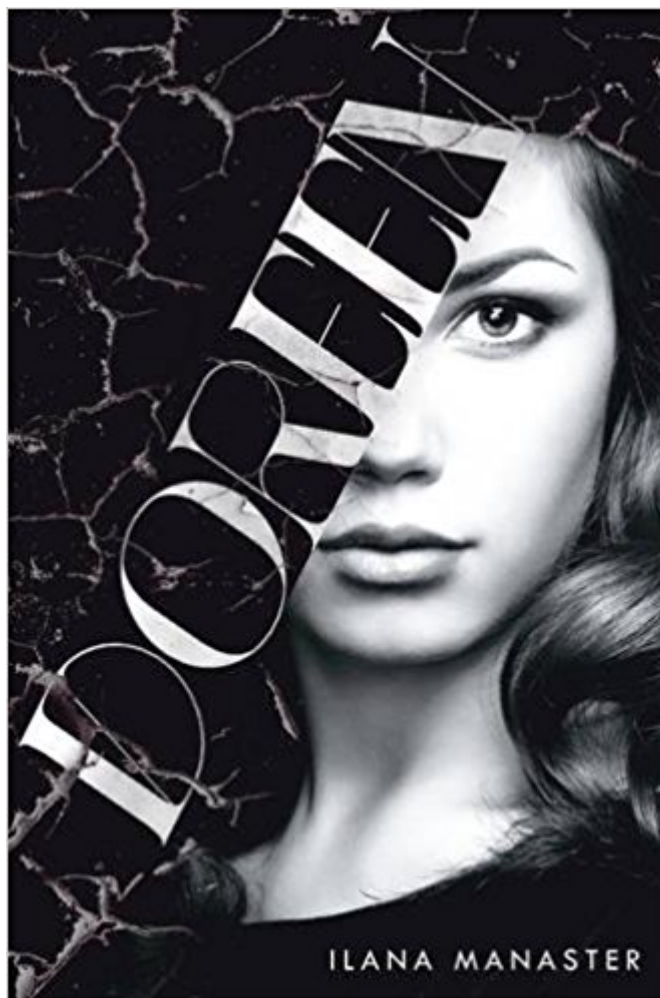


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# Doreen



## Synopsis

If Doreen Gray were to take a selfie upon her arrival at the elite Chandler Academy, it would capture a face marked with acne, a head full of frizz, and eyes looking anywhere but at the lens. What Chandler queen bee Heidi Whelan sees is a desperate hunger for acceptance and the makings of a willing and useful protégé. Heidi's roommate, Biz Gibbons-Brown, works her Photoshop magic to create a stunning profile pic of Doreen's; a glossy, digital makeover that Doreen initially rejects . . . only to wake up the next morning transformed as the girl in the picture. But Doreen quickly becomes accustomed to her newfound power and lives without considering consequences of her actions. Only the picture knows the truth, and she will do anything to protect her secret. In this sharp, scandal-filled retelling of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the men of nineteenth-century London become three girls of twenty-first-century New England.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Gr 9 Up — This stylish retelling of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* transports Oscar Wilde's characters — in all their hedonistic angst — to a present-day prep school for New England's WASP elite. When awkward, frumpy Doreen transfers into Chandler Academy, her driven photographer cousin Biz and shark-toothed queen bee Heidi give Doreen's profile picture for Chandler's social network the full Photoshop treatment, with mixed intentions. Doreen wakes up the next morning transformed into the flawless girl in the photograph and hits the ground running,

without a second thought to the casual cruelty that goes hand in hand with a quick rise to the top. Wear and tear of Doreen's pleasure-seeking behavior manifests itself on the photo Biz took, which gets uglier with each escapade. Heidi's scheming and string-pulling are given as much time as the protagonist's exploits, and the complicated, scandalous backstory connecting the main characters is perplexing but curious enough to keep teens turning the pages. Manaster's language and tone give the story a classic, set-apart feel, and there is a healthy mix of reserved refinement and soapy melodrama. VERDICT This unusual retelling may not be for everyone but will find an audience with fans of high society mean girl fare, and those familiar with the source material. —Beth McIntyre, Madison Public Library, WI

• Sex, lies, and secrets are the hallmarks of Manaster's debut. Filled with vivid imagery and characters readers will love to hate, the story takes on a haunting, sinister tone early on, maintaining it through the descent into madness. —Publishers Weekly • The striking black-and-white cover photo evokes Vogue magazine, with a stylish gothic feel that will draw readers, while the chatty, catty tone and breathless pace will keep them turning the pages. —Booklist

Doreen Gray isn't looking for social stardom. Instead, she arrives at her plush prep school seeking nothing more than a refuge from bullies. So when her cousin, Biz, photoshops Doreen's profile pic into clear-skinned and long-limbed perfection, Doreen renounces the digital makeover and retreats to her dorm room, mourning every pimple, fat roll and stray hair separating her from the Victoria's Secret Angel in the photograph. By the next morning, however, Doreen has morphed into her profile picture: her skin has cleared, her waist has narrowed and her riot of black frizz has calmed into soft curls. Meanwhile, the girl in the photo has transformed into Doreen as she was two days before, acne scars and all. But as Doreen glories in her newfound beauty, her backwoods innocence decays into the thoughtless hedonism of the rich, young and beautiful --- and the pubescent disaster in the photograph decays right along with it. Although Manaster reenacts THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY in a plush new England prep school, DOREEN does more than fast-forward the iconic tale of lost innocence to the modern day. Instead, this update explores the psyches of Biz and queen bee Heidi Whelan, Doreen's instructor in the dark (social) arts. Whereas the classic hones in on Dorian's moral decay, Manaster shifts DOREEN's focus between Doreen, Biz and Heidi. From Biz's resentment of her snooty pedigree and her adorable alarming adulation of her cousin to Heidi's secret, humble origins as a "garbage man's daughter," DOREEN embraces the

humanity of even its most angelic --- and sinful --- characters. Although glimpses of the classic's lush style pervade Manaster's prose, DOREEN streamlines THE PICTURE's sometimes-meandering imagery. That being said, this modern twist loses none of its predecessor's wit, insight or cynicism. Biz scorns her "mumzy" as a "superhero for the unbusy and overindulged" who "seemed to have had children out of a sense of obligation to her bloodline; Heidi instructs Doreen in the purchase of some "tastefully lurid underwear. Doreen's free fall from innocence skims over some plot points along the way --- readers receive precious few glimpses into Doreen and true love Simon Vale's romance before its ultimate demise. And although Manaster probes the secrets of not just Doreen, but also Biz and Heidi, meek Biz's coming-of-age can get lost amid Heidi's double-life and Doreen's garish debauchery. But I still loved every minute I spent reading DOREEN. Breezy enough for the beach, yet meaty enough for your three-AM musings on the meaning of life, Manaster's debut blends big moral questions and sumptuous Armani dresses into 333 pages of delight. Reviewed by Alison S.

Doreen Gray comes to Chandler Academy a pimple faced, frizzed haired, overweight teenager. She is welcomed by her cousin Biz, who just wants to help Doreen fit in and not be bullied, and by Biz's socialite roommate Heidi. Heidi gets right to work trying to help Doreen fit in, including creating a profile for her on the school website. Biz, who has an interest in photography, takes and air brushes the pictures, creating a beautiful, and classy Doreen. The next morning, Doreen finds out that she has switched appearances with the picture, and now she is beautiful and sexy, while the picture remains her true self. Life opens itself up to Doreen. She becomes popular with other students and boys seem to throw themselves at her. As her pride grows, her soul darkens, and the image in the photograph turns devilish. Now accustomed to privilege and power, Doreen ruins the lives of those around her, even her kind cousin Biz. Who can stop the beautiful monster? My Thoughts- Wow, this book is a work of art. I have not read Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray, which this book retells, so I can not tell you how close this modern adaptation is or the originality of plot points. So, I'm just going to tell you my thoughts as a first time reader. I found this story to be a mash-up between Jane Austin, Clueless and the Twilight Zone. Jane Austen because the language used is very proper and high society. So much so, that I often had trouble relating to the main characters that are in high school, as they tended to talk like mini-adult socialites who have their noses stuck up in the air. As I continued to read though, these rich, little socialites and their language evolved into something more, almost as if language could be a character all on its own. I find it hard to put into words this strange occurrence. It definitely fits with the plot. Now, let me tell you about the

Clueless and Twilight Zone mix. Clueless is obvious. We have the "different" girl being made into a popular girl by a manipulative, controlling peer. Twilight Zone because of the odd powers of the photograph and the demon powers it seems to endow. The transformation of Doreen is so heart wrenching and gut churning that I couldn't stand it. She truly becomes a soulless monster. Heidi is one of those characters you love to hate. She is controlling and cold, and yet the author gives her a tattered past with scandalous secrets that make you root for her. After finishing the book, I'm inclined to believe that she is the true main character, for she makes an amazing journey and finally makes a choice that leads her into her future. (So does Doreen, but her future is not certain.) There are a lot of point of view switches and sometimes I had to backtrack to see what character's head I was in. They were often random and sometimes you jump into the head of a minor character. Overall, I found this book morbidly fascinating. I couldn't stand the way the characters treated each other, but kept reading because I hoped at some point justice would be served, and Doreen's secret revealed. I'm giving this one 4.5 stars, and I can't even tell you fully why, just that the book was engrossing.

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