

OSCAR WILDE

Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1854. His father, Sir William Wilde, was a famous surgeon¹ of the city. Oscar was educated at Trinity College Dublin and Magdalene College in Oxford. After his degree² he moved to London where he soon became popular among the social and literary circles of the capital for his sparkling wit³ and unorthodox opinions.

Wilde's literary success came in 1888 with the publication of a book of fairy tales, "The Happy Prince and Other Tales"; his only novel "The Picture of Dorian Gray" was published in 1891. Some considered this book immoral while others found it brilliant.

In the next four years he wrote four plays that have been classified as being society plays: "Lady Windermere's Fan" (1892); "A Woman of no Importance" (1893); "An Ideal Husband" (1894) and "The Importance of Being Earnest" (1895). These plays, full of witty dialogues and paradoxes, earned him the recognition of being one of the most brilliant dramatists⁴ of his time. His fifth play "Salomè" (1893) was not allowed to be performed on stage by the Lord Chamberlain in England but had great success in Paris, France.

Wilde's literary career was destroyed in 1895 when he was imprisoned for homosexual practices and sentenced⁵ to two years hard labour.

Prison ruined his health and when he was released Wilde found himself a complete social outcast⁶, so he decided to leave England. He went first to Italy where he visited Naples, Rome and other towns, then to France where he died in 1900 under the name of Sebastian Melmoth.



notes

: chirurgo.
laurea.
g wit: spirito brillante.
sts: commediografi.
ed: condannato.
utcast: esiliato-escluso.
: doganieri.

WILDE'S APHORISMS

What is a cynic? A man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible. What the second duty is no one has yet discovered.

I can resist everything except temptation.

Experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes.

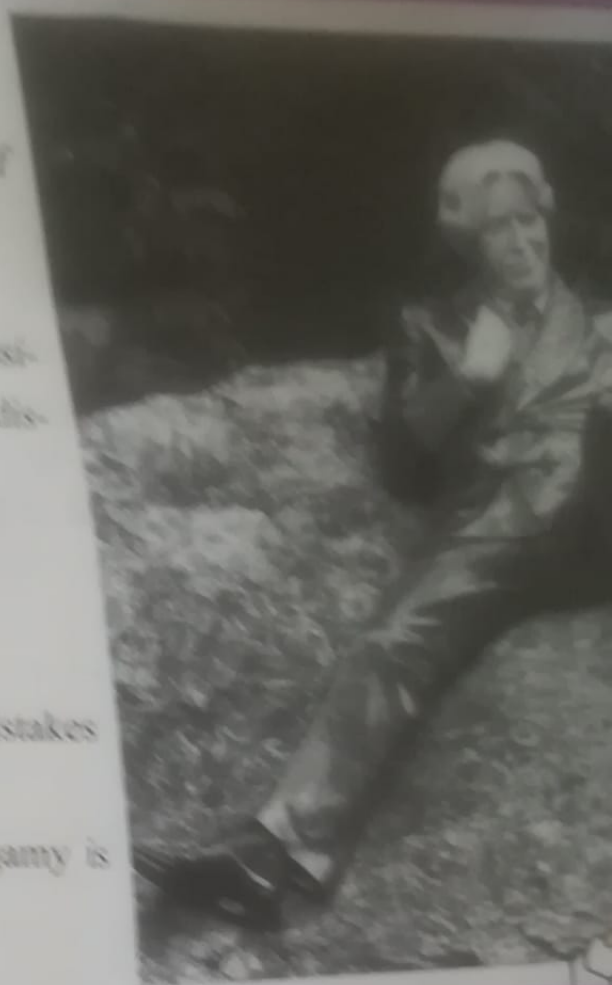
Bigamy is having one wife too many. Monogamy is the same.

The world is a stage but the play is badly cast.

I was asked by the customs if I had anything to declare. I said: Yes, I'd like to declare - I'm a genius!

There are only two tragedies in life: one is not getting what one wants, the other is getting it.

To love oneself is the beginning of a lifelong romance.



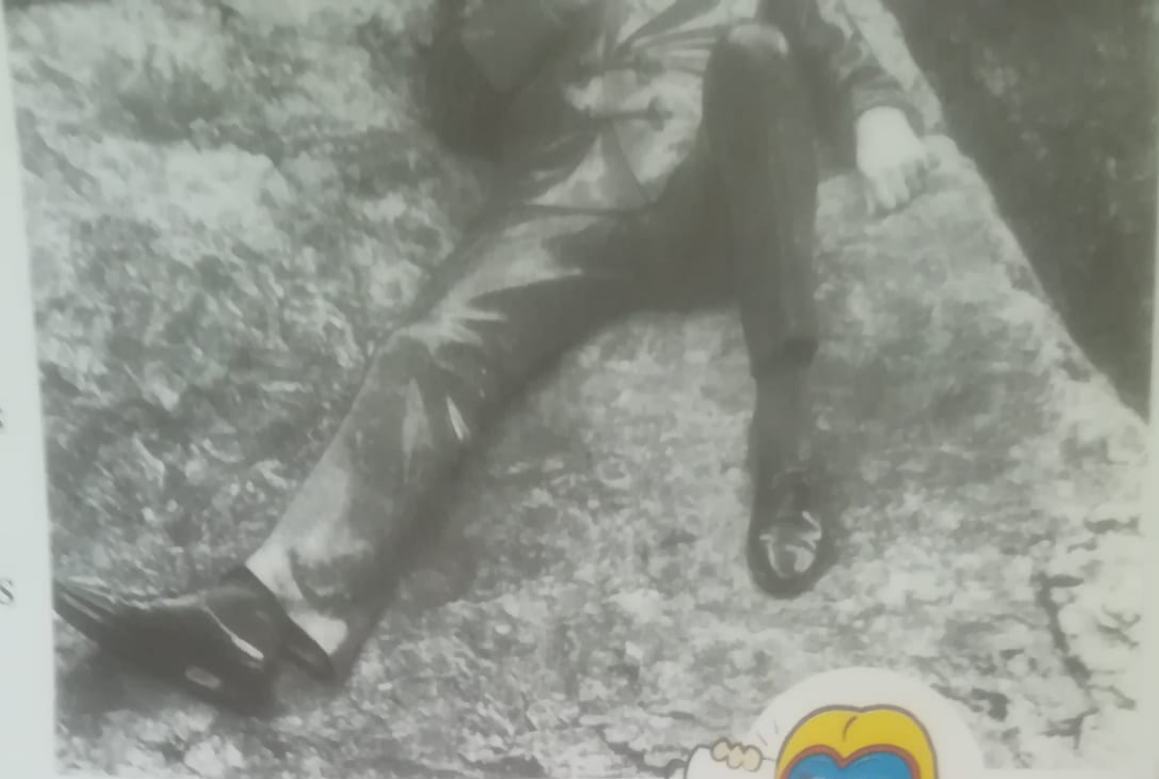
Exercises

1. Match the dates with the titles.

- | | |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| 1. 1888 | a) Lady Windermere's Fan |
| 2. 1891 | b) An Ideal Husband |
| 3. 1892 | c) The Importance of Being Earnest |
| 4. 1893 | d) The Picture of Dorian Gray |
| 5. 1894 | |
| 6. 1895 | e) The Happy Prince |

2. Answer the following questions.

- Where and when was Wilde born?
- What did his father do?
- Where did he study in Ireland?
- Where did he get his degree?
- Who banned the performance of *Salomé*?
- Why was Wilde's literary career destroyed?
- Why did he leave England?
- Where did he die?
- What name did he use abroad?



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