

OSCAR WILDE

life and works

Oscar Wilde was Irish. He was born in 1854 in Dublin, where he grew up.

Though they were not aristocrats, his parents were well-off, and provided Oscar with a fine education.

After graduating in classical studies at Trinity College (Dublin) he won a scholarship to Magdalen College and went to Oxford, where he became familiar with the work of Walter Pater (a proponent of the new school of aestheticism) and John Ruskin (a social theorist and Renaissance man).

Then he settled in London, where he became a popular and eccentric dandy (a *dandy* is a man who places particular importance upon physical appearance and refined language) who charmed everybody with his wit and brilliant conversation.

He was a spokesman for the school of “art for art’s sake” (a movement whose supporters considered art to be autonomous, with no relation to the world).

In his opinion, this school included some **French symbolist poets** (such as **Baudelaire**, **Verlaine** and **Mallarmé**) and the **Pre-Raphaelites**.

Wilde wrote poems, essays and the famous novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). The climax of his success, however, were his witty comedies, which were staged from 1892 to 1895; these included *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Woman of No Importance*, *An Ideal Husband* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

In the spring of 1895, however, his importance declined sharply when **he was arrested and sentenced to two years' hard labour.**

Wilde had been married for several years to Constance Lloyd with whom he had two children, when the Marquis of Queensberry accused him of having a relationship with his son, the young poet Lord Alfred Douglas.

A scandal ensued and Wilde was convicted for homosexual acts, which at that time was a serious criminal offence.

He spent two years in prison, where he wrote the poem *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* and his prose confession *De Profundis* .

After his release in 1897 Wilde emigrated to France, where his new life was lonely, impoverished, and humiliating.

He died in 1900 in Paris, in a hotel room.

We can say that his writings remain a wellspring of witticisms and reflections on morality, society and aesthetics.

And his Aestheticism had a profound influence on the work of others, including **Gabriele D'Annunzio** in Italy.