

Oscar Wilde

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Oscar Wilde was an Irish writer, famous for his humorous plays, witty comments and eccentric clothes.



Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin in 1854. His mother, Speranza, was a poet, and when he was a child Oscar met many of Ireland's famous writers. He was ten when he first went to school. He was good at classes but hated sports. "Football," he said, "is a good game for rough girls, but not for delicate boys."

Literary Success

Wilde started writing poetry at Oxford University, and won prestigious prizes, but he became famous just for his personality. He loved to make witty remarks and was very popular at London parties. He was a dandy and loved to wear extravagant clothes. His long hair was considered shocking.

Wilde is best known for his novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and his comic plays like *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Dorian Gray is a rich young man who never gets older; a portrait gets older in his place. But Dorian is a nasty young man who commits crimes to protect his secret. Wilde's plays are still regularly performed and are still very funny. He also

"There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about, and that is not being talked about."

wrote stories for his two sons, like "The Happy Prince".

In 1882, Wilde toured the United States and Canada for 12 months, giving public talks about art. Wilde

surprised America from the moment he arrived, when he told a New York customs officer, "I have nothing to declare but my genius".

Scandal

Wilde married Constance Lloyd, but the marriage was not a happy one. Oscar preferred the company of men, and in 1891, he met a young man called Lord Alfred Douglas. Douglas' father, the Marquis of Queensbury, accused Wilde of being homosexual. At that time, homosexuality was illegal in Britain. Wilde was arrested and was sentenced to two years in prison with hard labour. When he came out of prison, he went to France. Rejected by many of his friends, Wilde died there in 1900 in poverty. He was witty even when dying: "If another century began and I was still alive," he said, "it would really be more than the English could stand."

Help

century (n) 100 years

customs officer (n) person whose job is to control people coming into or out of

a country, check their passport, visa, etc.

dandy (n) a man who gives a great importance to his physical appearance and clothes

hard labour (exp) difficult physical work

nothing...but (exp) nothing except
rough (adj, pron. *ruff*) who like to fight, savage

stand (v) accept

witty (adj) amusing and intelligent