

OSCAR WILDE



Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (16 October 1854 – 30 November 1900) was an Irish writer, poet and playwright. Wilde was born at 21 Westland Row, Dublin which is now home to the Oscar Wilde Centre at Trinity College. His father was a successful surgeon and his mother was a writer and literary hostess. Wilde was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford. Before he graduated with honors, he received Oxford's Newdigate Prize for his long poem, *Ravenna*. After he graduated, he moved to London to pursue a literary career. In London, Wilde worked as a journalist for four years. Known for his biting wit, flamboyant clothes, and sparkling conversation, he became one of the most well-known personalities of his time. Wilde served as a spokesman for the late 19th-century aesthetic movement in England, which advocated art for art's sake.

Wilde wrote and published nearly all his major work in the 1890s. His output was diverse. His only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, brought him full recognition after which he turned to writing drama. Wilde found his greatest successes with his society comedies. He produced a string of extremely popular plays, including 'Lady Windermere's Fan' (1892) and 'An Ideal Husband' (1895). At the height of his fame and success, he wrote his masterpiece play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, which was first performed on 14 February 1895 at St. James's Theatre in London.

He also wrote fairy tales and short stories, including *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888), which contains 'The Happy Prince'. These stories often carry moral messages and explore themes of love, sacrifice, and social injustice. Another notable short story is *The Canterville Ghost* (1887), a humorous tale that satirizes English society and traditional ghost stories.

Wilde's poetry includes his early collection *Poems* (1881) and *The Sphinx* (1894), but his most famous poem is *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898), written after his release from prison (Wilde was involved in a legal battle and was imprisoned from 1895 to 1897). This powerful poem reflects on his experiences and expresses themes of suffering, isolation, and redemption.

After his release, Wilde moved to France, where he lived in exile and relative poverty. He died in Paris in 1900. Despite the controversies and hardships of his life, Oscar Wilde's literary legacy endures. His works continue to be read and admired for their wit, style, and insightful commentary on society.

On 14 February 1995, Wilde was commemorated with a stained-glass window at Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. The memorial, above the monument to Geoffrey Chaucer, was unveiled by his grandson Merlin Holland.