Guiding Questions for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

1. In the preface, Wilde writes that "there is no such thing as a moral or immoral book." In other words, art has no effect, other than aesthetic, on individuals or society. Do you agree with Wilde's premise? Does this novel adhere to his statement?

2. What is the relationship between Basil and Dorian, and how does it change from beginning to end?

3. Talk about Lord Henry: what code or set of beliefs does he 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?

4. 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?

5. Is Lord Henry's belief in the freedom of the individual truly evil? Or does Dorian misconstrue it? Does Lord Henry actually practice the ideas he espouses? Does he understand the real life consequences his ideas would have, or does he exhibit a sort of naïveté?

6. Talk about the role of the yellow book. Why doesn't Wilde give it a title?

7. Why does Sibyl commit suicide, and what impact does her death have on Dorian?

8. Discuss Dorian's portrait. What does it represent? What does it suggest about the effect of experience on the soul? Why does Dorian hide it in the attic?

9. Dorian's scandalous behavior shocks his peers, yet he remains welcome in social circles. Why? What is Wilde suggesting about "polite" London society?

10. Why does Dorian decide to destroy the painting at the end of the novel?

11. 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?

[Questions adapted from Litlovers.com discussion questions]