More Discussion Questions for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

**Directions:  Answer the following questions in complete sentences.**

1. Who is Dorian? Can we define his true nature as either good or evil? When Basil says that the painting is the "real Dorian," is that true? How might Dorian have turned out if he had not met Lord Henry?
2. What role does art play in The Picture of Dorian Gray? What are each of the three main characters' attitudes towards art? How do they think art functions in society?
3. What does Sibyl represent to Dorian? Does he really love her? Why does he leave her?
4. Dorian rationalizes Basil's accusations, saying that every individual is responsible for his or her actions, and therefore for his or her downfall. Do you believe this? Likewise, is Dorian responsible for his own ruination, or is Lord Henry?
5. Discuss the character of Lord Henry and his impact on Dorian.
6. Discuss the role of homoeroticism in the novel.
7. “There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book,” Wilde says in the Preface. “Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.” Does the novel confirm this argument?
8. Why does Dorian decide to destroy the painting at the end of the novel?
9. Compare and contrast the characters of Basil and Lord Henry. What is their relationship to one another? To Dorian?
10. Dorian never signs a contract with the devil, as in other “Faustian” tales; Wilde does not choose to focus on the “how’s.” How does this affect the novel? How would it have been different if Dorian had officially signed up for his fate?
11. In what way does Lord Henry affect Dorian’s character? Why does Lord Henry choose Dorian as his disciple? And what impels Dorian to follow his guidance? What is it that Dorian fears?
12. What is the relationship between Basil and Dorian, from the beginning to the end? Why doesn’t Basil want to exhibit the painting of Dorian?
13. What code or set of beliefs does Lord Henry live by? How does he view conventional morality and in what ways does he challenge it? Why, for instance, does he believe it is futile and wrong for the individual to resist temptation?
14. What is Sybil’s significance? Why does she commit suicide? What impact does her death have on Dorian?
15. Discuss Dorian’s various reactions to the portrait throughout his life. Why does he move it to the attic?
16. Discuss the passage of time in the novel and how it influences our impression of characters and events, especially the glossing-over of 18 years in chapter 11.
17. Is Dorian responsible for the ruined lives of his friends? Is Lord Henry responsible for the ruined life of Dorian? When is someone responsible?
18. How does Dorian manipulate those around him?
19. Dorian’s scandalous behavior shocks his peers, yet he remains welcome in social circles? Why? What is Wilde suggesting about “polite” London society?
20. Discuss the symbols of innocence in the novel.
21. What is the importance of sin and redemption in the novel? Is there any redemption for Dorian?
22. What does it say about Dorian’s character that he falls under the influence of Lord Henry immediately?
23. Why does Dorian appear to have more courage than Lord Henry?
24. Why does Dorian yield to the influence of Lord Henry, yet fail to be influenced by Basil?
25. When does Dorian try to turn his life around? How many attempts does he make?
26. At what points does Dorian appear to have given up any hope of changing?
27. Does Dorian seem aware of Basil’s feelings for him?
28. Does Dorian continue to derive pleasure from his actions as time goes on?
29. Does Dorian suffer for his crimes?  How?
30. Does Dorian ever seem to hold Lord Henry responsible for the turns his life takes?
31. Does Dorian ever seem to hold Basil responsible for the turns his life takes?
32. Can the reader have any sympathy for Dorian?  Why or why not?
33. What does the novel seem to say about beauty (appearance) and the way people relate to each other and judge each other based on appearance/beauty?