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«Oscar Wilde»

Автор работы:

Крылова Валерия Константиновна
10 «А»



‘We are all in
the gutter,
but some of
us are
looking at the
stars.’

OSCAR WILDE

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

Wilde's context



Oscar Wilde lived in the United Kingdom during the Victorian era; the period where Queen Victoria ruled. This time is often believed to be a period of strictly conservative family values and prudery. Whilst it was certainly true that the traditional nuclear family was celebrated and upheld there were many elements of the Victorian period which were dynamic and progressive

Science, medicine, art and writing were all changing. It was the age of invention and life changed dramatically from one end of Queen Victoria's reign to the other. The middle class was becoming more powerful challenging the power of the upper classes. For people living in Britain it was a largely peaceful era allowing people to focus on creating, designing and thinking.



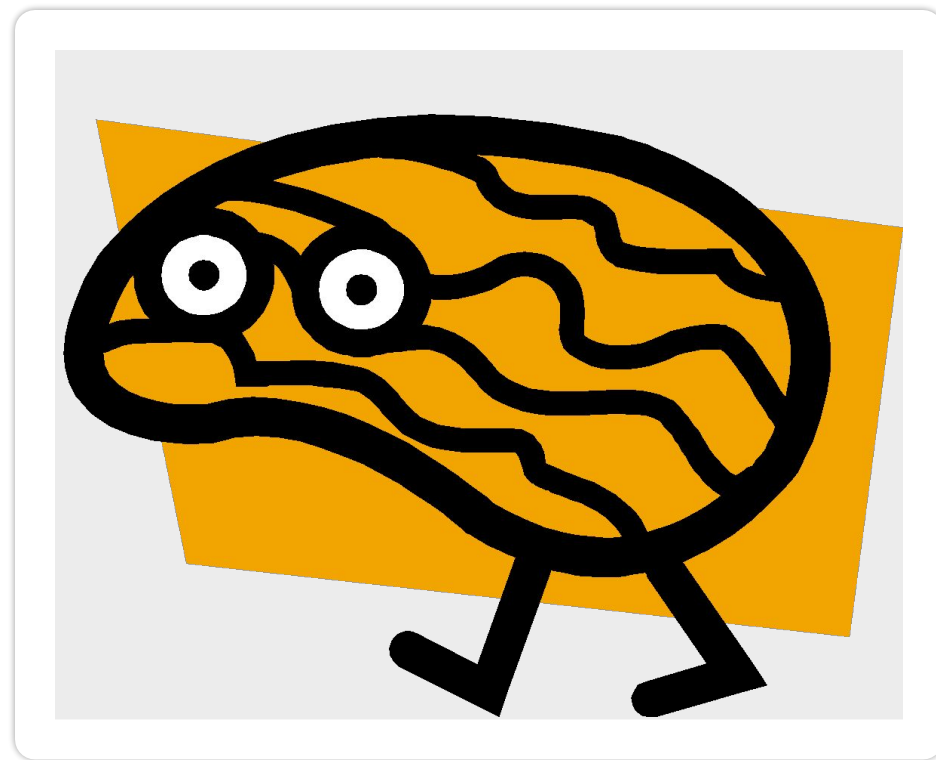
Some things were also static. Life was difficult if you were part of a minority and many people had attitudes that we would consider racist, sexist and homophobic.

Class and social standing was still one of the defining aspects of a person's life

So what?

So... we need to consider Wilde's writing within the context of the Victorian era and in terms of his own experiences as well as considering his chosen genres

Remember... “A man who
does not think for himself does
not think at all.” Oscar Wilde



Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie, on
October 16, 1854.

Oscar's parents were both prominent figures in Irish society. His father, William Wilde, was an eye specialist who was knighted for his work. He believed that it was important that the city's poor should be able to access medical attention so he funded and opened a free eye and ear hospital.





Oscar was an excellent student who excelled at school and at University. He attended Trinity College in Dublin and in 1874 won a scholarship to Oxford University in England.

Oscar graduated with distinction from Oxford University and moved to London where he shared a house with Frank Milne; a portrait painter.

In 1881 Oscar published his first collection of poetry: "Poems".



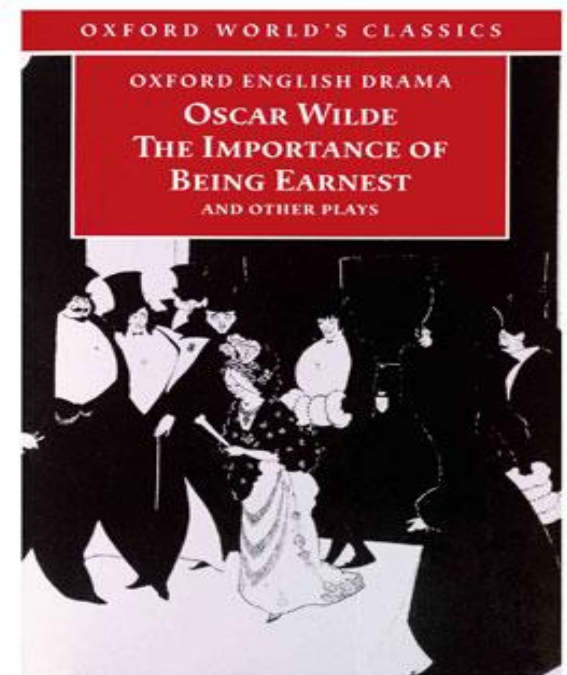
In 1884 Oscar married
Constance Lloyd.

Constance was also very
well educated and
outspoken.

Oscar and Constance had
two sons: Cyril and Vyvyan.
To support his family Oscar
took on the role of editing of
'Women's World' for two
years.



“The next six years were to become the most creative period of his life. He published two collections of children's stories, “The Happy Prince and Other Tales” (1888), and “The House of Pomegranates” (1892). His first and only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, was published in an American magazine in 1890 to a storm of critical protest. He expanded the story and had it published in book form the following year. Its implied homoerotic theme was considered very immoral by the Victorians and played a considerable part in his later legal trials. Oscar's first play, “*Lady Windermere's Fan*,” opened in February 1892. Its financial and critical success prompted him to continue to write for the theater. His subsequent plays included “*A Woman of No Importance*” (1893), “*An Ideal Husband*” (1895), and “*The Importance of Being Earnest*” (1895). These plays were all highly acclaimed and firmly established Oscar as a playwright.”





“There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written.”

Plate from 'Salome'
Aubrey Beardsley



In 1891 Oscar met Lord Alfred Douglas also known as Bosie. Bosie and Oscar began a relationship that lasted for four years.

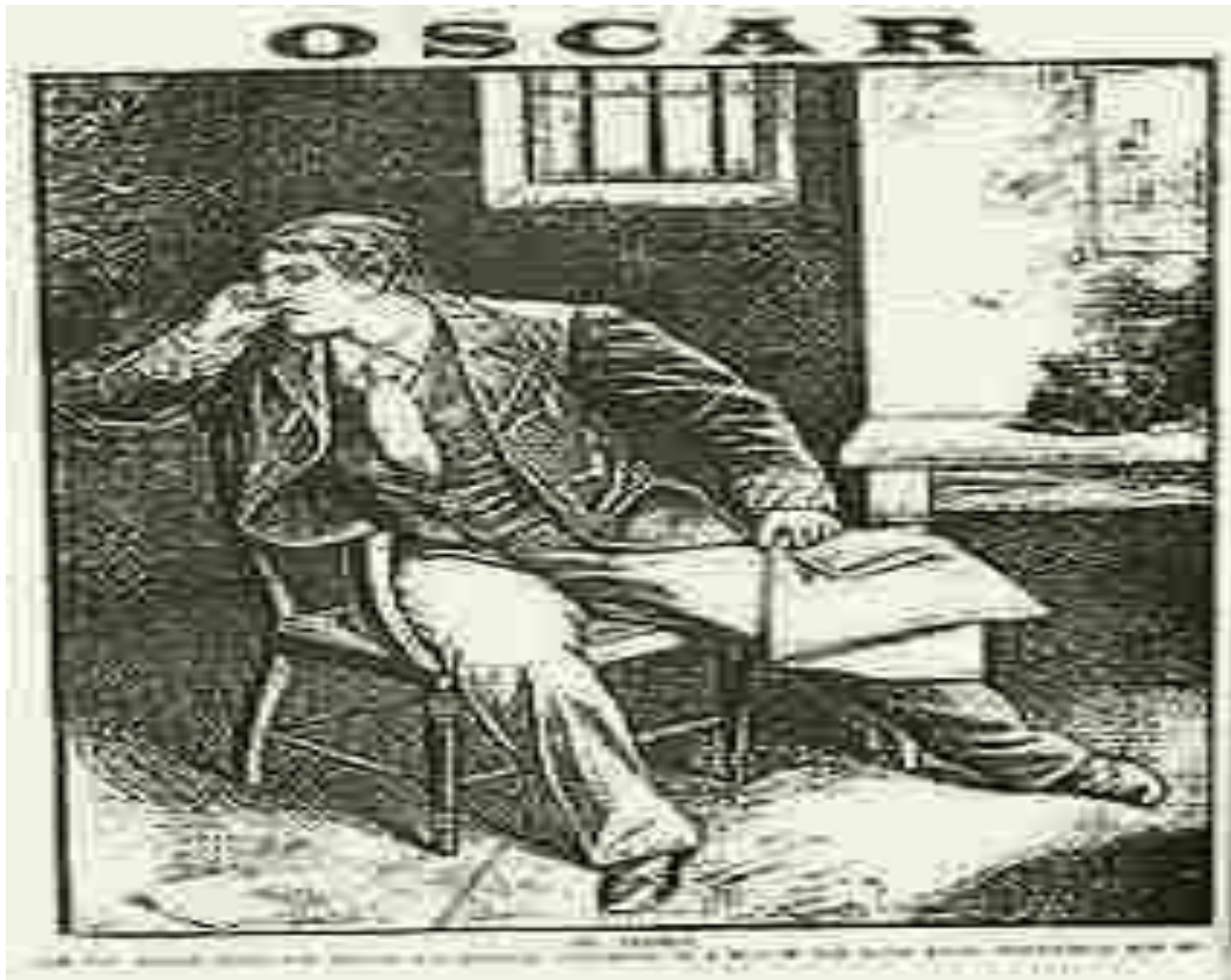
Bosie's father was the Marquis of Queensbury who took offence at his son's relationship and called Oscar a 'sodomnrite' meaning sodomnrite.

THE QUEENSBERRY CASE

FIGHT BETWEEN FATHER & SON



“One of the many lessons that one learns in prison is, that things are what they are and will be what they will be.”



The time that Oscar spent in jail was psychologically and physically demanding and his health was ruined.

Constance moved to Switzerland with the children after the trial and changed her name. She died in 1898.

In 1900 Wilde died of meningitis.



