

# Oscar Wilde

WORKSHEET A

1. Are the following statements about Oscar Wilde true or false?

- |   |       |
|---|-------|
| a) Oscar Wilde was born in London, England.                 | T / F |
| b) His full name was Oscar Fingall O'Flahertie Wills Wilde. | T / F |
| c) He never married.  | T / F |
| d) He was sent to prison for stealing.                      | T / F |
| e) He spent two years in prison.                            | T / F |
| f) He was a very athletic man.                              | T / F |
| g) He died alone in Rome, Italy.                            | T / F |
| h) He was only thirty-six when he died.                     | T / F |

Read Worksheet B to check your answers.

2. Oscar Wilde is famous for his humorous one-line quotations. Look at the following quotations and decide, in each case, what he was talking about. Choose from the topics in the box.

|         |          |        |           |           |        |         |          |
|---------|----------|--------|-----------|-----------|--------|---------|----------|
| Honesty | Ambition | Gossip | Smoking   | Parties   | Health | Parents | Goodness |
|         |          |        | Education | The Bible |        |         |          |

- a) To get back my youth I would do anything in the world, except take exercise, get up early, or be respectable.
- b) Children begin by loving them; after a time they judge them; rarely, if ever, do they forgive them.
- c) It is the last refuge of the failure.
- d) There is only one thing in the world worse than being talked about and that is not being talked about.
- e) It is the perfect type of a perfect pleasure. It is exquisite, and it leaves one unsatisfied. What more can one want?
- f) If one plays good music, people don't listen and if one plays bad music people don't talk.
- g) If one tells the truth, one is sure, sooner or later, to be found out.
- h) It is better to be beautiful than good. But...it is better to be good than to be ugly.
- i) It is an admirable thing, but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing that is worth knowing can be taught.
- j) The Book of Life begins with a man and a woman in the garden and ends with Revelations.

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# Oscar Wilde

WORKSHEET B

Oscar Fingall O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin, Ireland on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1854. He attended Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford, where he studied Classics. In 1875, at the age of twenty-one, his first poem was published. He spent the next few years studying, writing and travelling (mostly to Italy and Greece). Between 1882 and 1883, he lectured in the United States, France and England and in 1884 he married Constance Lloyd in London.

Two years after his marriage, he 'began that course of conduct which was to lead to his downfall in 1895'. The 'conduct' referred to was his openly homosexual lifestyle which, at the time, was regarded as unacceptable.

In 1890, the literary world sat up and took notice of Wilde as a serious writer when he published *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *The Critic as Artist*. This was the start of a very productive five years of writing for Wilde, during which time he became both famous and rich.

However, in 1891 he had met a good-looking young man named Lord Alfred Douglas. This man would lead him to his spectacular downfall within four years. The Marquess of Queensbury (the father of Lord Alfred Douglas) suspected the friendship between Wilde and Douglas of being 'improper' and publicly insulted Wilde on more than one occasion.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1895, Queensbury was arrested after Wilde complained of criminal libel. The case went to court but collapsed after it was revealed that Queensbury's comments were not lies but the truth. Wilde was immediately arrested for 'committing indecent acts with other male persons'. He was found guilty and sentenced to two years in prison with hard labour.

For a man who had always relied on his intellect rather than his athleticism, his time in prison hit him particularly hard. On his release, in 1897, he went to live in France but, poor and broken by his experience, died three years later, in 1900.