to build an airier castle in Spain than this of the imaginary William Hughes" we continue listening nonetheless to be charmed by the telling. The Soul of Man under Socialism , The Decay of Lying , and The Critic as Artist Sheet music cover, s Wilde, having tired of journalism, had been busy setting out his aesthetic ideas more fully in a series of longer prose pieces which were published in the major literary-intellectual journals of the day. In January , The Decay of Lying: Having always excelled as a wit and

raconteur, he often composed by assembling phrases, bons mots and witticisms into a longer, cohesive work. There lies its immense value. For what it seeks is to disturb monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine. At the same time, he stressed that the government most amenable to artists was no government at all. Wilde envisioned a society where mechanisation has freed human effort from the burden of necessity, effort which can instead be expended on artistic creation. George Orwell summarised, "In effect, the world will be populated by artists, each striving after perfection in the way that seems best to him. Intentions packaged revisions of four essays: The Picture of Dorian Gray[edit] Main article: When Gray, who has a "face like ivory and rose leaves", sees his finished portrait, he breaks down. Distraught that his beauty will fade while the portrait stays beautiful, he inadvertently makes a Faustian bargain in which only the painted image grows old while he stays beautiful and young. For Wilde, the purpose of art would be to guide life as if beauty alone were its object.

6: Literary criticism of Oscar Wilde. - Brigham Young University

Flamboyant man-about-town, Oscar Wilde had a reputation that preceded him, especially in his early career. He was born to a middle-class Irish family (his father was a surgeon) and was trained as a scholarship boy at Trinity College, Dublin.

Download this article Oscar Wilde prefaces his novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, with a reflection on art, the artist, and the utility of both. After careful scrutiny, he concludes: In this one sentence, Wilde encapsulates the complete principles of the Aesthetic Movement popular in Victorian England. That is to say, real art takes no part in molding the social or moral identities of society, nor should it. Art should be beautiful and pleasure its observer, but to imply further-reaching influence would be a mistake. Rather, the proponents of this philosophy extended it to life itself. To the aesthete, the ideal life mimics art; it is beautiful, but quite useless beyond its beauty, concerned only with the individual living it. Influences on others, if existent, are trivial at best. Many have read *The Picture of Dorian Gray* as a novelized sponsor for just this sort of aesthetic lifestyle. In the novel, Lord Henry Wotton trumpets the aesthetic philosophy with an elegance and bravado that persuade Dorian to trust in the principles he espouses; the reader is often similarly captivated. It would be a mistake, however, to interpret the novel as a patent recommendation of aestheticism. Dorian Gray personifies the aesthetic lifestyle in action, pursuing personal gratification with abandon. Yet, while he enjoys these indulgences, his behavior ultimately kills him and others, and he dies unhappier than ever. Rather than an advocate for pure aestheticism, then, *Dorian Gray* is a cautionary tale in which Wilde illustrates the dangers of the aesthetic philosophy when not practiced with prudence. Aestheticism, argues Wilde, too often aligns itself with immorality, resulting in a precarious philosophy that must be practiced deliberately. *Dorian Gray* is often read as an explicit proclamation of the worthiness of living life in accordance with aesthetic values. Oscar Wilde, however, proposed that the principles of the Aesthetic Movement extend beyond the production of mere commodities. Speaking of aestheticism, Wilde is quoted: I mean a man who works with his hands; and not with his hands merely, but with his head and his heart. The evil that machinery is doing is not merely in the consequence of its work but in the fact that it makes men themselves machines also. Whereas, we wish them to be artists, that is to say men. Every impulse that we strive to strangle broods in the mind, and poisons us. Lord Henry warns that without an enthusiastic embrace of aestheticism, one will perpetually anguish with the desire of precisely what he must deny himself, all for the sake of propriety. This, however, is too shallow of an interpretation. Opponents of a purely aesthetic lifestyle will certainly cite what they consider an inevitability: It is at these times that the virtues of the wholly aesthetic life become questionable. The ruination of *Dorian Gray*, the embodiment of unbridled aestheticism, illustrates the immorality of such a lifestyle and gravely demonstrates its consequences. Wilde himself admits, in a letter to the St. And the moral is this: Aestheticism does well to condemn the renunciation of desires, but it is an excessive obedience to these desires that is subversively dangerous. The character of *Dorian Gray* and the story of his profound degeneration provide a case study examining the viability of purely aesthetic lives. Dorian lives according to what Lord Henry professes without hesitation, and what Lord Henry inspires Dorian, through persuasive rhetoric, is an attitude indifferent to consequence and altogether amoral. Dorian pursues Sibyl from first sights, intent on acquiring her before he ever attempts to truly know her. For Dorian, whose uncontrolled aestheticism rejects the concept of morality, the immorality of his actions goes unrecognized. In his pursuit of his own pleasures, a distinctly narcissistic attitude emerges, and the incompatibility of morality and unconditional aestheticism becomes all the more apparent. This self-absorption, then, appears to be an inevitable consequence of aestheticism. Only a more deliberate practice of aestheticism may harness this egotism and avoid the immorality Dorian embodies. According to mythology, Narcissus, upon catching a glimpse of his reflection in a pool, becomes so enraptured by it that he stood and admired it endlessly, unmoving for the rest of his life. Eventually, as in the myth of Narcissus, such egotism has its consequences. In the end, as a testament to the purely aesthetic life, the only legacy Dorian leaves behindâ€”everything that identifies him as who he wasâ€”is his superficial jewelry. There is an argument, then, made by Wilde for a new aestheticism,

approached with more constraint than Dorian employs. This argument is based not only in the moral obligation of the individual, but with the betterment of all of society in mind. Arnold focuses on its detrimental effects on society and the possibility for societal improvement when aesthetic tendencies are properly controlled. As Arnold views his contemporary society, it is arranged hierarchically, dividing the aristocrats, the middle-class, and the working-class, all of which, Arnold laments, are inclined to live hedonistically, pursuing pleasure and only what is comfortable and easy. Arnold is optimistic that some may pursue beyond the immediately pleasurable and act to perfect themselves both morally and intellectually. This pursuit of perfection, however, is likely an arduous and uncomfortable task, and is therefore incompatible with pure aestheticism. Some concessions must be made for the absolute aesthete, then, for such transcendence occur. Dorian exemplifies a regression in social intellect from his beginnings rather than the kind of transcendence hoped for by Arnold. Dorian displays no such pursuit of intellectual perfection as he is slowly corrupted and in turn corrupts others, luring them with him into the slums and opium dens of London. The mere existence of these aliens, however, provides hope that the utter hedonists of society may learn to harness their damaging tendencies, and in doing so, better the intellectual and moral state of humankind. Indeed, Dorian appears to realize the consequences of his unbridled aestheticism; however, he is much too far gone to salvage. Dorian reveals his epiphany to Lord Henry: It can be bought, and sold, and bartered away. It can be poisoned or made perfect. There is a soul in each one of us. Unfortunately for Dorian, this realization comes too late to save his soul from its degradation, long-nurtured by a purely aesthetic life, and he is destroyed. Wilde realized and depicted in the life of Dorian Gray, a need for a more controlled and deliberate approach to aestheticism, without which morality will inevitably be elusive. The adoption of unrestrained aestheticism, as exhibited by Dorian, results in a lack of remorse, self-absorption, and intellectual regression. For the sake of preserving morality, a concept proven incompatible with pure aestheticism, more deliberation is necessary from the aesthete in deciding upon action. As Wilde makes clear, it is only through a more restrained philosophy that aestheticism and morality may eventually align. Works Cited Arnold, Matthew. The Unmasking of Oscar Wilde. The Picture of Dorian Gray. Appointments can be booked online. WR Transfer Credit Did you take or are you planning to take a writing class at another school? You may be able to receive WR transfer credit for it.

7: Literary criticism of Oscar Wilde - Oscar Wilde - Google Books

The item Literary criticism of Oscar Wilde., Edited by Stanley Weintraub represents a specific, individual, material embodiment of a distinct intellectual or artistic creation found in Brigham Young University.

The Oscar Wilde Encyclopedia. At nearly five hundred pages, a compendium of useful information on Wilde and his times. Calloway, Stephen, and David Colvin. *The Moral Vision of Oscar Wilde*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Contains illustrations, a select bibliography, and an index. Includes bibliography and appendices. This small volume is a useful corrective to studies of Wilde that see him and his work as anomalies of literature and history. A chronology, notes and references, an annotated bibliography, and an index supplement the text. *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society*. Yale University Press, By analyzing the trial testimony and press coverage, Foldy argues cogently that the prosecution of Wilde was not solely based on matters of morality but was directly linked to wider social, cultural, and political issues. *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public*. Stanford University Press, This study attempts to reach an understanding of Wilde by focusing less on his life and work and more on the relation of his work to his audiences. Includes bibliography and index. Harris was one of the few friends who remained loyal to Wilde after his downfall. His biography, although highly readable and full of interesting anecdotes, is not always reliable. This is a useful complement to the weightier biography by Ellmann. *The Works of a Conformist Rebel*. Translated by David Henry Wilson. Cambridge University Press, Kohl argues that Wilde was not the imitator he is often accused of being but a creative adapter of the literary traditions he inherited. Supplemented by detailed notes, a lengthy bibliography, and an index. Although not focused on the poetry, this work reveals much about early twentieth century literary society and the emerging gay culture. *The Secret Life of Oscar Wilde*. *The Unmasking of Oscar Wilde*. Includes biographical information because, Raby argues, it is most useful to see Wilde as indivisible from his works. Includes chronology, notes, a bibliography, and an index. *A Preface to Oscar Wilde: An introduction to the life and works, particularly the period from to* Some discussion of earlier work provides a view of some of the motivating forces behind his output. Also offers a chapter on his circle. *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*. Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

8: Project MUSE - A "Revolutionary Outrage": The Importance of Being Earnest as Social Criticism

Analysis of Oscar Wilde's poems - description of poetic forms and elements.

9: Oscar Wilde - Wikipedia

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (16 October - 30 November) was an Irish poet and playwright. After writing in different forms throughout the s, he became one of London's most popular playwrights in the early s.

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