

Comparative essay

The Picture of Dorian Gray and Intimate Apparel

In the novel Intimate Apparel, written by Lynn Nottage, the protagonist can best be described as a hard-working and naive woman. All her life she reaches out for her dreams, yet when she gives in to her desires, she loses her opportunity to achieve them. Contrastingly, in Oscar Wilde's novel The Picture of Dorian Gray, set in the Victorian era, a man by the name of Dorian Gray lives his life lavishly and selfishly, with no regrets until his last days when guilt eats him away. Both novels portray protagonists who are complete opposites at first glance, yet at the same time share similarities; Esther and the young Dorian Gray are from two different social classes, one has numerous privileges whereas the other battles numerous struggles daily. Amid those differences, the characters are very naive. The two of them let themselves be influenced and end up succumbing to their desires, letting those choices ruin their lives. The authors of the play and novel even utilize similar methods to express their intentions; the themes of friendship and marriage, or relationships in general, influence and lifestyles, hedonism as well are touched upon, and even foreshadowing is used. These methods convey overall the idea that it is not until life is over that an understanding of how to live it is revealed. Or how Jonathan Safran Foer puts it: "I regret that it takes a life to learn how to live."

Relationships are a powerful recurrent force in both works. On one hand, there are toxic friendships and marriages, which influence or even manipulate the naive protagonist towards the making of bad decisions. And on the other hand, there are the friendships which radiate a positive energy on the main characters and help the protagonists to live life fully. For example, in The Picture of Dorian Gray, Lord Henry and Dorian have an unhealthy relationship. It demonstrates how easily naive people can be influenced, so much so that it impacts on others, who in turn pick up on it. Basil, for instance, predicted the outcome of the two missing; when his muse meets Lord Henry, he says "I don't want you to meet him" (p. 27) and "He has a very bad influence over all his friends" (p.32). Surprisingly, even Dorian himself foreshadows his own fate, asking himself if his meeting with Lord Henry will always make him joy, "I wonder shall I always be glad?" (p.). Basil's relationship with Dorian is an obsessive one, although he strives for Dorian to be the best version of himself, he also uses him as his muse, letting the handsome young man be his motivation in life, his art. These relationships are toxic and in turn, they end up bringing guilt and death to the characters who do not realize until it is too late. Moreover, in Intimate Apparel, Esther is presented as a hardworking woman, who struggles with wanting to get married at the age of thirty five, "I don't know that I'll marry [...]. And I know right there that somethings ain't meant to be" (p.17) This prediction of her life and her strong desire for the opposite outcome brings her misery. When a "gentleman" takes interest in her, this longing for affection that she lacked her entire life, for marriage, is her downfall. She blinds herself with fantasies of her desires, letting George manipulate her to his own benefit. His declaration of love through a letter, when they haven't met yet further proves how unsuspecting, Esther is. Overall, the authors convey that these relationships and the impact they had on the protagonists changed their lives for worse.

Furthermore, hedonism is a major theme in The Picture of Dorian Gray. Through Lord Henry, Oscar Wilde communicated the ideas of hedonism and through Dorian, he communicated the application of those values "He was dominated by the carelessness of happiness, by the high indifference of joy" (p.271). Indeed, the cynical man's epigrams seem to assure that a hedonistic lifestyle is the most desirable, "Pleasure is the only thing worth having a theory about" (p.108). However, Dorian, who is a personification of hedonism at its optimal and most uncontrolled state, initially rejects those values "[...] you and all your wrong, fascinating, poisonous, delightful theories" (p.108). After living a lush life, devoted to pleasure, with no regards for others, Dorian Gray's guilt concerning his past actions consume him and regret and self awareness takes over, "I am to much concentrated on myself. My own personality has become a burden to me. I want to escape, to go away, to forget." (p.275) This quote shows the anguish and deep regret Dorian comes to feel upon recalling his sins. This cautionary tale warns the reader of the dangers of hedonism, it questions and test its values and ideals, highlighting the uncertainty that comes with it. Contrastingly, in Intimate Apparel, Esther is the opposite of hedonistic. Her whole life she has worked diligently toward her dream, yet when she gets married to George, she succumbs to the temptation of her desire. This single hedonistic and spontaneous decision causes her misfortune. An ending which could have been avoided as it was predicted by Mrs Dickson "I know these kinds of men [...]. He'll steal your common sense, he will walk away"(p.).

Mis en forme : Soulignement

Mis en forme : Soulignement

Commenté [1]: I think you should specify the "intention" already here--the idea that it takes a life to learn how to live. These three sentences the logic is a little confusing to follow

Supprimé: is a

Supprimé:

Supprimé: then

Supprimé: On one side

Commenté [2]: connect back to the thesis a little more clearly

Mis en forme : Soulignement

Supprimé: as hardworking

Commenté [3]: what do you mean by prediction of her life? are you referencing foreshadowing?

Supprimé: naive

Supprimé: These influences altered the way they lived their lives

Mis en forme : Soulignement

Mis en forme : Soulignement

Commenté [4]: I think you should reference foreshadowing once again and expand this paragraph

As such, although the protagonists of both works although completely different in terms of lifestyles and experiences of struggles, their naive and impressionable characteristics impact their life till the end. The themes of relationships and influence, lifestyles and hedonism highlight the uncertainty of life and evoke the theory that it takes a life to learn how to live it. That is the paradox that Jonathan Safran Foer puts forward.

Mis en forme : Surlignage

Commenté [5]: I think you need one or two more body paragraphs to create a solid essay. You should also expand your conclusion to include this idea of learning to live life when it is already too "late"

Mis en forme : Surlignage

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	Prose conveys the writer's ideas adequately. Vocabulary is sufficient and	Prose shows evidence of good writing skills. Lapses are minor and do not	Prose is clear and coherent. A rare lapse does not mar ideas or flow.	Prose is articulate, fluid, and displays an excellent command of

		<u>weak control (or French interference).</u>	<u>notions of good English usage are evident if sometimes inconsistently applied.</u>	<u>impede understanding. Some care is shown in word choice and register.</u>	<u>Effective use of vocabulary and register.</u>	<u>written language. Sophisticated use of vocabulary and register.</u>
<u>Totals</u>						

14/20

Adopted Nov 2015 OIB

Mis en forme : Droite, Droite : 0,15 cm, Espace Avant : 2,85 pt, Interligne : simple