CAPITOLO

4

Doubles and Dandies: Stevenson, Hardy and Wilde

"To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life." — Walter Pater, Conclusion to Studies in the History of the Renaissance (1873)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe late Victorian Britain (1870–1901) — schools and votes, the New Woman, the fears of the city, the new science — and explain what people meant by the *fin de siècle*.
2. I can outline the works of Stevenson, Hardy and Wilde and explain the double, Aestheticism, art for art's sake and the dandy, with examples.
3. I can analyse Jekyll's confession, the aphorisms of Wilde's Preface and Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush", commenting on form, language and themes.
4. I can recognise and use absolute constructions, and compare them with the Latin ablative absolute and the Greek genitive absolute.
5. I can speculate about a picture, take Cornell notes from a talk and write a short story with a twist.
6. I can compare Dorian Gray with D'Annunzio's Andrea Sperelli and with Ovid's Narcissus, and explain in plain words what X-rays are.

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English 5 · Parte I · The Victorian Age · versione 1.0
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In January 1886 a respectable London publisher brought out a thin, cheap book with an odd title: *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Within months its two names had become a phrase. Four years later an Irish classicist living in London published a novel about a beautiful man who stays young while his portrait grows old and ugly. Both books ask the same question, which the late Victorians found more and more urgent: is the face that we show to the world the real one?

This chapter covers the last thirty years of Victoria's reign, from the Education Act of 1870 to the queen's death in January 1901. You will meet three writers who saw the age from very different places — a Scottish romancer of divided selves, a Dorset novelist of chance and fate who ended as a poet, and a Dublin wit who turned his own life into a work of art and paid for it. At the end of the chapter you will compare them with Gabriele D'Annunzio, with Ovid's Narcissus and with a discovery of 1895 that let people see through skin.

4.1 History and Society: the Late Victorians, 1870–1901

The last three decades of the century were, for most Britons, richer and safer than the hungry 1840s of chapter 1. Real wages rose, food became cheaper, and the empire went on expanding (chapter 6). Yet the same years were full of anxiety: about the poor of the great cities, about crime and "degeneration", about women who no longer accepted the place assigned to them, and about a faith that science seemed to leave behind. Figura 4.1 sets the writers of this chapter against the events of the period.

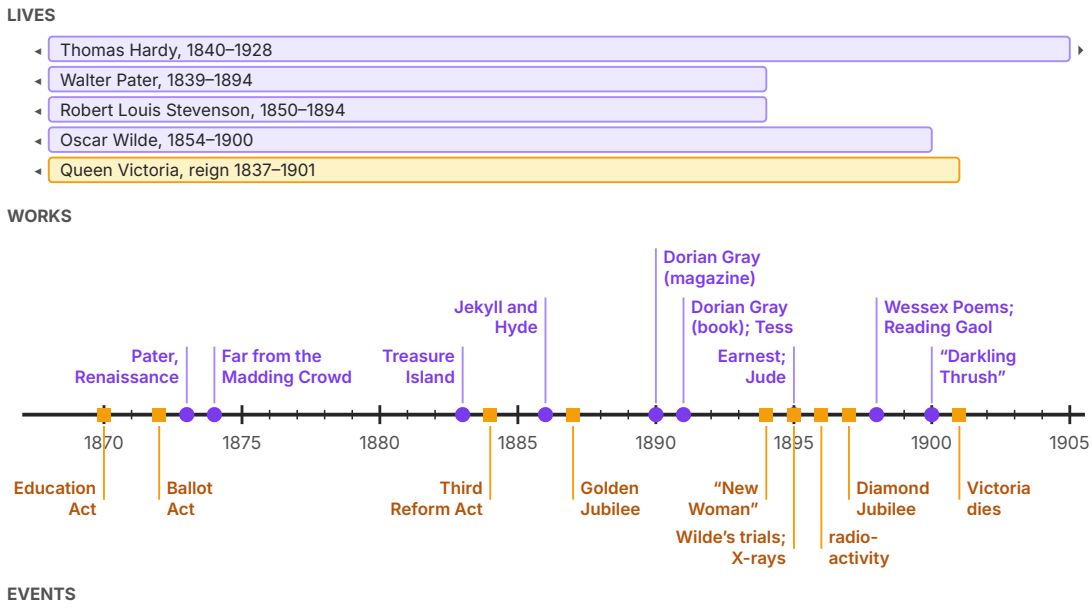


Figura 4.1 Late Victorian Britain, 1868–1905: lives (top; the queen's reign in amber), works (above the axis, violet) and events (below the axis, amber) on a proportional axis, ticks every year, labels every 5 years. Bars that run beyond the edges are marked ◂ ▸.

4.1.1 Schools and votes

The Elementary Education Act of 1870 (English 2, Unit 2) set up school boards to build schools wherever churches and charities had not. Attendance became compulsory for younger children in 1880, and most elementary schools stopped charging fees in 1891. The result was a nation that could read. Cheap papers were written for the new readers: *Tit-Bits* (1881) offered short, entertaining items, and the halfpenny *Daily Mail* (1896) sold to clerks and shop assistants on their way to work. Stevenson's "shilling shocker" and the serial novels of Hardy found their public in this enlarged market.

Politics widened too, but slowly. The Ballot Act (1872) made voting secret, so that a landlord or an employer could no longer watch how a man voted. The Third Reform Act (1884) gave rural householders the vote that town householders had won in 1867: after it, roughly six adult men in ten could vote in parliamentary elections. Women could not, though some could vote in local elections and sit on school boards.

4.1.2 The "New Woman"

In 1894 a magazine debate between two novelists, Sarah Grand and Ouida, gave the age a label: the **New Woman** (*la "donna nuova"*). It described the educated young woman of the middle class who worked as a typist, a teacher or a clerk, rode a bicycle, read what she liked and questioned

marriage as her only future. The phrase was used by admirers and satirists alike — *Punch* mocked her endlessly — and it never named an organised movement. Behind it, however, were real changes that chapter 3 described: the Married Women's Property Acts, the first women's colleges and the long campaign for the vote. Hardy's Sue Bridehead in *Jude the Obscure* (1895) is often read as a New Woman.

4.1.3 Fear in the city

London, with more than four million people in 1891, was the largest city in the world, and its East End frightened the comfortable West. From 1889 the businessman Charles Booth published a survey of *Life and Labour of the People in London* with maps that coloured every street by the income of its inhabitants, from gold for the wealthy to black for the poorest. In 1888 a series of murders of women in Whitechapel, never solved, filled the newspapers for months and fixed in the public mind the image of a respectable-looking killer moving unseen through the fog.

Some of the science of the day fed these fears. In *L'uomo delinquente* (1876) the Italian doctor Cesare Lombroso claimed that criminals were a "born" type that could be recognised by the shape of the skull and the face — a theory long since rejected. In *Degeneration* (1892, English translation 1895) Max Nordau argued that modern civilisation, and modern art, were sliding backwards. The idea of **degeneration** (*degenerazione*) — that a person, a family or a nation could fall back into a more primitive state — is never far from the Hyde who hides inside Dr Jekyll.

4.1.4 Science and the end of the century

Doubt, which in chapter 2 was the private crisis of poets such as Tennyson and Arnold, became common among the educated. At the same time physics revealed a world that the senses could not reach. On 8 November 1895, in his laboratory at Würzburg, Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen noticed that a screen glowed in the dark near a covered discharge tube: he had found a new kind of ray, which he called X. Within weeks newspapers all over Europe printed photographs of the bones of a living hand. In 1896 Henri Becquerel found that uranium gives off radiation of its own, and in 1897 J. J. Thomson identified the electron. The solid world of the Victorians was turning out to be full of invisible forces (the Connections section explains X-rays).

Victoria herself, who had withdrawn from public life after Albert's death in 1861, returned in glory for her Golden Jubilee (1887) and her Diamond Jubilee (1897), when troops from every part of the empire marched through London. She died at Osborne House, on the Isle of Wight, on 22 January 1901, after more than sixty-three years on the throne, and her son became Edward VII. By then the 1890s had already been given a French name, **fin de siècle** (*fine secolo*): not a date but a mood — a sense of living at the end of something, refined and tired, anxious and excited by the new.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Fin de siècle indica l'anno 1900.» → ✓ È un'etichetta per il clima culturale degli anni Novanta dell'Ottocento: stanchezza, raffinatezza, inquietudine e attesa del nuovo.

✗ «Con il Third Reform Act (1884) votavano tutti gli uomini adulti.» → ✓ Il voto passò ai capifamiglia delle campagne; circa quattro uomini adulti su dieci, e tutte le donne, restavano esclusi dalle elezioni politiche.

✗ «Röntgen scoprì la radioattività.» → ✓ Röntgen scoprì i raggi X (1895); la radiazione dell'uranio è di Becquerel (1896).

4.2 Literature: the Double, Wessex and the Aesthetes

Three very different writers dominate the fiction of these years. Stevenson gave the age its great myth of the divided self; Hardy wrote the last great Victorian novels and then abandoned the novel for poetry; Wilde made beauty a creed and the epigram a weapon. What links them is a suspicion of Victorian respectability: each, in his own way, looks behind the façade.

4.2.1 Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894)

Stevenson was born in Edinburgh on 13 November 1850, into a family of engineers who built Scotland's lighthouses. He studied engineering, then law, but his weak lungs drove him from one climate to another, from France and the Swiss Alps to the United States and finally the South Seas. He settled on the island of Upolu, in Samoa, where he died on 3 December 1894. The adventure story *Treasure Island* (1883 in book form) made his name; *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (January 1886 — the first edition has no "The" in the title) made him famous everywhere.

The lawyer Gabriel John Utterson is worried by his friend Dr Henry Jekyll's will, which leaves everything to a certain Edward Hyde: a small, repellent man who has trampled on a child in the street and later beats an old gentleman, Sir Danvers Carew, to death. Jekyll seems to protect him. In the end Jekyll's servant Poole fetches Utterson, they break down the door of the doctor's cabinet and find Hyde dead, in clothes far too large for him. Only two documents, read by Utterson after that night, explain the mystery: Hyde and Jekyll are the same man, changed by a drug that Jekyll invented. The story is built like a set of boxes, one inside the other (Figura 4.2): the reader moves, like a detective, from the outside of the case to its centre.

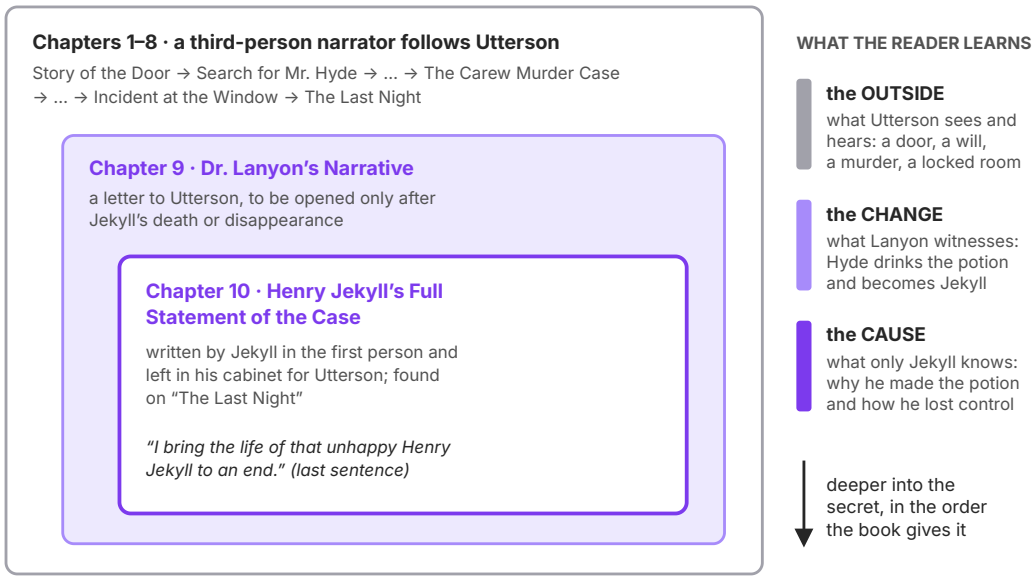


Figura 4.2 The narrative structure of *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*: three narratives, one inside the other, with chapter titles as printed. Each level brings the reader closer to the secret.

Hyde is the most famous example in English of the **double** (*il doppio*): a second self who shares a character's identity but acts out what the first self represses. The motif is older than Stevenson — the German novelist Jean Paul coined the word **Doppelgänger** ("double-goer") in 1796, and Edgar Allan Poe and Dostoevsky had written doubles — but Stevenson gave it a Victorian setting: a doctor of perfect reputation whose second self walks the same London streets. Edinburgh, too, was a divided city, with its elegant New Town and its crowded Old Town, and it had its own double life in Deacon William Brodie, a respected cabinet-maker by day and a burglar by night, hanged in 1788; Stevenson had written a play about him with W. E. Henley (1880).

APPROFONDIMENTO

A story from a dream. In his essay "A Chapter on Dreams" (1888) Stevenson wrote that he had been looking for a story about man's "double being" for a long time, and that some of its scenes — among them the transformation in front of witnesses — came to him in a dream. The rest, he added, he wrote awake. The book was an immediate success: in a few months many thousands of copies were sold in Britain, preachers used it in sermons, and a stage version opened in Boston in 1887 and in London in 1888. Since then "a Jekyll and Hyde" has entered the language for anyone whose character changes alarmingly.

4.2.2 Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)

Hardy was born on 2 June 1840 at Higher Bockhampton, near Dorchester, the son of a stonemason. He trained as an architect and restored country churches before he lived by writing. In *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874) he first used the name of the old Anglo-Saxon kingdom, **Wessex**, for the region of southwest England in which all his major novels are set (Figura 4.3). Its towns and villages are real places under invented names — Casterbridge is Dorchester, Christminster is Oxford — and its rural world of shepherds, farm workers and fairs was disappearing as he wrote.

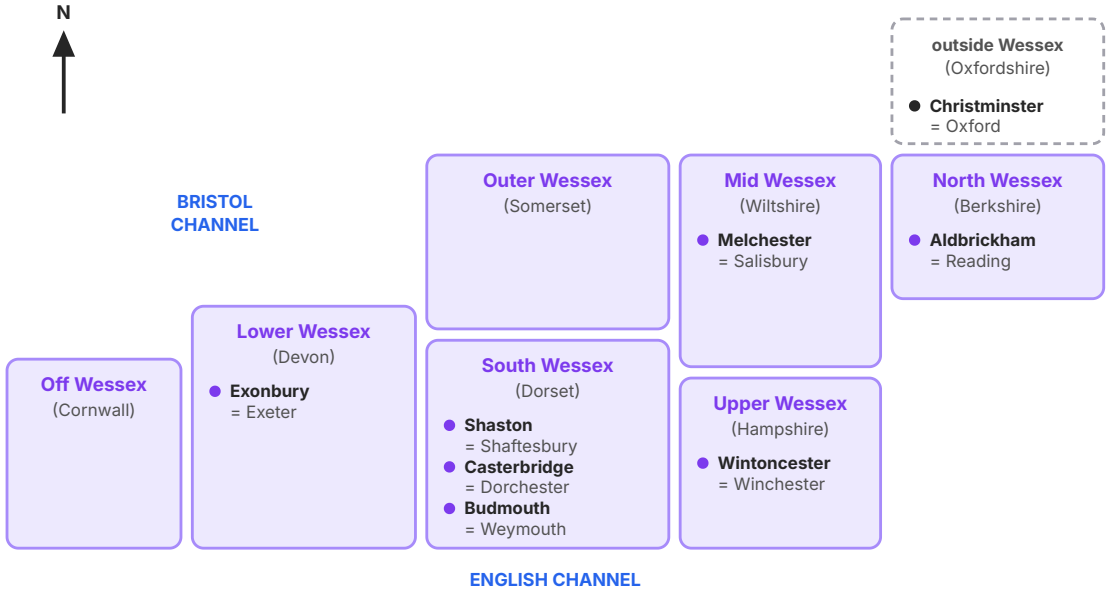


Figura 4.3 Hardy's Wessex (schematic): the fictional regions, with the real counties in brackets, and some of the fictional towns with the real ones they stand for. Christminster (Oxford), the goal of Jude, lies just outside Wessex.

Hardy's plots are driven by chance and by rigid social rules, under a universe that does not care. In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), subtitled "A Pure Woman", a poor country girl is seduced (or raped — the novel leaves it unclear) by the rich Alec, then rejected by her husband, Angel Clare, on their wedding night, when she tells him her past. Driven back to Alec, she kills him and is hanged. Hardy's last sentence about her points to Greek tragedy: "the President of the Immortals, in Æschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess." *Jude the Obscure* (1895), the story of a stonemason who dreams of studying at Christminster and of his unmarried life with his cousin Sue Bridehead, was savaged by reviewers, and Hardy began no new novel after it —

because of the reviews, it is often said, though critics still debate it. He turned to the poetry he had always written: *Wessex Poems* (1898) was followed by seven more collections, the last published after his death. When he died, on 11 January 1928, he was the grand old man of English poetry.

4.2.3 Aestheticism and the dandy

In 1873 the Oxford don Walter Pater (1839–1894) published *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*. Its short Conclusion, quoted as the epigraph of this chapter, told its readers that life is a stream of fleeting impressions and that the wise man lives each moment as intensely as he can. Pater feared he had been misunderstood by the young: he dropped the Conclusion from the second edition (1877) and restored it, slightly revised, in 1888. His book became the bible of **Aestheticism** (*estetismo*): the belief that beauty is the highest value, and that a work of art should be judged by its form and by the experience it gives, not by its moral or social usefulness. Its slogan was **art for art's sake** (*l'arte per l'arte*), a translation of the French *l'art pour l'art*, associated with the poet Théophile Gautier. In London the American painter James McNeill Whistler defended the same idea, in a famous libel case against the critic John Ruskin (1878) and in his "Ten O'Clock" lecture (1885).

In the 1890s Aestheticism shaded into **decadence** (*decadentismo*): a taste for the artificial, the exquisite and the forbidden, and a sense of belonging to a civilisation in its last refined years. Its models were French — Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* (1857) and Huysmans's novel *À rebours* (1884), usually identified with the "yellow book" that poisons Dorian Gray — and its London magazine was *The Yellow Book* (1894–1897). Its human type was the **dandy** (*il dandy*): a man who makes his dress, his manners and his conversation into a work of art, and who answers seriousness with wit. The model was Beau Brummell (1778–1840), the arbiter of Regency fashion; Baudelaire had made the dandy a hero of modern life (1863); Wilde made him a figure on the London stage.

4.2.4 Oscar Wilde (1854–1900)

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin on 16 October 1854, the son of a famous eye surgeon and of a poet who wrote as "Speranza". He was, before anything else, a brilliant classicist: at Trinity College Dublin he won the Berkeley Gold Medal for Greek (1874), and at Magdalen College, Oxford, he took first-class honours in both parts of his classics degree and the Newdigate Prize for his poem "Ravenna" (1878). At Oxford he heard Ruskin and read Pater. By the time of his lecture tour of America (1882) he was the most famous aesthete in Britain, his long hair and velvet coat a gift to cartoonists.

The Picture of Dorian Gray appeared in the July 1890 number of *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*. The painter Basil Hallward paints a portrait of a beautiful young man, Dorian; the witty cynic Lord Henry Wotton teaches him that youth and pleasure are all that matter; Dorian wishes that the picture could grow old instead of him, and the wish comes true. Every cruelty, beginning

with his desertion of the actress Sibyl Vane, who kills herself, marks the canvas, while his face stays young. Years later he murders Basil; at last he stabs the portrait, and his servants find on the floor a withered old man with a knife in his heart, beneath a picture restored to its beauty. Reviewers called the story immoral. For the book of 1891 Wilde added six chapters and a Preface of aphorisms (T2).

His four society comedies filled London theatres between 1892 and 1895. The last, *The Importance of Being Earnest: A Trivial Comedy for Serious People*, opened at the St James's Theatre on 14 February 1895. Its dialogue is a chain of epigrams (English 4, chapter 1): in Wilde's hands the word no longer means a short poem in the manner of Martial but a single witty sentence, usually built on a paradox (English 4, chapter 2). "The truth is rarely pure and never simple," says Algernon; and Lady Bracknell, told that the young man who wants to marry her daughter has lost both his parents, replies: "To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness." An **aphorism** (*aforisma*) states a general truth in one memorable sentence; Wilde's aphorisms turn the expected truth upside down.

Weeks after the première came the trials. Wilde sued the Marquess of Queensberry, the father of his young friend Lord Alfred Douglas, for libel, and lost; he was then prosecuted for "gross indecency" under a law of 1885 that punished sexual relations between men, and on 25 May 1895 he was sentenced to two years' hard labour. He served most of it in Reading Gaol. Released in 1897, a ruined man, he left England for ever; *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898) was signed only with his prison number, "C.3.3.". He died in a Paris hotel on 30 November 1900. In 2017 a British law pardoned him, with thousands of other men convicted under the same laws.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «Hyde è il fratello gemello di Jekyll.» → ✓ Hyde è Jekyll stesso, trasformato dalla pozione: un solo corpo, due personalità. Il lettore lo scopre solo negli ultimi due capitoli.

✗ «Gli aforismi della Prefazione li pronuncia Lord Henry.» → ✓ La Prefazione (1891) è firmata da Wilde e sta fuori dal racconto; Lord Henry ha i suoi paradossi, dentro il romanzo.

✗ «Il Wessex è una contea inglese.» → ✓ È il nome di un antico regno anglosassone che Hardy usa per una regione immaginaria, costruita su contee reali (Dorset, Wiltshire, Hampshire…).

DA RICORDARE

Five terms of the fin de siècle. double — a second self that acts out what the first represses (Hyde, Dorian's portrait) · **Aestheticism** — beauty as the highest value; art judged by form (Pater, Wilde) · **art for art's sake** — its slogan: art needs no moral or useful purpose · **decadence** — the artificial, the refined and the forbidden, at the end of a civilisation · **dandy** — dress, manners and wit as a work of art.

4.3 Texts: a Confession, a Preface and a Thrush

Three texts and three forms: the scientific confession that ends Stevenson's novel, the aphorisms with which Wilde answered his critics, and a poem that Hardy dated at the very end of the nineteenth century.

4.3.1 T1 · Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, ch. 10: "truly two"

Context. The last chapter is the statement that Jekyll writes for Utterson when he knows that he can no longer return from Hyde. He begins with his youth: a man of fortune and talent, eager for respect, who hid his pleasures out of shame. In this passage he moves from his own case to a general law.

Tabella 4.1 T1 — *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, "Henry Jekyll's Full Statement of the Case" (text of the first edition, Longmans, 1886, as transcribed on Wikisource; checked against Project Gutenberg eBook #43), from the first paragraph.

> Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite; both sides of me were in dead earnest; I was no more myself when I laid aside restraint and plunged in shame, than when I laboured, in the eye of day, at the furtherance of knowledge or the relief of sorrow and suffering. And it chanced that the direction of my scientific studies, which led wholly towards the mystic and the transcendental, reacted and shed a strong light on this consciousness of the perennial war among my members. With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens.

Glosses. *double-dealer*: a person who deceives by acting in two ways · *in dead earnest*: completely serious · *laid aside restraint*: stopped controlling himself · *in the eye of day*: in public, openly · *furtherance*: progress · *it chanced*: it happened by chance · *perennial*: lasting for ever · *my members*: the parts of my body (a biblical phrase, Romans 7:23) · *doomed*: condemned · *outstrip*: go faster and further than · *hazard the guess*: risk the suggestion · *polity*: a state, an organised community · *multifarious*: of many kinds · *incongruous*: not fitting together · *denizens*: inhabitants.

Analysis

A sincere double life. Jekyll begins with a paradox: he is a "double-dealer" but "in no sense a hypocrite". A hypocrite pretends; Jekyll claims that both of his selves are real and serious — the man who plunges into shame and the man who works for knowledge and the relief of suffering. The respectable self is not a mask over the true one: there are two true ones.

The language of science and war. Jekyll speaks as a scientist reporting a discovery: *scientific studies*, *light*, *knowledge*, *discovery*, *truth*, *the same lines* (of research). But his metaphors are of conflict and disaster — the "perennial war among my members", the "dreadful shipwreck". The sentence that names the truth is held back by a long build-up and arrives after a colon, balanced by antithesis and repetition: *not truly one, but truly two*.

A prophecy. The last sentence looks forward. Others, Jekyll guesses, will discover that man is not two but many, "a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens" — a city of strangers. Readers of the next century, which gave us psychoanalysis (chapter 9) and Pirandello's *Uno, nessuno e centomila*, have often found this sentence prophetic.

1. Why does Jekyll insist that he was "in no sense a hypocrite"? What is the difference between a hypocrite and a double-dealer, as he sees it?
2. List the words from the field of science and those from the field of war and disaster. What does the mixture suggest about Jekyll's discovery?
3. Rewrite "that man is not truly one, but truly two" in plain modern English, and explain the effect of the repetition of *truly*.
4. What does Jekyll predict about future knowledge? Why does he choose the political word *polity*?
5. Jekyll writes after his ruin. Find the words that show he knows how his story ends.

4.3.2 T2 · Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: from the Preface (1891)

Context. Wilde first published the Preface in the *Fortnightly Review* in March 1891, as an answer to the reviewers who had called the magazine version of the novel immoral, and then placed it at the front of the book. In the 1891 edition every aphorism stands alone, like a line of verse; here a selection is printed.

Tabella 4.2 T2 — *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the Preface: a selection, in the order of the book. Text of the first book edition (Ward, Lock and Co., 1891), as transcribed on Wikisource, checked against Project Gutenberg eBook #174. […] marks omitted aphorisms.

The artist is the creator of beautiful things.
To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.
[…] Those who find ugly meanings in beautiful things are corrupt without being charming. This is a fault.
There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written, or badly written. That is all.
[…] No artist desires to prove anything. Even things that are true can be proved.
[…] All art is at once surface and symbol.
Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.
Those who read the symbol do so at their peril.
It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.
[…] All art is quite useless.

Glosses. *conceal*: hide · *aim*: purpose · *corrupt*: morally bad · *charming*: pleasant, attractive · *at their peril*: at their own risk · *mirrors*: reflects, as a mirror does.

Analysis

A manifesto in aphorisms. The Preface is the clearest statement of Aestheticism in English. It separates art from morality ("no such thing as a moral or an immoral book"), from truth ("No artist desires to prove anything") and from usefulness ("All art is quite useless"). A book is to be judged only as well or badly written. The flat little sentences — *This is a fault. That is all.* — close each argument like a door.

Paradox as a method. Almost every aphorism contains a surprise. We expect the critic to call ugly meanings corrupt; Wilde adds "without being charming", as if charm were the real virtue. We expect a cynic to say that even false things can be proved; Wilde says that "Even things that are true can be proved", as if proof were vulgar and beneath the artist. The structure is often an antithesis (English 3) of two balanced clauses, as in the pair on surface and symbol.

A warning about the novel. Read with the novel in mind, the Preface is less innocent than it seems. A novel about a portrait that records its owner's sins is plainly a moral fable, and the warning that those who go "beneath the surface" do so "at their peril" is also an invitation. The last aphorism on the mirror returns the accusation of immorality to the reviewers: if they see vice in the book, the vice is theirs.

1. Which aphorisms separate art from morality, which from truth, and which from usefulness?

2. Choose two aphorisms built on antithesis and show the two balanced halves.
3. Explain in your own words: “It is the spectator, and not life, that art really mirrors.”
4. Is “All art is quite useless” an insult? Read it again after “To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim” and decide.
5. Does the novel, as you know its plot from the Literature section, obey the Preface? Give one argument for and one against.

4.3.3 T3 · Thomas Hardy, “The Darkling Thrush” (1900)

Context. Hardy dated the poem “December 1900” — the last month, as he counted, of the nineteenth century, since the twentieth began on 1 January 1901. First printed in the magazine *The Graphic* on 29 December 1900, as “By the Century’s Deathbed”, it was collected in *Poems of the Past and the Present* (published in 1901, dated 1902). The speaker leans on a gate on a winter evening; the land around him looks like the corpse of the dead century.

Tabella 4.3 T3 — Thomas Hardy, “The Darkling Thrush”, complete. Text of *Poems of the Past and the Present* (Macmillan, 1919 reprint), Project Gutenberg eBook #3168; other printings, such as the text on Wikisource, read “strings of broken lyres” (l. 6), “a voice arose among” (l. 17) and “carolings” (l. 25).

I leant upon a coppice gate	
When Frost was spectre-gray,	
And Winter’s dregs made desolate	
The weakening eye of day.	
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky	5
Like strings from broken lyres,	
And all mankind that haunted nigh	
Had sought their household fires.	
The land’s sharp features seemed to be	
The Century’s corpse outleant,	10
His crypt the cloudy canopy,	
The wind his death-lament.	
The ancient pulse of germ and birth	
Was shrunken hard and dry,	
And every spirit upon earth	15
Seemed fervourless as I.	
At once a voice outburst among	
The bleak twigs overhead	
In a full-hearted evensong	
Of joy illimited;	20
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,	
In blast-beruffled plume,	
Had chosen thus to fling his soul	
Upon the growing gloom.	
So little cause for carollings	25
Of such ecstatic sound	

Was written on terrestrial things

Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through

His happy good-night air

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew

And I was unaware.

December 1900.

Glosses. *darkling*: in the dark (a poetic word: Keats's nightingale and Arnold's "darkling plain" in chapter 2) · *coppice*: a small wood of trees cut regularly · *spectre-gray*: grey as a ghost · *dregs*: the last, worst part · *bine-stems*: the stems of climbing plants · *scored*: cut lines across · *lyres*: ancient stringed instruments, the symbol of poetry · *haunted nigh*: lived nearby · *outleant*: stretched out (a rare word) · *crypt*: an underground tomb · *germ*: seed · *fervourless*: without passion or warmth · *outburst*: burst out · *illimited*: without limits · *gaunt*: thin · *blast-beruffled plume*: feathers ruffled by the wind · *carollings*: joyful songs · *whereof*: of which.

Analysis

Form. The poem has four stanzas of eight lines, each made of two ballad quatrains (English 3): iambic lines of four and three stresses that alternate, rhyming *ababcdcd*. The simple, song-like form contrasts with the dark vocabulary and the learned words (*terrestrial*, *illimited*) — a mixture typical of Hardy.

The death of a century. The first two stanzas build an extended metaphor. The landscape is the corpse of the century; the clouds are its tomb; the wind sings its funeral song. The broken lyres suggest that poetry itself, the music of the Romantics, has broken. Even the "ancient pulse of germ and birth" — the power of nature to renew itself — seems dead, and the speaker is as "fervourless" as the earth.

A turn without a conversion. At "At once" the poem turns, like a sonnet at its volta. An old, thin bird sings with "joy illimited" into the dark. The last stanza is carefully hedged: the speaker does not say that there is hope, only that he "could think" that the thrush knew of some "blessed Hope" of which he himself "was unaware". The capital H may suggest a religious hope, but the speaker cannot share it. The poem ends the Victorian age with the doubt of Arnold's "Dover Beach" (chapter 2) — and a song.

1. Find all the words in stanzas 1–2 connected with death and burial. What is the extended metaphor?
2. What time of day and year is it? Why is this setting appropriate for a poem dated December 1900?

3. Describe the thrush. Why does Hardy make him "aged, frail, gaunt, and small" instead of young and beautiful?
4. Explain the contrast between the thrush's song and "the growing gloom".
5. Does the speaker find hope in the end? Look closely at "could think" and "unaware".
6. Compare the ending with the last lines of "Dover Beach" (chapter 2). Which poet leaves more room for hope?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Scanning a stanza and saying what the metre does. Mark the stressed syllables (capitals) in lines 1–4 of T3.

1. I **LEANT** up**ON** a **COP**pice **GATE** — four iambs (da-DUM × 4): iambic tetrameter.
2. When **FROST** was **SPEC**tre-**GRAY** — three iambs: iambic trimeter.
3. And **WIN**ter's **DREGS** made **DES**o**LATE** — four again; *desolate* takes a light second stress for the rhyme with *gate*.
4. The **WEAK**ening **EYE** of **DAY** — three: the shorter line closes the quatrain, rhyming *gray* / *day*.

So what? This is the rhythm of the ballad and the hymn, the most familiar music in English. Hardy pours a funeral image into a song form, and the regular beat makes the thrush's song in stanza 3 feel natural: the poem has been "singing" from the first line.

Model sentence: *Hardy sets his elegy for the century in the plain iambic rhythm of the ballad stanza, so that the poem itself seems to answer the thrush's song.*

4.4 Language: Absolute Constructions

You know participle clauses (English 3, chapter 8): *Walking home through the fog, Utterson thought of the will.* The participle clause has no subject of its own, so its subject must be the subject of the main clause; otherwise you produce a dangling participle. An **absolute construction** (*costrutto assoluto*) is different: it has **its own subject**, different from the main clause's, followed by a participle, an adjective, an adverb or a prepositional phrase. It has no conjunction and no finite verb, and it is usually separated from the main clause by a comma (Figura 4.4). A classico student knows the mechanism already: it is the **ablative absolute** of Latin (*urbe capta*, "the city taken") and the **genitive absolute** of Greek.

Tabella 4.4 Absolute constructions: form and examples from this chapter

Form	Example	Equivalent clause
noun + *-ing* participle	*The fog thickening, Utterson walked faster.*	As the fog was thickening, …
noun + past participle	*His face hidden in his collar, Hyde hurried away.*	His face was hidden, and …
noun + perfect participle	*The trials having ended, Wilde was taken to prison.*	When the trials had ended, …
noun + adjective / adverb	*The experiment over, Jekyll locked the cabinet.*	When the experiment was over, …
noun + prepositional phrase	*Pen in hand, Jekyll began his statement.*	With his pen in his hand, …
with + object + participle / adjective	*With his reputation ruined, Wilde left England.*	Because his reputation was ruined, …
it / *there* + *being*	*It being December, the land was bare.*	Since it was December, …
fixed absolutes	*All things considered, Hardy was right to stop.*	(idiomatic)

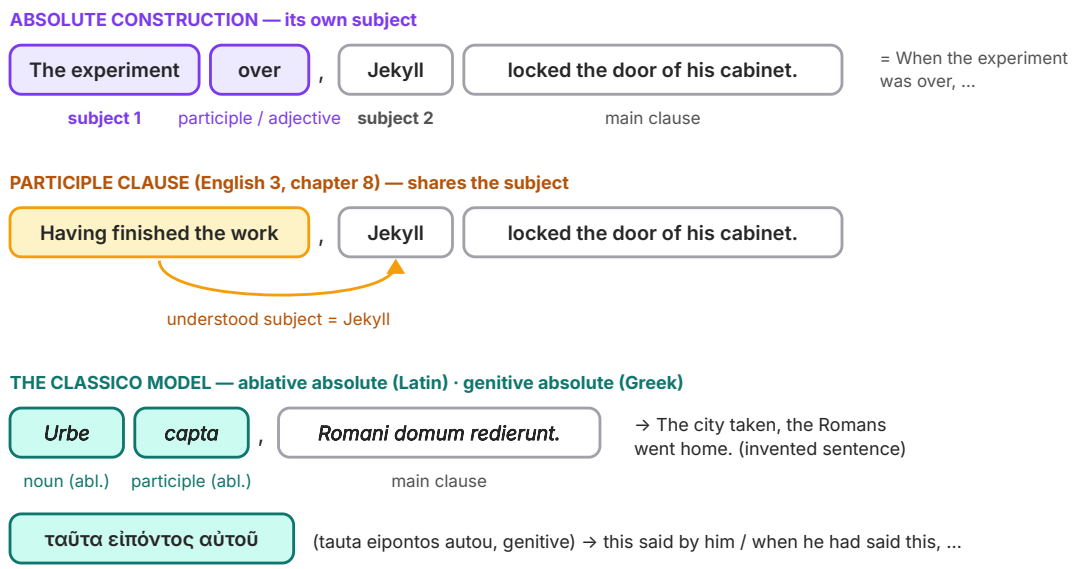


Figura 4.4 The absolute construction (violet) has its own subject; the participle clause (amber) borrows the subject of the main clause. Below, the Latin ablative absolute and the Greek genitive absolute, which work in the same way.

4.4.1 Meaning and use

An absolute adds background to the main clause: time (*The play over, the audience went home*), cause (*The house being empty, Hyde could come and go*), condition (*Weather permitting, we'll go to the gallery*) or an accompanying detail, often of the body (*She stood at the window, her hands pressed against the glass*). The relation is not stated; the context supplies it. This is why absolutes are typical of narrative prose, history writing and formal essays, where they compress a whole clause into a few words. Victorian prose is full of them. Lanyon, watching the transformation, leaps back against the wall, "my arms raised to shield me from that prodigy, my mind submerged in terror"; in "The Last Night" Utterson and Poole find the cabinet quiet, "a good fire glowing and chattering on the hearth, the kettle singing its thin strain".

With ***with*** the construction is far more common in everyday English: *With the exam only a month away, Giulia started her revision log*; *He sat there with his eyes closed*; *With so many people watching, she couldn't refuse.* The negative uses *without*: *Without anyone noticing, Hyde slipped through the door.*

4.4.2 Fixed absolutes

Some absolutes have become fixed expressions and are used in speech as well: *all things considered*, *weather permitting*, *other things being equal*, *that said*, *this being so*, *present company excepted*. A related group, the participles used as sentence adverbs — *generally speaking*, *strictly speaking*, *judging by…*, *considering…*, *given (that)…* — have no subject at all and are accepted even though they would otherwise "dangle": *Generally speaking, Victorian novels were published in parts.*

Register. Outside the fixed expressions and the *with* pattern, absolutes belong to written and literary English. In conversation you will normally say *When the film was over, we went for a pizza*, not *The film over, we…*; in an essay or a story the absolute is elegant, as long as you use it sparingly.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Il costrutto assoluto. È una struttura senza congiunzione e senza verbo di modo finito, con un **soggetto proprio**, diverso da quello della principale: *The experiment over, Jekyll locked the cabinet*. Il soggetto viene **prima** del participio (*the portrait finished*), mentre in italiano il participio assoluto viene di solito prima del nome: «*Finito* il ritratto, Basil…». Con *with* (*with his reputation ruined*) è comune anche nella lingua di tutti i giorni.

Confronto con il latino e il greco. È lo stesso meccanismo dell'**ablativo assoluto** (*urbe capta*, «presa la città»; *Caesare duce*, «sotto la guida di Cesare») e del **genitivo assoluto** (ταῦτα εἰπόντος αὐτοῦ, «avendo egli detto queste cose»). In latino il caso è l'ablativo, in greco il genitivo, in inglese il soggetto resta al caso soggetto: *He being absent* (formale), oggi quasi sempre *With him absent*. Come in latino, la relazione con la principale (tempo, causa, condizione, concessione) la decide il contesto: traducendo, scegliete voi la congiunzione.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ Finished the experiment, Jekyll drank the potion. (ordine italiano) → ✓ *The experiment finished, Jekyll…* oppure, con lo stesso soggetto, *Having finished the experiment, Jekyll…*

✗ Being Sunday, the gallery was full. (participio sospeso: non è «la galleria» a essere domenica) → ✓ *It being Sunday, the gallery was full.* / ✓ *As it was Sunday, …*

✗ With his reputation ruining, Wilde left England. → ✓ *With his reputation ruined* (participio passato: la reputazione è stata rovinata).

✗ The trials over Wilde was taken to prison. → ✓ *The trials over, Wilde…* (la virgola separa il costrutto assoluto dalla principale).

4.5 Skills: Masks, Mirrors and Stories

4.5.1 Vocabulary: identity, appearance and morality

Stevenson and Wilde write about the distance between how a person appears and what a person is. Tabella 4.5 gives the key words; notice how many of them belong to the language of judgement.

Tabella 4.5 Identity, appearance and morality: key words

Word	Meaning	Example
respectable (adj.)	socially accepted as good and proper	*Jekyll is a respectable doctor.*
reputation (n.)	the opinion people have of someone	*The trials destroyed Wilde's reputation.*
hypocrisy (n.)	pretending to have virtues you do not have	*Is Victorian respectability hypocrisy?*
secret (n., adj.)	something hidden from others	*The portrait keeps Dorian's secret.*
double life (n.)	two separate lives, one of them hidden	*Deacon Brodie led a double life.*
mask (n., v.)	a cover for the face; something that hides feelings	*His smile masks his fear.*
vanity (n.)	too much pride in your looks or abilities	*Dorian's vanity is his ruin.*
corrupt (adj., v.)	morally bad; to make morally bad	*Lord Henry corrupts Dorian.*
conscience (n.)	the inner sense of right and wrong	*The portrait is a picture of his conscience.*
beauty (n.)	the quality of being pleasing to the senses	*For the aesthetes beauty was the highest value.*

Word formation: *-ism* and *-ist*

The suffix *-ism* forms nouns for a movement, a belief, a system or a kind of behaviour; *-ist* forms the person who follows it or practises it, and often the adjective too (*a realist novel*). An adjective in *-istic* often exists beside it (*realistic*, *idealistic*), sometimes with a different meaning: *a realist novel* belongs to the movement, *a realistic plan* is practical. Note also the exceptions: a follower of Aestheticism is an *aesthete*, not ✗ an aestheticist.

Tabella 4.6 Nouns in *-ism* and *-ist*

-ism (movement, belief, behaviour)	-ist (person; often adjective)	Example
realism	realist	*Hardy is often called a realist, but his plots depend on chance.*
socialism	socialist	*Wilde wrote an essay on "The Soul of Man under Socialism" (1891).*
Darwinism	Darwinist (rare) / Darwinian	*Social Darwinism misapplied Darwin's ideas to societies.*
dandyism	(dandy)	*Baudelaire saw dandyism as a kind of heroism.*
Aestheticism	(aesthete)	*Wilde was the most famous aesthete of his day.*
—	novelist, journalist, scientist	*Stevenson was a novelist, an essayist and a poet.*

4.5.2 Listening: a talk at the gallery

Before you listen. Giulia has spent the long weekend of 1 November in Edinburgh, visiting Callum. On Saturday morning they join a guided talk in a gallery about a Victorian painting. (The painting and its painter are invented for this book.) Look at the title of the painting in the script and predict three things you might see in it. Then listen (books closed) while three classmates read the script, and take notes in the Cornell format described in the Learning to learn box below.

Tabella 4.7 Listening script — *The Mirror at Midnight*

Guide	Good morning, everyone. This is *The Mirror at Midnight*, painted in 1893 by a Scottish artist, Agnes Rennie. A young woman in a white evening dress sits in front of a tall mirror. Her party is over, her gloves lying on the table beside a single candle. Now look at the mirror.
Giulia	Her reflection is different. It's older — and it's wearing grey.
Guide	Exactly. In the room she is perhaps twenty; in the glass she could well be fifty. Victorian viewers would have recognised the candle at once: a symbol of time burning away. And on the floor, half hidden by her skirt, there is a mask — the kind people wore at fancy-dress balls.
Callum	So the party was a masked ball? Or is the mask just a symbol?
Guide	It may be both. We know very little about the painting. It was shown once, in Glasgow, and the critic of a local paper called it "morbid". Rennie never explained it. What do you think?
Callum	I'd say she's seeing her future. The candle's almost finished, so she must be thinking about getting old.
Giulia	Or her real self. In *Dorian Gray* the portrait shows the truth while the face stays young. Maybe this is the opposite: the mirror tells the truth, and the white dress is the lie.
Guide	That's a reading many visitors suggest. There's one more detail. Can you see the letter under the candle?
Callum	It's sealed. She hasn't opened it yet.
Guide	Yes. A sealed letter in a Victorian painting usually means news, or a secret. We don't know whose. Some people think it's a proposal of marriage; others think it's a letter breaking an engagement.
Giulia	There's no way it's good news. Look at her hand: it's stopping just before the letter, as if she's afraid of it.
Callum	Or she just wants to look at herself a bit longer. The aesthetes would have loved that — the moment before the ending.
Guide	You two sound like the critics of 1893. One last fact: the frame. Rennie designed it herself, and she carved two words in Latin at the bottom, *tempus fugit*.
Giulia	"Time flies." So the painter did give us a clue.
Guide	Or a warning. Thank you — the next painting is in the room on your left.

After listening. a) What two differences are there between the woman and her reflection? b) What do the candle, the mask and the sealed letter traditionally suggest? c) How do Giulia and Callum interpret the mirror? Which interpretation do you prefer, and why? d) Find in the script three expressions used to speculate (*could well be…*) and one absolute construction.

4.5.3 Speaking: speculating about a picture or a situation

When you speak about a picture you cannot be sure of everything: who the people are, what has just happened, what will happen next. In English, and in an oral exam, you show that you are interpreting, not stating facts, by using modal verbs and expressions of probability (chapter 3) and by giving the evidence for each guess.

Tabella 4.8 Useful language — speculating

Function	Expressions
Almost certain	*She must be… · He can't be… · There's no way he… · I'm pretty sure that…*
Probable	*It could well be… · I'd say she's probably… · It looks as if / as though… · He's likely to…*
Possible	*It might be… · Perhaps / Maybe… · It's hard to say, but… · I wouldn't be surprised if…*
Giving evidence	*judging by… · from the way she… · the… suggests that… · that would explain why…*
The past and the future	*She must have just… · He might have been… · They're about to… · She's going to…*

1. **Pictures in words.** In pairs, A reads description 1 and B description 2; each speculates for one minute about who the people are, what has happened and what will happen next, then reacts to the partner's ideas. 1: *A man in an elegant evening suit is laughing with friends at a party; behind him, in a dark window, his reflection shows a tired, unsmiling face.* 2: *Two young women who look exactly alike are standing on a station platform; one holds a suitcase and a ticket, the other holds an umbrella, though the sky is clear.*
2. **A situation.** A respected teacher at your school is seen late at night in a part of town where nobody expected to see him. In groups of three, speculate about the explanation (at least three possibilities), then decide which is most likely and why. Use at least four expressions from Tabella 4.8 and one absolute construction.

4.5.4 Writing: a short story

A short story is not a short novel. It usually has one main character, one setting, one central event and a single effect, and it often ends with a **twist** (*colpo di scena finale*): a final revelation that makes the reader see everything before it in a new way. The writers of this chapter loved the form: Stevenson's "Markheim" (1885) is a double story, and the fin de siècle magazines published hundreds. Read the model, a story that a student wrote for the Link Reading Club's "Doubles" competition.

Tabella 4.9 Model text — a short story (287 words, title excluded)

Room Nine
The night guard came into Room Nine at two o'clock, as he had done every night for eleven years. His torch swept across the gold frames, lingered on the dark landscapes and stopped, as it always did, on the portrait of the young man in black.
He had never liked it. The young man was painted in 1891 by an artist nobody remembered, and he had the kind of face that looks back at you. Tonight, though, something was wrong. The guard stepped closer, his heart beating fast. The young man's left hand, which had always rested on a closed book, was now holding the book open.
"Impossible," he whispered. He checked the label, the frame, the alarm. Everything was in order. He wrote in his notebook: *02.07 — portrait in Room Nine — hand moved?* Then he crossed it out. He did not want to lose his job.
The next night the book was open at a different page. The night after that, the young man's head had turned a little, towards the door. The guard stopped sleeping. His wife said he looked older every morning. He thought she was exaggerating, until he saw a photograph of himself taken at Christmas and did not recognise the tired grey man in it.
On the seventh night he could not walk past the portrait. He stood in front of it, the torch shaking in his hand, and the young man smiled.
The guard was found the next morning on the floor of Room Nine. The doctors said it was his heart.
I watched them carry him out. Then, very carefully, so that the morning visitors would notice nothing, I closed my book, put my hand back where it had rested for a hundred and thirty years, and waited for the new guard.

Analysis. The story has one setting, one character and one central event, told in chronological order. The opening establishes a routine (*as he had done every night for eleven years*) so that the change can surprise us. Suspense grows in steps — the hand, the page, the head, the smile — and each step is shorter. Narrative tenses (English 3) carry the time: past simple for events, past perfect for what came before (*had always rested*), past continuous for background. Two absolutes (*his heart beating fast*, *the torch shaking in his hand*) give physical detail. The twist is in the pronoun: the last paragraph reveals that the narrator, silent until then, is the portrait.

Checklist. ✓ one main character, one setting, one central event · ✓ a first sentence that creates curiosity · ✓ suspense built in steps · ✓ narrative tenses used correctly · ✓ some direct speech, not too much · ✓ at least one absolute construction · ✓ a twist prepared by clues the reader can find on a second reading · ✓ a title that does not give the ending away.

Task. Write a short story (about 300 words) with one twist, on one of these subjects: a) *The Double* — a character meets someone who looks exactly like him or her; b) *The Portrait* — a picture, a photograph or a profile picture that changes. Post your story on the Link Reading Club forum and ask Sam for one comment on the twist. For a model of the master, read Stevenson's "Markheim" on Project Gutenberg (in *The Merry Men and Other Tales and Fables*, 1887), and check the date of first publication on the title page of the edition you use.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Taking notes from a lecture: the Cornell method. At university, and in the colloquio, you must follow a long spoken explanation and keep what matters. The Cornell method, devised at Cornell University in the 1950s, divides the page into three parts:

1. **Notes** (right, about two thirds of the page): write during the talk — key words, dates, names, abbreviations, arrows; never full sentences.
2. **Cues** (left column): after the talk, write a question or a key word beside each block of notes (*Why the candle? — Three readings of the mirror*).
3. **Summary** (bottom): two or three sentences in your own words, written the same day.

To revise, cover the notes and answer the cues aloud. Try it on the gallery talk above, then on your next Latin or Greek lesson: the cues column is a ready-made list of questions for an oral test, and it works exactly the same in Italian.

Towards the colloquio. *The double → philosophy*: in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) Nietzsche described Greek art as a tension between the Apollonian (measure, form, the clear image) and the Dionysian (ecstasy, the loss of the self). Prepare a two-minute comparison with Jekyll and Hyde — presented as a comparison, since Stevenson does not refer to Nietzsche.

4.6 Connections: Two Aesthetes, Narcissus and the Invisible Self

4.6.1 Dorian Gray and Andrea Sperelli

In 1889, a year before *Dorian Gray*, Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938) published *Il piacere*, the novel of the Italian aesthete. Its hero, the young count Andrea Sperelli, lives in Rome among antiques, poems and love affairs, divided between the sensual Elena Muti and the gentle Maria Ferres, and ends alone. Like Dorian, he has been shaped by a teacher — in his case his father, who gave him a set of maxims:

> Il padre gli aveva dato, tra le altre, questa massima fondamentale: "Bisogna fare la propria vita, come si fa un'opera d'arte. Bisogna che la vita d'un uomo d'intelletto sia opera di lui. La superiorità vera è tutta qui."
>
> Gabriele D'Annunzio, *Il piacere* (1889), Libro I, cap. II (text of Wikisource)

"His father had given him, among others, this fundamental maxim: 'One must make one's own life as one makes a work of art. The life of a man of intellect must be his own work. True superiority lies entirely in this.'" (translation by the editors)

The two novels share the type and its weakness. Lord Henry and the elder Sperelli both teach that life must be lived as art; Dorian and Andrea both lose their moral will while they refine their senses, and both narrators show the cost. The differences are as instructive. Wilde's

story is a fable with a supernatural portrait, told with epigrams and an ironic distance; D'Annunzio's is a psychological novel in a richly ornate prose, closer to its hero, who is in part a portrait of the author. The two books appeared independently, a year apart: a sign that the European fin de siècle shared one figure. The self that breaks into many — Jekyll's "polity" of denizens — will return in chapter 9, with Pirandello.

4.6.2 Narcissus and the portrait

A classico reader recognises in Dorian the oldest story of a young man destroyed by his own image. In Book III of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which you read in Latin in year 4, the seer Tiresias is asked whether the beautiful baby Narcissus will live to old age, and answers "si se non noverit", "if he does not know himself" (III.348) — a dark reversal of the Delphic "know yourself". Years later Narcissus falls in love with a face in a pool and at last understands whose it is.

Tabella 4.10 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III.463–464. Latin text of the Latin Library, checked against *Latino 4* of this series (chapter 14). Translation by the editors.

Latin	English (translation by the editors)
iste ego sum: sensi, nec me mea fallit imago; *uror amore mei: flammas moveoque feroque.*	"That one is me: I have understood, and my image does not deceive me. I burn with love for myself: I both stir the flames and suffer them."

The parallels are clear: a beautiful young man, an image that is himself, a love of one's own beauty that ends in death. So is the reversal. Narcissus dies because he recognises himself; Dorian survives as long as he refuses to look at the portrait, which shows him what he really is, and dies when he attacks it. Ovid's image is perfect and the man wastes away; Wilde's man stays perfect and the image decays. Wilde knew the myth well, as a Greek and Latin prizeman: in his prose poem "The Disciple" (1893) the pool weeps for Narcissus, but only because in his eyes it could see its own beauty reflected — the myth turned, like a Wildean epigram, inside out.

COLLEGAMENTI

Classico — Latin and Greek: the absolute construction. When you translate an ablative absolute, you normally turn it into an Italian clause (*urbe capta* → «dopo che la città fu presa»). English can often keep the construction: *the city taken*, *the speech over*, *with Caesar in command*. Try it with the next ablative absolute in your Latin homework: it is a good test of the Language section of this chapter.

COLLEGAMENTI

Physics: what are X-rays? Light is an electromagnetic wave, and visible light is only a narrow band of a much wider spectrum (Figura 4.5). **X-rays** (*raggi X*) are electromagnetic waves with a much shorter wavelength than light — roughly from 10 nanometres down to a hundredth of a nanometre — and therefore much more energy. Röntgen produced them without knowing it: in his glass tube, a high voltage accelerated electrons (then called cathode rays) towards the far end, and where the fast electrons struck the glass or a metal target they gave off this new radiation. X-rays pass easily through soft tissue but are absorbed more by bone, which contains heavier atoms such as calcium: so a plate behind a hand records the bones as a shadow. Because they carry so much energy, X-rays can damage living cells, which early experimenters, who used them without protection, learned at their own cost.

Why it mattered to the fin de siècle. In 1896 the X-ray of a hand, with its bones and a ring, was the image of the year. For the first time the inside of a living body could be seen without opening it, and writers and cartoonists were quick to imagine a ray that would show the secret self beneath the respectable surface — the same idea that Stevenson and Wilde had given to a potion and a portrait.

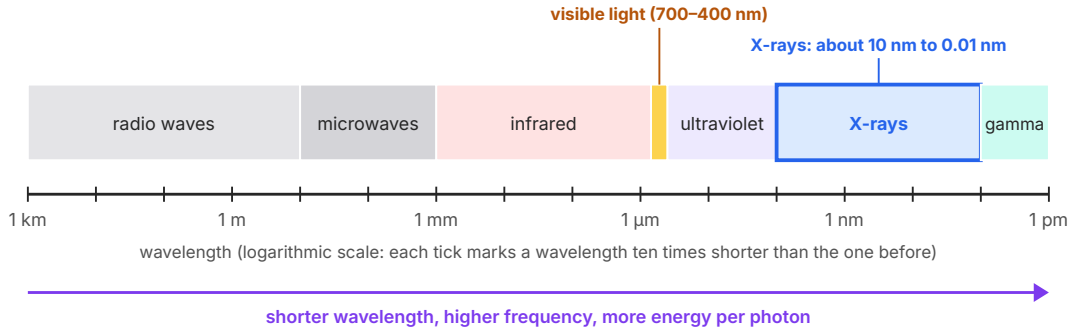


Figura 4.5 The electromagnetic spectrum (simplified), on a logarithmic scale of wavelength: X-rays lie between ultraviolet light and gamma rays, with wavelengths far shorter than those of visible light.

SINTESI

- Late Victorian Britain (1870–1901) was richer and more literate than the Britain of the 1840s: the Education Act (1870), compulsory (1880) and then largely free (1891) elementary schools created a mass reading public.
- The Ballot Act (1872) made voting secret and the Third Reform Act (1884) extended the vote to rural householders; most women and many men still could not vote.
- The "New Woman" (a label of 1894) described the independent, educated young woman who questioned marriage as her only future.
- Fears of the city, crime and "degeneration" (Booth's maps, the Whitechapel murders, Lombroso, Nordau) shaped the age's imagination of a hidden, primitive self.
- Röntgen discovered X-rays in 1895 and Becquerel radioactivity in 1896; Victoria died on 22 January 1901. The 1890s mood is called the fin de siècle.
- Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) is the classic story of the double, told through nested narratives that lead from Utterson's investigation to Jekyll's own statement.
- Hardy set his novels in Wessex, a fictional region built on real counties; after *Tess* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) he turned from the novel to poetry.
- Pater's *Renaissance* (1873) inspired Aestheticism and the slogan "art for art's sake"; decadence and the dandy were its fin-de-siècle forms.
- Wilde, a gifted classicist, published *Dorian Gray* in 1890 (book with the Preface, 1891) and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895), comedies built on epigram and paradox; imprisoned in 1895, he died in Paris in 1900.
- "The Darkling Thrush", dated December 1900, mourns the dead century in ballad stanzas and ends with a hope the speaker cannot share.
- An absolute construction has its own subject (*The experiment over, Jekyll…*; *with his reputation ruined*), like the Latin ablative absolute and the Greek genitive absolute.
- Dorian Gray can be compared with D'Annunzio's Andrea Sperelli (*Il piacere*, 1889) and with Ovid's Narcissus, who dies when he knows himself.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● What did the Third Reform Act of 1884 do?

   A. It gave the vote to all adult men and women.

   B. It made voting secret.

   C. It extended the householder vote to the countryside.

   D. It created school boards.

2. ● Which discovery did Wilhelm Röntgen make at Würzburg in November 1895?
   A. radioactivity
   B. the electron
   C. radio waves
   D. X-rays

3. ● Which statement about *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is correct?
   A. In 1891 Wilde added six chapters and the Preface.
   B. It was first published as a book in 1890, with the Preface.
   C. Basil Hallward is the young man in the portrait.
   D. The portrait stays beautiful while Dorian's face grows old.

4. ● Which work did Hardy publish after *Jude the Obscure*?
   A. *Far from the Madding Crowd*
   B. *Wessex Poems*
   C. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*
   D. *Treasure Island*

5. ● Match each author with a work and a date. Authors: Pater · Stevenson · Hardy · Wilde. Works: *The Importance of Being Earnest* · *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* · *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* · *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. Dates: 1873 · 1886 · 1891 · 1895.

6. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a The phrase "New Woman" named a political party founded in 1894. b Jean Paul coined the word *Doppelgänger*. c Hardy's Christminster stands for Oxford. d Pater kept the Conclusion in every edition of his book. e Wilde died in Reading Gaol.

7. ●● Explain each term in one or two sentences, with an example from the chapter: a the double · b Aestheticism · c art for art's sake · d the dandy · e decadence.

8. ●●● Short answer (50–80 words): Why does Stevenson tell the story of Jekyll and Hyde through Utterson's investigation and two documents, instead of letting Jekyll tell it from the start? Refer to Figura 4.2.

Text Analysis

9. ●● In T1, "man is not truly one, but truly two" means that…
   A. Jekyll has a twin brother.
   B. every human being contains two real and conflicting natures.
   C. Jekyll is a hypocrite who pretends to be good.
   D. science and religion are two separate truths.

10. ●● T1: Find a the paradox with which the passage begins; b two metaphors of conflict or disaster; c the phrase in which Jekyll predicts that future science will go further than he has. Explain each in a few words.

11. ●● T2: Paraphrase in plain English: a “To reveal art and conceal the artist is art’s aim.” b “Those who go beneath the surface do so at their peril.” c “Even things that are true can be proved.”

12. ●● T3: a Which details in stanzas 1–2 make the landscape a funeral? b What is surprising about the singer in stanza 3? c Why is the last stanza ambiguous?

13. ●●● Compare T1 and T2 (80–100 words): both texts are about a hidden self and a surface. What does each say about the relation between the face we show and what lies beneath it?

14. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (Point, Evidence, Explanation; 80–100 words) on this point: “In ‘The Darkling Thrush’ Hardy hopes, but does not believe.” Quote at least two phrases.

15. ●●● Colloquio link (60–80 words). Choose one of the three texts and link it to another subject (Latin, Greek, philosophy, physics or art), explaining the connection.

Language

16. ● Absolute construction (A), participle clause (P) or dangling participle (D)? Mark each sentence and correct the dangling one. a The door locked, Poole could not get in. b Walking through Soho, Utterson saw the house. c Looking at the portrait, his face changed. d With the trials over, Wilde was sent to prison. e Having written his statement, Jekyll sealed it.

17. ● Complete with the correct form of the verb in brackets (*-ing*, past participle or *having* + past participle). a The candle _____ (burn) low, she looked into the mirror. b The portrait _____ (finish), Basil refused to exhibit it. c His work _____ (complete), Hardy turned to poetry. d Hyde ran off, his footsteps _____ (echo) in the empty street. e The letter _____ (seal), nobody could read it.

18. ●● Rewrite each sentence with an absolute construction, without a conjunction. a When the play was over, the audience went home. b As the fog was getting thicker, Utterson lost his way. c Because his health was failing, Stevenson left Britain. d After the dinner had ended, the guests talked about Hyde. e Jekyll sat at his desk, and his hands were shaking.

19. ●● Rewrite with *with* or *without* + object + participle / adjective. a Wilde left England. His reputation was ruined. b She stood at the mirror. Her eyes were closed. c The exam is only a month away, so Giulia started revising. d Hyde slipped out. Nobody noticed him.

20. ● Complete with a fixed absolute: *all things considered · weather permitting · generally speaking · that said · present company excepted*. a _____, the class trip will include a walk on the moors. b _____, Victorian novels were longer than modern ones. c Wilde’s comedies are brilliant. _____, they are hard to translate. d “_____, critics are a dull lot,” the novelist said, smiling at the two critics at her table. e _____, the exhibition was a success.

21. ●● Error correction (✗). Each sentence has one mistake. a Finished the lecture, the students went to the café. b Being a rainy day, the gallery was crowded. c With his hands shaken, Jekyll wrote the last page. d The experiment over Jekyll locked the door. e The trials having ended Wilde was taken to Pentonville.

22. ●●● Sentence building. Write one sentence about this chapter for each pattern: a noun + past participle; b noun + *-ing* participle; c *with* + object + adjective; d a fixed absolute; e *it being*...

23. ●●● Translate into English, using an absolute construction where possible. a Finita la festa, la ragazza si sedette davanti allo specchio. b Con la reputazione distrutta, Wilde lasciò l'Inghilterra. c Essendo domenica, il museo era pieno di turisti.

24. ●●● Classico. Translate each sentence into English twice: first with an English absolute construction, then with a subordinate clause. a *Urbe capta, milites praedam diviserunt.* b *Caesare duce, Romani Gallos vicerunt.* c ταῦτα εἰπόντος αὐτοῦ, οἱ στρατιῶται ἀνέστησαν (*tauta eipontos autou, hoi stratiōtai anestēsan* — "stood up").

Vocabulary

25. ● Complete with words from Tabella 4.5. a Dorian keeps the portrait locked in an upstairs room: it is his _____ . b Jekyll's _____ is excellent: he gives to charity and works hard. c Dorian looks in the mirror every day: his _____ grows with his beauty. d Deacon Brodie led a _____ . e The portrait is a kind of _____ : it shows what he has done.

26. ●● Complete the table and use each word in a sentence of your own: a realism → person ___ b ___ → socialist c Aestheticism → person ___ d dandy → noun for the behaviour ___ e novel → person ___ f Darwin → the theory ___.

27. ●● Collocations with *reputation*, *secret* and *mask*. Choose the correct verb: a to *build / make / do* a reputation (two are correct) · b to *ruin / break / fall* a reputation · c to *keep / hold / guard* a secret (two are correct) · d to *let out / reveal / say* a secret (two are correct; one is informal) · e to *wear / dress / carry* a mask.

Writing and Speaking

28. ●●● Writing (about 300 words). Write the short story described in the Writing task of the Skills section (*The Double* or *The Portrait*), with one twist and at least one absolute construction. Use the checklist.

29. ●●● Speaking (2 minutes). Speculate about this picture, described in words: *A Victorian gentleman in a top hat stands at the door of a fine house in a London square, at night, holding a key; across the street, in the fog, a small figure in a long coat is watching him.* Say who the two figures might be, what has just happened and what will happen next, and give your evidence.

Towards the Exam

30. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap. According to his stepson, Stevenson wrote the first draft of *Jekyll and Hyde* in (1) _____ few days in 1885, when he was living in Bournemouth. The book came out in January 1886 and, thanks (2) _____ its low price, sold thousands of copies in a few months. Many readers took it (3) _____ a simple horror story, but preachers saw a moral lesson in it: (4) _____ respectable a man may be, he is never safe from his own desires. Today the phrase "a Jekyll and Hyde" is used for anyone (5) _____ character changes suddenly, and the story has been adapted for the stage and the screen many times (6) _____ then.

31. ●● Word formation. Use the word in capitals to form a word that fits the gap. a Wilde's Preface is a statement of _____ (AESTHETIC). b The reviewers found the novel _____ (MORAL). c Hardy's plots depend on chance and _____ (COINCIDE). d Jekyll's statement reveals the _____ (DEEP) of his shame. e Victoria's death marked the end of an era of _____ (RESPECTABLE). f Many readers found the ending of *Tess* _____ (BEAR).

32. ●●● Key-word transformations. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word given. Use two to five words, including the word given. a When the experiment was over, Jekyll destroyed his notes. (OVER) · With _____ , Jekyll destroyed his notes. b Wilde lost his case, so he was soon arrested. (HAVING) · _____ case, Wilde was soon arrested. c It's possible that the woman is seeing her future. (MIGHT) · The woman _____ her future. d I'm sure Callum wasn't bored by the talk. (CAN'T) · Callum _____ bored by the talk. e People say that Stevenson wrote the first draft in a few days. (SAID) · Stevenson _____ the first draft in a few days.

33. ●●● Colloquio prompt. The material: *a picture described in words — a nineteenth-century photograph of a hand made with X-rays, the bones dark, a ring on one finger.* In two minutes, say what it shows, link it with one text of this chapter, and with one other subject (physics, art, philosophy or Latin). Then answer the commission's follow-up question: "Is there a 'hidden self' in Greek or Latin literature?"

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the pages on the late Victorian novel, on Stevenson, Hardy and Wilde, and on the Aesthetic movement.
- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. E, *The Victorian Age*: the introduction on the end of the century and the selections from Pater, Hardy and Wilde.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "Aestheticism", "epigram" and "paradox".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on participle clauses.

Glossario del capitolo

Ablative absolute
ablativo assoluto — the Latin absolute construction, with noun and participle in the ablative: *urbe capta*.

Absolute construction
costrutto assoluto — a phrase with its own subject and a participle, adjective or phrase, but no finite verb: *The experiment over, Jekyll…*

Aestheticism
estetismo — the late Victorian belief that beauty is the highest value and that art should be judged by its form, not by its moral use (Pater, Wilde).

Aphorism
aforisma — a short sentence that states a general truth memorably, like those of Wilde's Preface.

Art for art's sake
l'arte per l'arte — the slogan of Aestheticism: art needs no moral, political or useful purpose.

Cornell method
metodo Cornell — a way of taking notes on a page divided into notes, cues and a summary.

Dandy
dandy — a man who makes his dress, manners and conversation into a work of art.

Decadence
decadentismo — the fin-de-siècle taste for the artificial, the refined and the forbidden, with a sense of the end of a civilisation.

Degeneration
degenerazione — the nineteenth-century idea, now rejected, that people or nations could fall back into a more primitive state.

Doppelgänger
sosia, doppio — German "double-goer", a word coined by Jean Paul (1796) for a person's double.

Double (in literature)
il doppio — in literature, a second self who shares a character's identity and acts out what he represses: Hyde.

Fin de siècle
fine secolo — the mood of the 1890s: refinement, weariness and anxious excitement at the end of an age.

Genitive absolute
genitivo assoluto — the Greek absolute construction, with noun and participle in the genitive.

New Woman
la "donna nuova" — a label of 1894 for the educated, independent young woman who questioned traditional marriage.

Twist
colpo di scena finale — an unexpected revelation at the end of a story that changes its meaning.

Wessex
Wessex — the name of an Anglo-Saxon kingdom that Hardy used for the fictional region of his novels in southwest England.

X-rays
raggi X — electromagnetic waves of very short wavelength that pass through soft tissue; discovered by Röntgen in 1895.

Soluzioni

1. C (the Ballot Act of 1872 made voting secret; school boards came in 1870).

2. D (radioactivity: Becquerel, 1896; the electron: J. J. Thomson, 1897).

3. A (the magazine version, July 1890, had no Preface; Basil is the painter; it is the portrait that ages).

4. B (*Wessex Poems*, 1898; *Far from the Madding Crowd* 1874, *Tess* 1891, *Treasure Island* is Stevenson's).

5. Pater — *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* — 1873; Stevenson — *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* — 1886; Hardy — *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* — 1891; Wilde — *The Importance of Being Earnest* — 1895.

6. a F — it was a label from a magazine debate (Sarah Grand, Ouida), never an organised movement or party. b T (1796). c T. d F — he dropped it from the second edition (1877) and restored it, revised, in 1888. e F — he was released in 1897 and died in Paris on 30 November 1900.

7. Model answers. a A second self who shares a character's identity and acts out what he represses: Hyde. b The belief that beauty is the highest value and that art should be judged by its form: Pater, Wilde. c The slogan of Aestheticism: art needs no moral or useful purpose ("All art is quite useless"). d A man who makes his dress, manners and conversation a work of art: Brummell, Wilde, Lord Henry. e The fin-de-siècle taste for the artificial and forbidden, with a sense of the end of a civilisation: Huysmans, *The Yellow Book*.

8. Traccia: the nested structure creates suspense — the reader, like Utterson, sees only the outside (the door, the will, the murder) and forms wrong hypotheses (blackmail, a protégé); Lanyon's narrative shows the change without explaining it; only Jekyll's statement gives the cause. The truth is delayed until the last chapter, as in a detective story, and the reader experiences the shock of respectable witnesses discovering what lies behind a respectable man. Telling it from the start would remove the mystery and the point of view of respectable society.

9. B (Jekyll denies being a hypocrite; the "two" are both real sides of one man).

10. a "Though so profound a double-dealer, I was in no sense a hypocrite": he deceives others but both his selves are sincere. b "the perennial war among my members" (his body is a battlefield); "such a dreadful shipwreck" (his discovery destroyed him like a ship on the rocks). c "Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines": other scientists will discover that man is many, not two.

11. a The purpose of art is to show the work of art and hide the artist's personality. b People who look for hidden meanings in art do so at their own risk. c Proving something is no sign of value — even the truth can be proved, so proof is not what art is for (an ironic reversal of "even false things can be proved").

12. a The century's "corpse" (the land), its "crypt" (the clouds), the wind's "death-lament", the spectral frost, the dried-up "pulse of germ and birth". b It is an aged, frail, gaunt, small thrush with ruffled feathers, yet it sings with "joy illimited" in the gloom. c The speaker says only that he "could think" the bird knew of a "blessed Hope" of which he was "unaware": hope exists for the bird, perhaps, not for him.

13. Traccia: in T1 the respectable surface and the secret self are both real — Jekyll is "truly two" and the war between them ruins him; in T2 Wilde warns that going "beneath the surface" is dangerous and claims that art mirrors the spectator, not life, so the hidden meaning is the reader's responsibility. Jekyll wants to separate the two selves; Wilde wants to stay on the surface. Both, however, admit that so-

mething lies beneath, and the novel *Dorian Gray* shows its danger.

14. Model: Point — the poem expresses a wish for hope without faith. Evidence — the speaker "could think" there trembled through the song "Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew / And I was unaware". Explanation — the conditional "could think" makes hope a possibility, not a conviction; the capital H suggests a religious hope, but the speaker remains "fervourless" and "unaware". The bird's "joy illimited" is real; the speaker's share of it is not, and the poem ends in the doubt of "Dover Beach".

15. Traccia (example): T3 → Latin and Greek: the image of the dying year and the bird's song recalls the classical elegy; or T1 → philosophy: Nietzsche's Apollonian and Dionysian (1872) as two sides of human nature (a comparison, not a source); or T2 → art: Whistler and the idea that painting, like music, needs no story. Any well-argued link with one precise reference is acceptable.

16. a A. b P (the subject of *walking* is Utterson). c D → ✓ *Looking at the portrait, Dorian felt his face change* / ✓ *As he looked at the portrait, his face changed*. d A (*with* pattern). e P (perfect participle clause).

17. a burning · b finished · c completed (or having been completed) · d echoing · e sealed.

18. a The play over, the audience went home. b The fog getting thicker, Utterson lost his way. c His health failing, Stevenson left Britain. d The dinner (having) ended, the guests talked about Hyde. e Jekyll sat at his desk, his hands shaking.

19. a Wilde left England with his reputation ruined. b She stood at the mirror with her eyes closed. c With the exam only a month away, Giulia started revising. d Hyde slipped out without anyone / anybody noticing (him).

20. a Weather permitting · b Generally speaking · c That said · d Present company excepted · e All things considered.

21. a → *The lecture finished, the students…* (or *Having finished the lecture, …*) · b → *It being a rainy day, …* · c → *With his hands shaking* · d → *The experiment over, Jekyll…* (comma) · e → *The trials having ended, Wilde…* (comma).

22. Model sentences: a *The portrait finished, Basil hid it in his studio.* b *The century ending, Hardy wrote his elegy for it.* c *Stevenson drafted the story in a few days, his health poor.* d *All things considered, Wilde's Preface is a manifesto.* e *It being December, the land was bare.* Accept any correct sentence.

23. a The party over, the girl sat down in front of the mirror. b With his reputation ruined (His reputation destroyed), Wilde left England. c It being Sunday, the museum was full of tourists.

24. a The city taken, the soldiers divided the booty. / After the city had been taken, the soldiers divided the booty. b With Caesar as (their) leader / in command, the Romans defeated the Gauls. / As Caesar was their leader, the Romans defeated the Gauls. c This said / He having said this (formal), the soldiers stood up. / When he had said this, the soldiers stood up.

25. a secret · b reputation · c vanity · d double life · e conscience.

26. a realist · b socialism · c aesthete · d dandyism · e novelist · f Darwinism. Sentences: own answers.

27. a build, make (*make a name for yourself* is a related idiom) · b ruin · c keep, guard · d reveal, let out (informal) · e wear (also *put on* a mask).

28. Marking grid: content and twist 5 · organisation and suspense 4 · language (narrative tenses, absolutes, vocabulary) 4 · accuracy 2. A twist that is not prepared by clues loses a point.

29. Model answer: "Judging by his clothes and the house, the man at the door must be wealthy — he could well be a doctor or a lawyer. It looks as if he's just come home late, because the square is empty and the windows are dark. The figure across the street is more mysterious. He's small, his face hidden by the fog, and he seems to be waiting for something. I'd say he's probably someone the gentleman knows — perhaps a servant, or someone he owes money to. There's no way this is a friendly visit: nobody watches a friend from the shadows. If this were a scene from Stevenson, I wouldn't be sur-

prised if the two men turned out to be the same person. What will happen next? I think the gentleman is about to go in, and the figure is going to follow him."

30. (1) a · (2) to · (3) for (accept *as*) · (4) however · (5) whose · (6) since.

31. a aestheticism · b immoral (*amoral* is also a word, but the reviewers' charge was immorality) · c coincidence · d depth · e respectability · f unbearable.

32. a the experiment over · b Having lost his · c might be seeing · d can't have been · e is said to have written.

33. Model answer: "This is an X-ray of a hand from the 1890s: we can see the bones and a ring, but not the skin. It reminds me of *Jekyll and Hyde*, because both show what is hidden beneath a respectable surface. In physics, X-rays are electromagnetic waves with a very short wavelength; they pass through soft tissue but not easily through bone. I could also link it to Ovid's Narcissus, who dies when he truly sees himself." Follow-up: Narcissus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III), or Seneca's idea of examining one's conscience every evening; any precise, well-argued example is acceptable.