

literature is not just for art's sake, but also a vital critical reflection of the spirit of its time. How do two literary works from your OIB program both reflect and challenge the spirit of the times in which they were written?

"One of the best way to analyse a past society is to examine the literature of its time". Through Baldwin's essay, Stranger In the Village, and Wilde's novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray, writers allow us to explore the society's struggle and hypocrisy they had to face. Both works convey the hypocrisy of individuals towards another but in a different perspective. In Stranger in the Village, Baldwin reflects on the injustice his community faced and the hypocrisy of white people whereas Wilde in The Picture of Dorian Gray analyzes his society as a whole and criticizes different aspects of it embodied by his characters.

Through Baldwin's essay, he establishes a criticism of the society he lived in. This reflection of the spirit of its time is established in three aspects: the loss of identity, the assimilation and the influence of history on the life of Afro-American community. The author introduces this theme through the expression "American Negro wishing to go back so far will find his journey through time abruptly arrested by the signature on the bill of sale which served as the entrance paper for his ancestor". In other terms, afro-american can not trace their family roots and find their true identity: slavery has built their ancestors and consequently white people stole their identity. Thus, he demonstrates how complex it is to grow when you are still looking for your true identity, especially as an afro-american. As well, he adds "the white man's motive was the protection of his identity, the black man motive by the need to establish an identity". He allows us to acknowledge that white people are afraid of black people stealing their identity when they are just looking for the one they were stolen of. He insists on the idea with the repetition "endures and endures" illustrating the colossal amount of pain, sufferance and struggle black people face on a daily basis. Then, Baldwin elaborates on the notion of assimilation. Black people have to conform in order to fit in society. Even though they were already deprived of their identity and struggle to find it, a precise identity are imposed upon them. This belief is illustrated in the sentence "I say that the culture of this people controls me" which is accentuated by the another repetition of "despite". We could argue that the numerous repetition made by the author are a way of expressing the constant repetition, the chain, the circle of sufferance he's been through. Finally, Baldwin presents in his essay a contrast in the racism he faces. Through various children reaction as he approaches. Some try to build a friendship with him "delightful, hilarious [...] overtures of friendships" whereas others who have been taught by their parents that "the devil is a black man" are afraid of him and "scream in anguish as he approaches". This strong metaphor demonstrates how white people are frightened by black people, associating them to evilness. This divergence in children's reactions illustrates that prejudices and old uneducated racist beliefs will fade as generations come furthermore, it allows us to notice the power and meaning of the roots of history. As the author said "people are trapped in history and history is trapped in them", history is a part of us, it must not be forgotten and it is not "a very distant day" from our actual society.

If Baldwin's essay analyzes white people cruelty and hypocrisy towards others individual, especially black people, Wilde, through the character of Dorian Gray, describes the hypocrisy of his era in general. In his novel, Wilde establishes his critic in three points: reputation, sexual relationship and drug's use. The Victorian era could be defined by the expression "prim and proper", your appearance and reputation were particularly important. It became the primary interest of any person as Basil Hallward said "every gentleman is interested in his good name". In order to be respectable in public, people began to hide their darkest desires and their misdeeds. This idea is illustrated through Dorian's character as throughout the novel, he progressively abandons his morals of censure. Even though, as Basil warns, society's elite question his name and reputation, Dorian is never ostracized. On the contrary, despite his way of living, he remains at the heart of London social scene because of the "innocence" and "purity of his face". As Lady Warburton notes to Dorian, there is little distinction between ethics and appearance: "you are made to be good, you look so good". The parallel structure of the quote could evoke Dorian's dual personality and identity. His appearance does look good but his portrait is hideous. His appearance is only a facade he presents to society. Then, sexuality was deemed unhealthy during the Victorian era. Many different devices were designed in order to impede sexual impulse. Thus, prostitutes and homosexuals emerged as a social problem. However, sexuality was prevalent. They were about 80 000 prostitutes in London alone. Dorian Gray is seen coming out of "the foulest den in London" and from "dirty houses". As well, open marriages existed. This notion is established by the cynic character of Lord Henry in the novel when he says "one charm of marriage is that it makes a life of deception absolutely necessary for both parties. I never know where my wife is and my wife never knows what I am doing [...] go down to the Duke, we tell each other the most absurd stories with the most serious faces. My wife is very good at it". Furthermore, the character of Dorian also embodies this notion of impurity as one states "whom no pure-minded girl should be allowed to know, and whom no chaste woman should sit in the same room with". The author established a parallelism by using the words "pure minded" and "chaste" strengthening the impurity of Dorian. At last, the Victorian era was known for its use of drugs notably opium. The novel provides a vivid description of the place and area where gentlemen from this era were going as Wilde describes "he reached a small shabby house, that was wedged in between two factories". He then writes "distorted in the fly-blown mirrors that faced them" which could be assimilated to Dorian real reflection appearing through drug's use. We could argue that Wilde conveys that no facade, reputation and illusion can resist to the destructive effects of drugs. The mirrors in this scene represent Dorian's true self.

To conclude, both authors through their works establish a critic and a rejection of their society. In Stranger in the Village, Baldwin demonstrates the discrimination and suffering of the black community by three main ideas: identity, assimilation and history. In The Picture of Dorian Gray, Wilde analyzes his society hypocrisy as well by demonstrating how it is only an illusion. He elaborates his critic on three of the biggest lies of his era: reputation, sexual relationship and drug abuse.

ASSESSMENT RUBRIC FOR OIB AMERICAN OPTION WRITTEN EXAMINATION: ESSAY

N.B. A short response may require assessment to be lowered.

Category	Below Level -0.5 or more at the discretion of the examiner	Level 0	Level 1 + 0.5	Level 2 + 1.0	Level 3 +1.5	Level 4 +2.0
Knowledge & Understanding	No true understanding or first-hand knowledge shown. Factual inaccuracies void argument.	Some understanding but superficial. Learned response replaces first-hand knowledge. Factual inaccuracies affect argument.	Satisfactory understanding and knowledge. Development may be limited with some inadvertent or minor factual inaccuracies.	Good overall understanding. Knowledge is full and developed.	Very good and thorough understanding, including some subtlety. Levels of meaning are apparent.	Excellent understanding, including some subtlety. Levels of meaning are apparent. Detailed and pertinent knowledge.
Response to the Question	Off-subject or no clear response discernible. Observation, commentary or opinion may be present but no attempt to form an argument.	Response is partial or muddled. Argument is directed at the question but may be confused or superficial.	A satisfactory response to the main implications of the question. Some aspects of the question may be ignored.	A good response. Argument addresses the question but may need more development.	A very good response. Argument is complete and well-targeted, and the question is well-understood.	An excellent response. Argument demonstrates original thought and addresses the question with clarity and depth.
Analysis & Depth (Includes discussion of style at Level 2 and above)	Plot summary or generalizations dominate. No successful attempt at analysis.	Plot summary or generalizations frequent. Little or unsuccessful analysis.	Inconsistent analysis that does not always address important elements. Analysis may be uneven or lacking in depth.	Good analysis that appropriately addresses important elements. Generally appropriate analysis of style illustrated by relevant examples.	Very good analysis. Thoughtful, pertinent analysis of style.	Excellent analysis and argumentation. Insightful, sophisticated and coherent analysis of style.
Organization of the Essay & Integration of Evidence	No logical sequence of ideas. Chronological confusion. Development is so inadequate that clarity is in danger of dissolving completely.	Weak or mechanical structure. Development is barely adequate and examples are either impertinent or lack clear connection to the argument.	Satisfactory structure and development. Sequence of ideas generally logical. Examples not always pertinent and integration may be awkward.	Good structure with some transitions. Sequence of ideas logical. Examples are generally pertinent and most often integrated appropriately.	Very good essay structure with solid transitions. Clear development throughout and good integration of supporting evidence.	Excellent essay structure with clear transitions. Carefully planned, persuasive development throughout. Sophisticated integration of supporting evidence.
Expression	Meaning often cannot be surmised. The essay is very difficult to read.	Prose can be read and its meaning surmised even if hampered by weak control (or French interference).	Prose conveys the writer's ideas adequately. Vocabulary is sufficient and notions of good English usage are evident if sometimes inconsistently applied.	Prose shows evidence of good writing skills. Lapses are minor and do not impede understanding. Some care is shown in word choice and register.	Prose is clear and coherent. A rare lapse does not mar ideas or flow. Effective use of vocabulary and register.	Prose is articulate, fluid, and displays an excellent command of written language. Sophisticated use of vocabulary and register.
Totals						