

In this review by Francis Cowley Burnand, he argues there is nothing worth taking away from Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray. To him it can be “finished in one sitting.” There is no moral to the story, in his opinion, either. It was all just to “give us a sensation.” It has aesthetic qualities that do not even make it worth reading due to its “poisonous” nature. He also believes a writer such as Nathaniel Hawthorne could have done something better with this topic. In order for this book to be worthwhile, Burnand suggests, “[it] would have avoided both the glittering conceits… and the unsavory suggestiveness that lurks in its spirit.” So even though Burnand understand the book is rather aesthetic, he still argues the art and the morals within the book are either not there at all or they are so wicked that an audience simply cannot take away anything from the book.


Hawthorne argues that even though there can be many different interpretations of the work, if Lord Henry Wotton had been the lead character, the book would have been better valued. He believes Harry is the best portrayed character for Dorian’s character hasn’t quite been “realized and worked out.” He believes the portrait of Dorian is a more convincing character than the real Dorian was.

This unsigned review suggests that even though this novel is a great work of art, it is not convincing in the slightest as he states it clever and brilliant, but it lacks humanity. Since it has no basis of humanity, he can only view it as a piece of elaborate art work.


This man argues that even though the author claimed there is a moral to the book, unless the moral is to teach young people “there is not a single good and holy impulse of human nature,” then there is, in fact, no moral to this novel. He believes it’s a “sham moral” that he’s teaching men that it’s considered suffering when their souls endure too much “purity and self-denial.”


This unsigned review argues that the moral praises its hero as a devil and the art is false. He is absolutely outraged by the lack of humanity in this novel, and thinks it best for “outlawed noblemen and perverted telegraph boys” to read. It is not a decent book for the rest of society in his view.


This review gets deeper than the rest of the reviews as it argues farther than the novel being good or bad. Pater believes this novel is a failed attempt at an Epicurean Philosophy. Since Dorian did not fully develop and according to Pater, lessened to a lower degree of development by the novel’s end, it fails in that philosophy. Because of this, Dorian remains as art rather than a developing character for Epicureanism. He depicts Dorian’s world so cleverly, that it can be viewed as art since other attempts to make the novel worthwhile failed.