“I would give my soul” – Text analysis

**What does Lord Henry tell Dorian about his beauty?**
Lord Henry tells Dorian he has extraordinary beauty and that beauty is a form of genius, higher than genius itself, because it does not need explanations. He also says that beauty is not superficial, as other people say.

**What is youth according to him?**
According to Henry, youth is a short period in man’s life, destined to pass and go away with beauty.

**What does he implore Dorian to do?**
He invites Dorian not to waste his youth and to live fully, always searching for new sensations.

**What does their age require?**
Henry says that their age require a new Hedonism, and Dorian, with his perfect beauty, could be its symbol.

**What does Dorian realise by looking at his portrait?**
By looking at his portrait, he realises what Lord Henry has said about his extraordinary beauty and understands that his beauty will only last a short time.

**What feelings does the picture create in his soul?**
The picture creates the consciousness of his beauty, because it represents the way Basil and everybody see him, that is perfection.

**What will happen to the portrait and to Dorian in the future?**
**Dorian’s perfection will separate from the portrait:** while the portrait will never change, Dorian will grow old and time will destroy his beauty: he will become wrinkled and deformed. In the end, though, by killing the portrait, Dorian will restore the original roles of art and life: Dorian will die old and deformed with vices and the portrait will recover its perfect and timeless beauty.

**What does Dorian wish?**
He wishes he could be always young, while the portrait grew old.

**State which kind of narrator tells this story, and if he openly intervenes in the narration. Whose point of view is adopted throughout?**
The story is told by an unobtrusive third-person narrator, who does not intervene in the narration. The perspective adopted is internal, and this allows a process of identification between the reader and the character.

**What social class do the characters belong to?**
They belong to the upper-middle class.
How does Lord Henry exert his influence on Dorian Gray?
Lord Henry exerts his influence on Dorian through his panegyric about beauty and youth, rich with paradoxes.

What image of youth, beauty and old age are depicted by Lord Henry?
Lord Henry thinks that youth is a period of splendour and beauty, while the old age is a period of decadence. If a man does not live his youth fully, that is searching for pleasure, in his old age he will be haunted by regrets.
He thinks that all the pleasures denied to oneself through moral bounds “rot” our souls and make our selves grow ill.

Identify the theme of the text.
The main theme is the search for beauty and pleasure, which is the main feature of Hedonism and Aestheticism, main artistic and philosophical movements of the Victorian age.
As summarized in Lord Henry’s view, the only purpose of man is the search for beauty and for new sensations.

In addition to that, Dorian’s wish and the evolution of the plot underline the close relation between art and life: according to the Aesthetic movement, life should be lived as a work of art. Through Dorian’s wish, the portrait (art) and Dorian (real life) will exchange their roles: the beauty of the portrait will change and decade, while Dorian’s beauty will keep its perfection through the years.
In the end, when Dorian stabs the portrait to break the evil charm, Dorian grows old and marked by vices, while the portrait recovers its original perfection: art and life take back their original role, where art survives human mortality.