Compare and Contrast: The Picture of Dorian Gray

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Compare and Contrast Essay Outline

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Dorian Gray Compare and Contrast

The Picture of Dorian Gray is an interesting novel written by Oscar Wilde based on a man’s selfishness and vanity which would later turn into his ultimate demise. The story tells a story of a man named Dorian Gray, whose beauty is praised. Lord Henry gave him an idea that he should treasure his youth until the end of it, thus causing Dorian to have an emotional breakdown which would turn his life into a dreadful and atrocious direction. There are two versions of this novel, a literary version and a graphic version released not too long ago. The graphic novel portrays the story more like a comic book with illustrations and word bubbles; this is easier to understand as it can directly show you what is going on. The reason of the graphic novel release is most likely so they could get the future interested in the novel by making it similar to today’s comic books. The literary novel projects the story in a way that you make up how you see the characters and setting.

The literary and graphic novel share many things with each other. The graphic novel undoubtedly stays true to the source material at a high degree. Needless to say, most of the ideas are conveyed very similarly. The themes are exactly the same in both versions of the novel. The theme revolves more around Dorian Gray and his thoughts and actions. The supremacy of youth and beauty is one of the main themes which are shared on both versions of the novel. Another theme which occurs on both the novels is the theme of homo erotic relationships. Basil has a strong influence and interest towards Dorian in the novel, to the extent of insisting of painting a portrait and constantly complementing him on his charming good looks. Lord Henry has also incredibly adored Dorian Gray’s beauty but he gave him the realization that his youth and beauty days are indeed numbered. A really important theme which occurs in both novels is the negative consequences of influence. Lord Henry was a very huge influence to Dorian which got him using his youth and beauty as an advantage over other people. Dorian Gray committed very bad acts of the result of Lord Henry's influence.

"Because you have the most marvelous youth, and youth is the one thing worth having."

"No, you don't feel it now. Someday, when you are old and wrinkled and ugly, when thought has seared your forehead with its lines, and passion branded your lips with its hideous fires, you will feel it, 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. You have. And beauty is a form of genius — is higher, indeed, than genius, as it needs no explanation..." "...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..." (EL, 30)

The characters are basically the same in both novels, their personality is extremely similar. You can find that Dorian Gray was very innocent in the beginning of each novel, with the same personality which later changes throughout the end when he becomes vicious and evil hearted. Basil is still an artist who develops a friendship with Dorian and has a distinct attraction to his beautiful looks and powerful youth. Dorian Gray has completely changed the way he views art. Basil put too much of himself into his work which would ultimately grow a huge attraction to Dorian. He still has an adoration for him, defends him even though they have not been friends for a long time. He is murdered by Dorian in both novels in a very similar manner. Lord Henry is still the man who is a bad influence to Dorian, his theories and ideas make him a very intellectual human being. Sibyl Vane is the girl which attracts Dorian and later on, they both seem to have an attraction for each other. She is a girl who fell into depression which eventually led to her suicide. James Vane, Alan Campbell and the rest of the characters are pretty much the same to both of their novel counterparts. The main object which is symbolized throughout the whole entire story is the portrait of the main character, Dorian Gray. The painting captured the youth and beauty that everyone once adored and probably envied at some point, only to wither and turn into a disgusting piece of revolting monstrosity. Throughout the novels, the painting becomes uglier while the real Dorian Gray still remains the same as he did when he ultimately sold his very soul in order to stay beautiful. The painting’s significance can relate to Oscar Wilde’s quote ‘’All art is quite useless’’ as he explains the lack of usefulness in a piece of art. Basil was against the idea of revealing his painting to others because he may be the only person who truly understands the beauty and motive of the painting unlike the others who may not find much value in it at all. When Lord Henry asks Basil about why he has not revealed his work to the public, this is what he stated.

"Because, without intending it, I have put into it some expression of all this bi-curious artistic idolatry, of which, of course, I have never cared to speak to him. He knows nothing about it. He shall never know anything about it. But the world might guess it, and I will not bare my soul to their shallow prying eyes. My heart shall never be put under their microscope. There is too much of myself in the thing, Harry — too much of myself!"(EL, 18)

The main plot remains unchanged at all; it is essentially the same story. Dorian Gray realizes his potential of being young and beautiful; he sells himself to the devil in order to stay the way he is without changing his looks. Lord Henry had convinced Dorian to believe that beauty is the only thing in life which is worth living for. The plot does not have anything new in particular so it has the same rising action, climax, falling and conclusion. The resolution in the end is the same, Dorian faces the painting which has ruined his life and stabbed it with a dagger. This ends the whole plot as stabbing the portrait had resulted in his own death, as he continued laying down on the ground with a dagger deep inside his chest as he instantly becomes wretched and ugly looking. Both novels take place around London, England around the streets, several houses and the theatre where the plays were held.

There are some minor differences between the literary and the graphic novel, one of which is the dialogue. In the literary novel, the dialogue is more detailed and longer than the graphic novel which uses word bubbles with shortened re-phrased dialogue from the original story. Basil says more things when he talks to Lord Henry about Dorian Gray.

‘’Dorian Gray is my dearest friend,’’ he said. ‘’He has a simple and a beautiful nature. Your aunt was quite right in what she said of him. Don’t spoil him. Don’t try to influence him. Your influence would be bad. The world is wide, and has many marvelous people in it. Don’t take away from me the one person who gives to my art whatever charm it possesses; my life as an artist depends on him. Mind, Harry, I trust you.’’ (EL, 21)

 When compared, the graphic novel emits some certain parts such as ‘’your aunt was quite right in what she said of him’’. The literary book also states that Lord Henry’s aunt was fond of Dorian, and one of her favorites but also one of her victims. The graphic novel completely ignores the fact that Dorian had any relation with Lord Henry’s aunt, Lady Agatha. The placement of some of the scenes has been switched in some occasions. The setting has a slight chance in some cases, such as the conversation between Dorian and Lord Henry about the power of youth and beauty. In the literary novel, they are talking indoors while they have their chat outdoors in the graphic novel. The literary is way more detailed in terms of explanation as the text distinctively shows us exactly what is happening including the character movements, emotions and place that they are sitting in. The graphic novel gives us the details of the setting and character traits through the illustrations which accompany the text bubbles so they both have different ways of projecting the story.

 There are many things which are left out from the graphic novel, many of which are actually important things within the storyline. One of the main things which is not included is the pre-face which a long quote by the author himself displaying his views on arts, artists and possibly how life was like through his eyes at the time. A symbol has been left out of the graphic novel; a yellow book which was given to Dorian from Lord Henry. Another thing is the removal of chapters 6,9,11 and 17. An absence of a chapter could mean an absence of an important story factor. Chapter 6 stated that Dorian Gray was engaged and slated to be married, which was not at all mentioned in the graphic novel. In Chapter 9, Basil confronted Dorian on how changed and cold blooded he has become. Chapter 11 had no dialogue at all, it was just a behind the scenes perspective of Dorian’s thoughts and actions. Chapter 11 is just Lord Henry and Dorian having tea time with a bunch of people, having a normal conversation.

‘’All art is quite useless’’ as quoted by the author Oscar Wilde, its significance is very powerful yet to who may follow it may also deceive it. What he means is that art has absolutely no point in existence what so ever. The reason people believe that art has a value is because the value has been given by other people. If a person were to find a specific piece of art very gruesome and ugly, it is definitely most like that the person is corrupt in some way to find the faults in an artwork. The graphic novel is a work of art but one can say it is not as accurate or entertaining as the literary novel but that is all in a person’s own perspective. The literary version is a great piece of literature which is being passed down for generations to come, as it would have the greatest impact because it is the original version of the tale. It is a great thing that there are different versions of the novel, it is so people with different interests in literature could find a way to enjoy the story that quite fits them well. The Picture of Dorian Gray is an exquisite concept, the literary and graphic novel sometimes share the same road but occasionally would part ways and take a detour.