



SOME WILDE'S WORKS

Match the names of Oscar Wilde's major works with their summaries.

(1) *The Importance of Being Earnest*

(2) *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

(3) *An Ideal Husband*

(4) *Salome*

A) This comedy is an attack on Victorian social values. Its main character, Sir Robert Chiltern is a rising political star and well-off. He has a beautiful and loving wife Gerturde. His life seems perfect, but all this is threatened when someone discovers the evidence that he, as a young man, sold cabinet secrets to a stock-exchange speculator. As the comedy goes on, we find out that this perfect Victorian man and husband is full of flaws.

(adapted from www.guardian.co.uk)

B) In this comedy, Oscar Wilde us tells the story of two young gentlemen who lead double lives in Victorian England. Jack Worthing lives in a country estate with his ward, young and beautiful Cecily. He pretends to have a brother Ernest who causes a lot of problems, and who he needs to visit from time to time in London. One day Jack decides to marry Gwendolen, his friend's cousin. He finds out that his friend, Algernon Montcrieff also leads a double life. Algernon pretends he has an invalid friend named Bunburry, whom he needs to visit from time to time (he calls these visits "bunburring"). When Algernon hears about Cecily, his friend's beautiful ward, he decides to go to Jack's house as Ernest, Jack's brother! Things go really bad when their lies are finally discovered.

(adapted from www.sparknotes.com and www.cinema.com)

C) This tragedy was originally written in French. It tells in one act the Biblical story of the princess and stepdaughter of Herod Antipas. The young princess dances at her stepfather's birthday party. Herod offers to give her whatever she desires as a reward for her dancing. She requests the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter. This story has been taken up by many writers, but Oscar Wilde's version remains the most popular to this day.

(adapted from www.enotes.com)

D) It is the only novel by Oscar Wilde. It tells the story of a handsome young man who devotes his life to beauty and sensual pleasures. One day he gets his portrait from one of his friends. Looking at the beautiful picture of himself, he declares that he would give his own soul if he could remain eternally young. He gets his wish, but the picture shows a gradual change as he sinks into a life of degradation and crime. After many years, he decides to change his life and be good, but he feels fear whenever he sees his portrait. He finally stabs it with a knife and falls dead. When the servants enter the room, they see the portrait as it was when it was new, and an old, ugly man lying dead on the floor.

(adapted from www.enotes.com)

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Teacher's Notes and Answer Key

Depending on the level of your students, you may need to pre-teach some vocabulary, eg. ward, to sink into, to stab with a knife. Then, ask your students to read the titles and descriptions and match them.

Answers:

1B, 2D, 3A, 4C

Homework:

Oscar Wilde has written 9 plays. Ask your students to find out another play by Oscar Wilde and check what it is about? They can find all works by Oscar Wilde on www.oscarwildecollection.com.