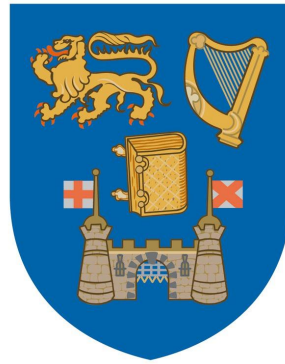


OSCAR WILDE

- ❑ Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born on **October 16, 1854** in Dublin, Ireland.
- ❑ His father, William Wilde, was an acclaimed doctor who was knighted for his work as medical advisor for the Irish censuses. William Wilde later founded St. Mark's Ophthalmic Hospital, entirely at his own personal expense, to treat the city's poor.
- ❑ Oscar Wilde's mother, Jane Francesca Elgee, was a poet who was closely associated with the Young Irelander Rebellion of 1848, a skilled linguist whose acclaimed English translation of Pomeranian novelist Wilhelm Meinhold's *Sidonia the Sorceress* had a deep influence on her son's later writing.



- Wilde was a bright and bookish child. He attended the Portora Royal School at Enniskillen where he fell in love with Greek and Roman studies. He won the school's prize for the top classics student in each of his last two years, as well as second prize in drawing during his final year.
- Upon graduating in 1871, Wilde was awarded the Royal School Scholarship to attend Trinity College in Dublin. At the end of his first year at Trinity, in 1872, he placed first in the school's classics examination and received the college's Foundation Scholarship, the highest honor awarded to undergraduates.



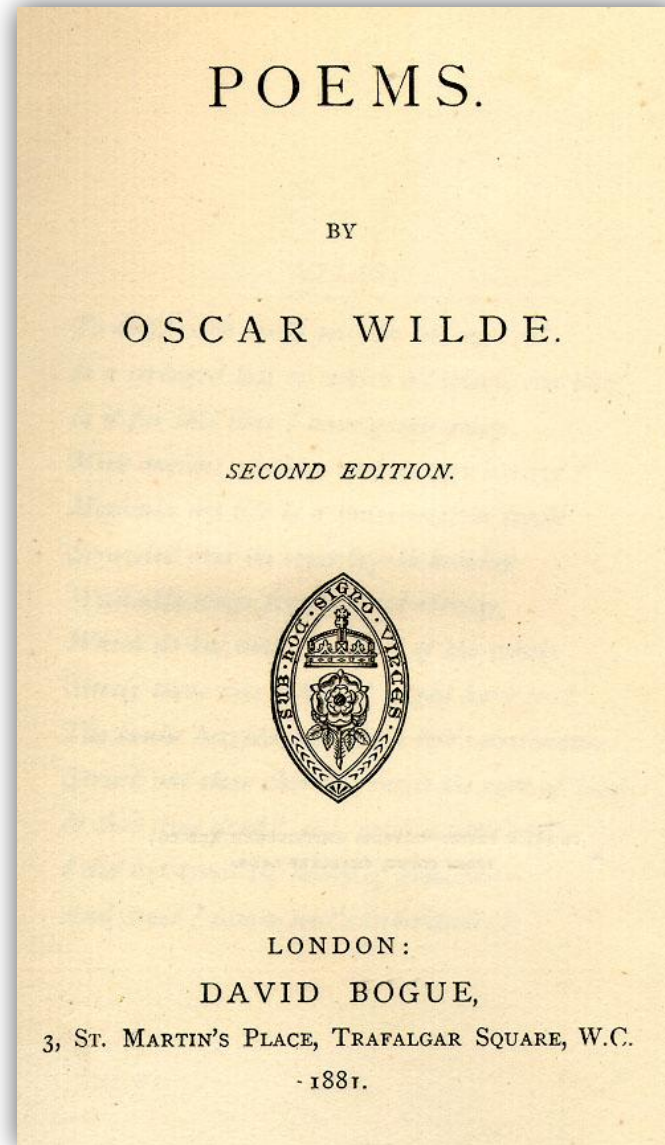
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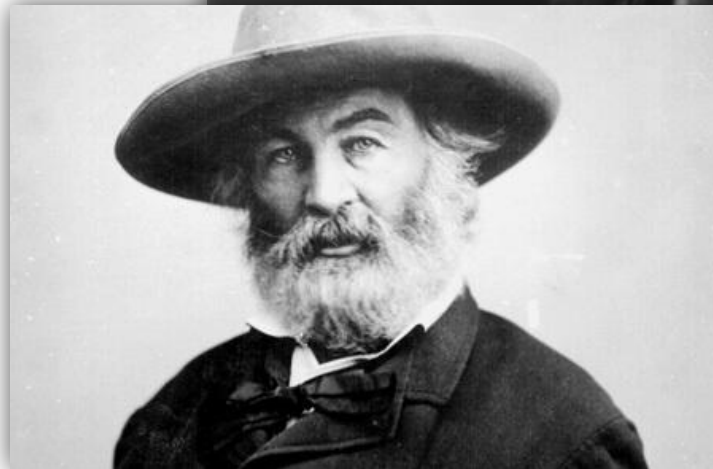
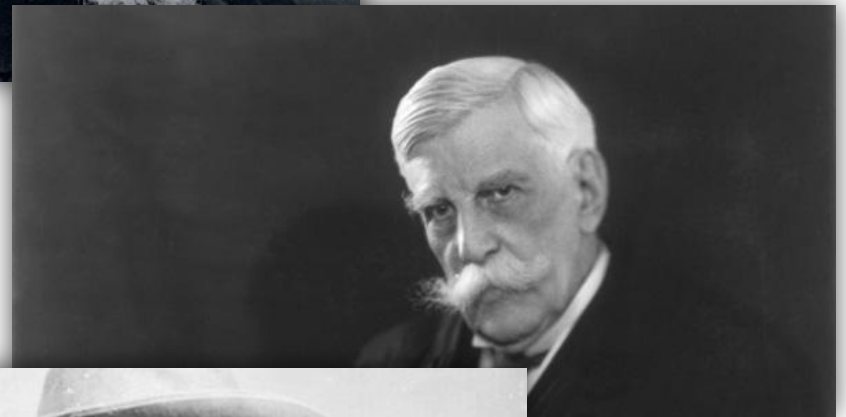
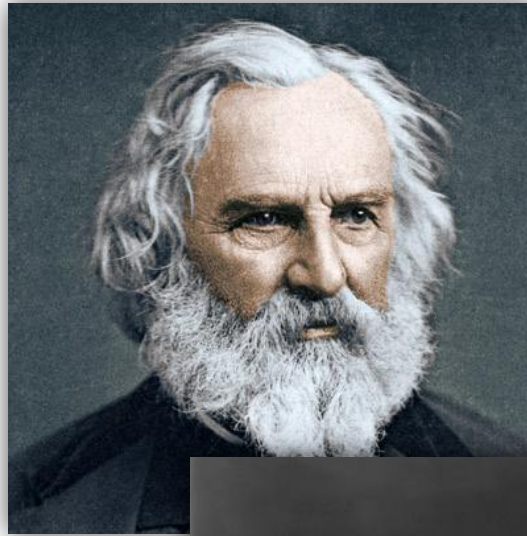
- Upon his graduation in 1874, Wilde received the Berkeley Gold Medal as Trinity's best student in Greek, as well as the Demyship scholarship for further study at Magdalen College in Oxford. At Oxford, Wilde continued to excel academically, receiving first class marks from his examiners in both classics and classical moderations. It was also at Oxford that Wilde made his first sustained attempts at creative writing. In 1878, the year of his graduation, his poem "Ravenna" won the Newdigate Prize for the best English verse composition by an Oxford undergraduate.



- Upon graduating from Oxford, Wilde moved to London to live with his friend, Frank Miles, a popular portraitist among London's high society. There, he continued to focus on writing poetry, publishing his first collection, *Poems*, in 1881. While the book received only modest critical praise, it nevertheless established Wilde as an up-and-coming writer. The next year, in 1882, Wilde traveled from London to New York City to embark on an American lecture tour, for which he delivered a staggering 140 lectures in just nine months



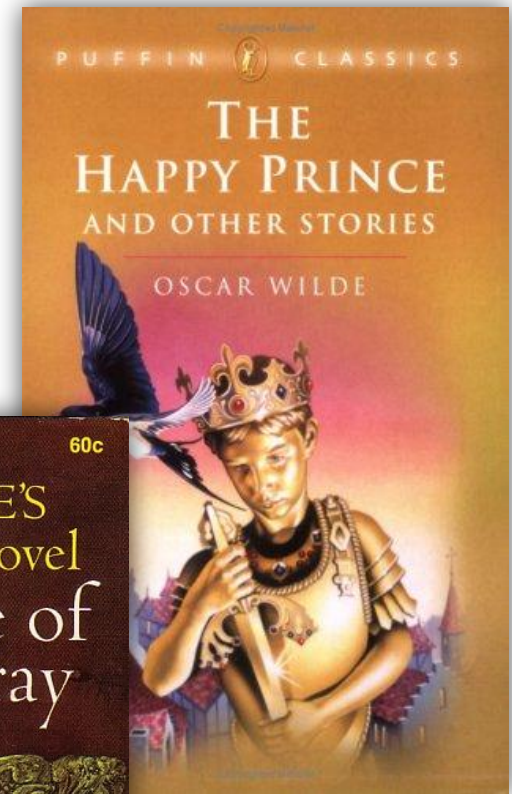
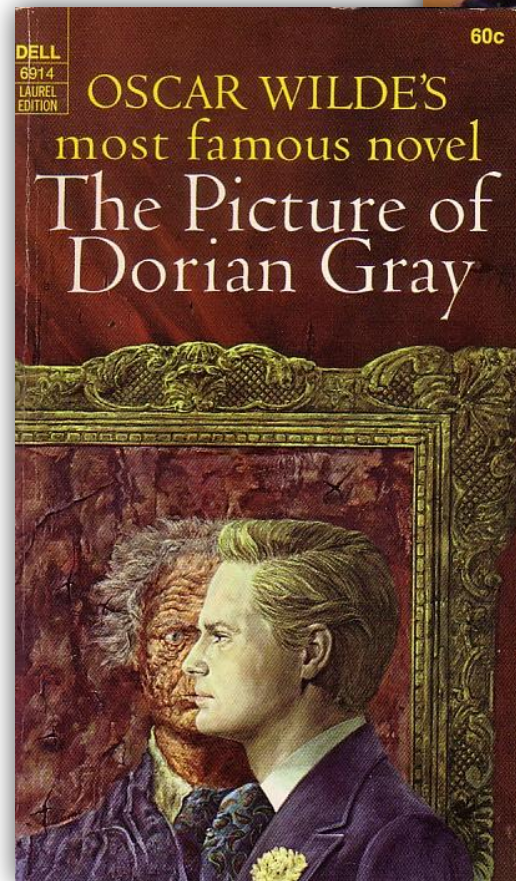
- While not lecturing, he managed to meet with some of the leading American scholars and literary figures of the day, including *Henry Longfellow*, *Oliver Wendell Holmes* and *Walt Whitman*. Wilde especially admired Whitman. "There is no one in this wide great world of America whom I love and honor so much," he later wrote to his idol.



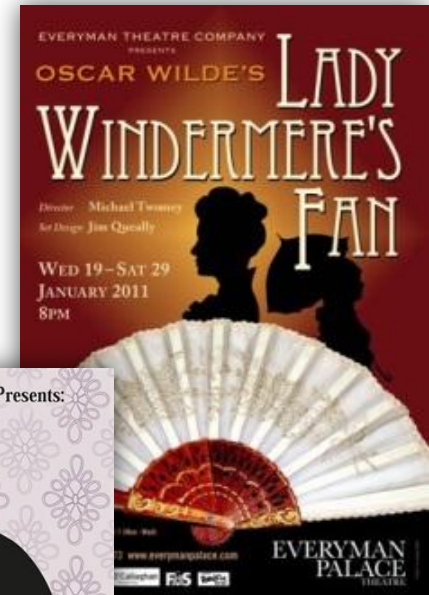
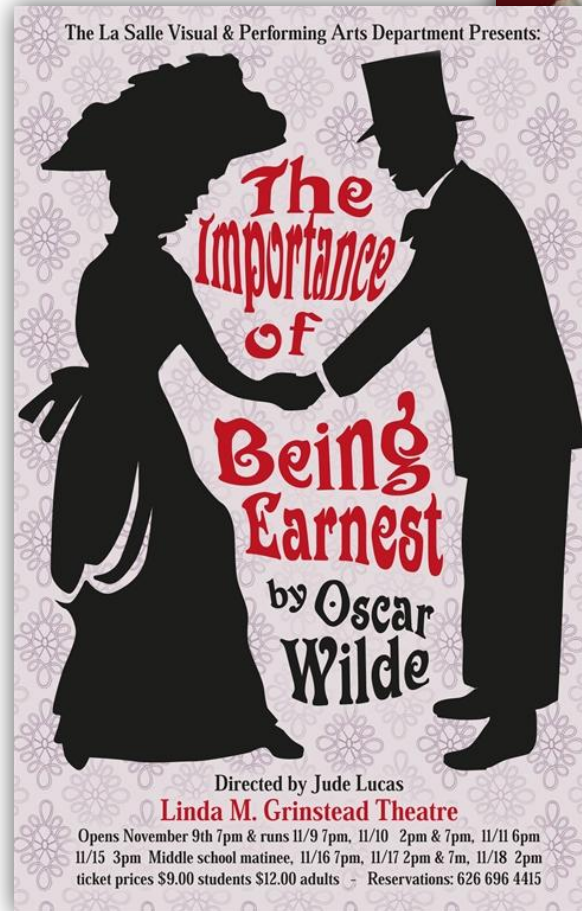
- Through his lectures, as well as his early poetry, Wilde established himself as a leading proponent of the aesthetic movement, a theory of art and literature that emphasized the pursuit of beauty for its own sake, rather than to promote any political or social viewpoint.
- On May 29, 1884, Wilde married a wealthy Englishwoman named Constance Lloyd.
- A year after his wedding, Wilde was hired to run *Lady's World*, a once-popular English magazine that had recently fallen out of fashion.



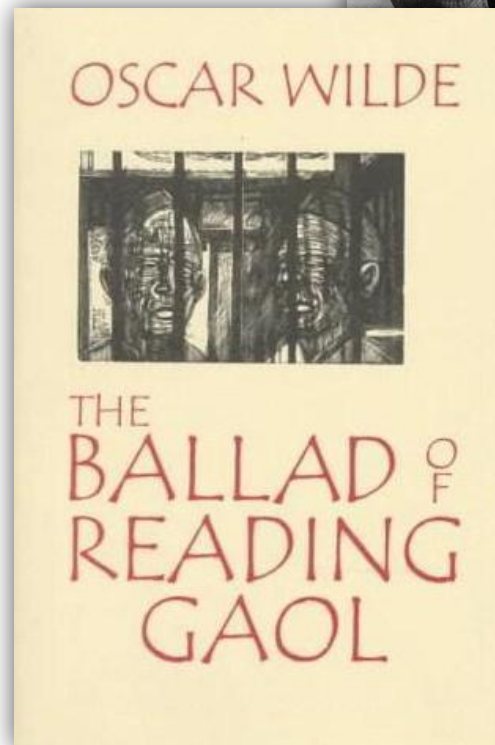
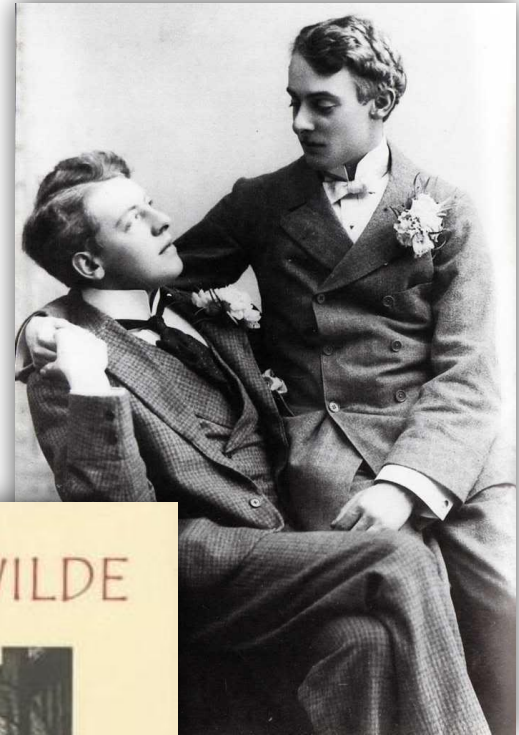
- ❑ In 1888, seven years after he wrote *Poems*, Wilde published *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, a collection of children's stories. In 1891, he published *Intentions*, an essay collection arguing the tenets of aestheticism, and that same year, he published his first and only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.
- ❑ The novel is a cautionary tale about a beautiful young man, Dorian Gray, who wishes (and receives his wish) that his portrait ages while he remains youthful and lives a life of sin and pleasure.
- ❑ Though the novel is now revered as a great and classic work, at the time critics were outraged by the book's apparent lack of morality. Wilde vehemently defended himself in a preface to the novel, considered one of the great testaments to aestheticism, in which he wrote, "an ethical sympathy in an artist is an unpardonable mannerism of style" and "vice and virtue are to the artist materials for an art."



- Wilde's first play, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, opened in February 1892 to widespread popularity and critical acclaim, encouraging Wilde to adopt playwriting as his primary literary form.
- Over the next few years, Wilde produced several great plays—witty, highly satirical comedies of manners that nevertheless contained dark and serious undertones.
- His most notable plays were *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), his most famous play.



- Around the same time that he was enjoying his greatest literary success, Wilde commenced an affair with a young man named Lord Alfred Douglas. On February 18, 1895, Douglas's father, the Marquis of Queensberry, left a calling card at Wilde's home addressed to "Oscar Wilde: Posing Somdomite," a misspelling of sodomite. Although Wilde's homosexuality was something of an open secret, he was so outraged by Queensberry's note that he sued him for libel. The decision ruined his life.
- When the trial began in March, Queensberry and his lawyers presented evidence of Wilde's that quickly resulted in the dismissal of Wilde's libel case and his arrest on charges of "gross indecency." Wilde was convicted on May 25, 1895 and sentenced to two years in prison.
- Wilde emerged from prison in 1897, physically depleted, emotionally exhausted and flat broke. He went into exile in France, where, living in cheap hotels and friends' apartments, he briefly reunited with Douglas. Wilde wrote very little during these last years; his only notable work was a poem he completed in 1898 about his experiences in prison, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol."



- ❑ Wilde died of meningitis on **November 30, 1900** at the age of 46.
- ❑ More than a century after his death, Wilde is still better remembered for his personal than for his literary accomplishments.
- ❑ Nevertheless, his witty, imaginative and undeniably beautiful works, in particular his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and his play *The Importance of Being Earnest*, are considered among the great literary masterpieces of the late Victorian period.

“Yes: I am a dreamer. For a dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world.”

OSCAR WILDE
KUSHANDWIZDOM

BE YOURSELF;
everyone else
IS ALREADY TAKEN.

-Oscar Wilde

I THINK IT'S VERY
HEALTHY TO SPEND TIME
ALONE. YOU NEED TO KNOW
HOW TO BE ALONE AND NOT
BE DEFINED BY ANOTHER
PERSON.

- OSCAR WILDE

Nowadays
people know
the price of
everything
and the value
of nothing.

OSCAR WILDE

