

An Oscar for an Oscar

The positive feedback from the attendees of our One Day Course "Oscar Wilde – Nothing to declare but his genius" prompted from us, the Billericay WEA committee, a resounding 'It's an Oscar for an Oscar!'

The tutor Margaret Mills took us through three thoroughly interesting sessions on Wilde:

Session 1: His Background and Life

Photos of his family and friends provided the faces to so many of Wilde's influences, a colourful and revolutionary mother "Speranza" (the Italian word for 'Hope'), a father who was a leading ear and eye surgeon, early life in Ireland surrounded by Anglo Irish Dublin intellectuals, his outstanding intellect at an early age, times at both Dublin and Oxford universities, involvement in aestheticism movement "art for art sake", and his rise in London's fashionable cultural and social circles.

Session 2: His Work

As a group, we read some extracts of his poetry, plays and novel. Margaret then gave us some insight into the deeper social and class inferences brought out in his works. Over tea break many of us commented how these insights into society at that time would make seeing the many versions and film adaptations of his plays even more fascinating now.

Session 3: The Downward Spiral

Step by step the real-life drama that unfolded, leading to scandal, three trials, prison, exile, and eventually the pitiful existence in Paris before his death. Many of us knew pieces of this downfall, but Margaret brought together a fuller picture and again in the context of the morals promoted by society at the time.

As well as many anecdotes and facts around Wilde's life and demise, Margaret's knowledge and description of society at the time made this a very rich biography to explore. 32 people attended judging this course to be a resounding success with the feedback from our course questionnaire as:

- Course content – 10
- Course presentation – 10
- Would you recommend this course? – 10
- Did you enjoy the day? – 10 (we even had an 11!)

'Thank you for all your efforts in organising a most interesting and stimulating day with such a knowledgeable speaker'.

The Billericay WEA Branch would like to say thank you to Margaret for a wonderful One Day Course, and yes you have our Oscar!

Billericay WEA Committee

