Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime

The author: Oscar Wilde
Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1854. He studied Greek and Latin at university in Dublin and Oxford. He was a famous writer and wrote many poems, stories and plays. He also went to prison during his life. Most people remember the funny things he said about people and about life. He died in Paris in 1900 when he was only forty-six years old.

1. Ecco alcuni dei temi delle opere di Oscar Wilde. Abbina le descrizioni delle sue opere teatrali, romanzi e poesie ai temi corretti.

A. It’s good to help people poorer than you.
B. In everyone good there is something bad, and in everyone bad there is something good.
C. You cannot know the inside of a person from looking at the outside.
D. We often hurt people that we should be nice to.

Plays, stories and poems

1. □ His poem The Ballad of Reading Gaol is about someone who kills the woman he loves.
2. □ His comedy The Importance of Being Earnest is about a man who behaves badly in town and well in the country.
3. □ His novel The Picture of Dorian Gray is about a young man who does terrible things, but who stays young while a picture of his face grows old.
4. □ His fairy story The Happy Prince is about the statue of a prince who was happy in life but is now sad and tries to help poor people.

Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime: the story
In the story Lord Arthur Savile’s Crime, a young man, Lord Arthur Savile, meets a fortune teller. He hears about his future and is worried about some bad things which might happen. This makes him act in a very strange and dangerous way. In this extract, Lord Arthur is at a party at Lady Windemere’s house. She is talking about the fortune teller and her guests are very excited.
Lady Windermere: Arthur, allow me introduce you to the Duchess of Paisley.

Arthur: That's an honour, Lady Windermere.

Lady Windermere: Duchess, this young gentleman is Lord Arthur Savile. He is engaged to Sybil Merton.

Duchess of Paisley: I'm delighted to meet you, Lord Savile.

Lady Windermere: Where is my palmist?

Duchess: Your palmist?!

Lady Windermere: Yes, I can't live without him at the moment.

Duchess: You are always so unusual.

Lady Windermere: He looks at my hand twice a week.

Duchess: (whispers to Arthur) How terrible to ask a complete stranger to a party like this! I hope he isn't English.

Lady Windermere: He says that I have an interesting hand because of my thumb. A very short thumb means that you look on the dark side of life and prefer to leave the world behind and to be alone.

Duchess: Ah, I see. And can he see the future in your hand too?

Lady Windermere: Of course – both the good and the bad things. I think he prefers the bad. I think everyone should visit a palmist once a month. That way they will know what they shouldn’t do. Of course they’ll still do it, but it’s nice to hear about bad things before they happen. Now, Arthur, can you find Mr Podgers or do I have to look for him myself?

Arthur: I will go and find him for you immediately, but what does he look like?

Lady Windermere: Well, he looks quite normal. He’s a short fat man with a large bald head and gold glasses. He looks like a family doctor, I’m afraid. People are very strange these days. They never look like what they are. I had a famous murderer here last year and he looked just like a nice old vicar and told funny stories all evening.

Mr Podgers: Lady Windermere …

Lady Windermere: Ah, there you are, Mr Podgers. Now I want you to read the Duchess of Paisley’s hand. Duchess, you must take off your glove. No, not your left hand, dear, the other one.
Duchess: Are you sure this is all right?

Lady Windermere: Of course not. Nothing ever is, but that’s how the world goes. Mr Podgers, this is the Duchess of Paisley. Duchess, this is Mr Podgers. And if you say that her mountain of the moon is bigger than mine, Mr Podgers, I shall stop coming to you.

Duchess: I’m sure there is nothing like that in my hand.

Arthur: Will Mr Podgers read my hand too, Lady Windermere?

Lady Windermere: Of course, I must tell you that Sybil is coming to lunch with me tomorrow. So if Mr Podgers learns that you get angry easily or are going to be ill in later life, or have a wife in Bayswater, I shall tell her everything.

Arthur: I’m not afraid. Sybil knows me as well as I know her. That is why she is marrying me.

Narrator: Lord Arthur sees Mr Podgers later and they are alone in the library.

Arthur: Will you read my hand now, Mr Podgers?

Mr Podgers: Certainly.

Narrator: Mr Podgers's face turns pale and he begins to tremble.

Arthur: What is wrong, Mr Podgers? What do you see? Tell me.

Mr Podgers: The light is not right in here. I cannot see anything. I’m sorry.

Arthur: No. You have seen something, haven’t you? You must tell me.

Mr Podgers: Very well. You have forced me to tell you. You will do a terrible thing – you will kill someone.

Arthur: But that cannot be true. I am soon to be married.

Mr Podgers: It is true. You will kill someone before you marry. Your crime will change your life forever. And now, I really must go.

Arthur: Oh, no. This cannot be. What can I do? What shall I tell Sybil?