**Purdy Literary Analysis Overview and Examples**

**Specific Intro / Body Examples for Draft**

1. **Answer this Question:**

How does Wilde both honor and satirize the Aesthetic movement through his play The Importance of Being Earnest?

Keep in mind the frame: Aestheticism

1. **Hook / literary theory used**: Within the Aestheticism movement, beauty over substance is an overall guide to how one views art.
2. **Quote from outside source:** The artists of the Aesthetic style, embracing the precepts of “Art for Art’s Sake,” (p 98) would agree that it is how one looks as opposed to how one acts that is truth.
3. **Answer the elements of the question:** Dualism represents the two sides to a persona or how one sees a subject or object.
4. **Introduce the Author:** Oscar Wilde believes that within a world that holds Aesthetics to be the highest standard of what beauty is – he concludes that beauty is not without its dark side.
5. **Make a Claim:** In *the Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde shows the character’s dualism through ~~the settings he puts forth, and the verbal irony in which he uses to define the ugliness in beauty.~~ The main character, jack, coming to terms with his darker nature and embracing the dynamic qualities of his identity, thus revealing that Aesthetics are a shallow interpretation of reality.
6. **Explain the claim as it relates to your literary theory:** The characters of IOBE are each harboring their true darker selves while putting on airs of superiority as their ‘fake’ counterparts.

**Body Paragraph(s):**

**Framework:**

“Wilde’s plays invariably seem to lead the artists who produce them into a **hall of mirrors** where reality and fiction, creator and creature, spectator and actor come face to face…discover that they can merge and exchange identities,”

-Victorian norms are standardized variations of class / pecking order

**Evidence:**

Earnest as Jack / Jack’s reflection of himself to others in different social contexts

**Explain the two:**

How Aesthetics are seen through the character to an ‘immoral end’. Selfishness / Vanity is the winning trait of the Aestheticist - merging of character at the end of the story, acceptance and identity revealed.

**Conclusion:**

1. **Idea Revisited:** Jack as Earnest is a microcosm for going against Victorian norms and exploring the true meaning of the Aesthetic as having dual nature.
2. **Detail about the Idea**: *The Importance of Being Earnest* plays on Jack’s ideals of being true to himself as he grows throughout the play and realizes through his ‘hall of mirrors’ of self-awareness.
3. **Brief Quote from Journal:** Wilde lives through Jack’s realization as he knows that **“**duplication and duplicity are at the centre of the plot” (Drugeon 97) and both embraces and satirizes the shallowness of the Aesthetic as such.
4. **Final Point Brought from Intro and explored further:** To look for an absolute beauty in both art and the world around the art, the character must also look within themselves in order to understand true beauty. Wilde not only looks at the dualism of the character, but the two sides to the movement he embraces as well.

**FYI:**

**Essay Writing Steps**

1. Pick a topic. (The first two will be given to you)
2. Try to narrow the topic as much as you possibly can. Transform it into a specific critical question in relation to the text.
3. Brainstorm points that you want to make in relation to the topic
4. Group points and eliminate points, as necessary.
5. Order points in a way that reflects a logical progression of argumentative thought. Think about how you want to launch your essay, and how you want to finish it. Theoretical frameworks are usually situated within the opening section.

e.g.

PROBLEM

WORKING THROUGH PROBLEM

SOLUTION

BEGINNING SITUATION

SHIFT IN SITUATION

ENDING SITUATION

1. Construct topic sentences for each of the points. Think about transitions/connections/links between the points.
2. Construct a thesis statement that summarizes your points put together. Make it as specific as possible and get at the significance (connection to larger themes) of what you are observing. You are offering a critical reading/interpretation of the text, not just describing.
3. Write your intro (summary of your points, thesis) – DO NOT GENERALIZE OR MAKE SWEEPING STATEMENTS IN THE BEGINNING – stay grounded in the text and your particular focus
4. Write your body paragraphs (transition+ topic sentence + expansion with textual evidence + closing sentence)
5. Make sure you have transitions between body paragraphs and points. Make sure all points connect to your overarching argument/thesis.
6. Write your conclusion – wrap up your paper and re-summarize your points/thesis.

**Basic Structure of Essay Introduction:**

Example #1

The novel Green Grass, Running Water by Thomas King presents contrasting information about Indigenous identity. The reader is exposed to the everyday lives of Indigenous characters living in the fictional Albertan town of Blossom, but is also subject to the various appropriations and misconceptions of ‘Indian’ culture in performance and movies mentioned throughout the novel. This paper will argue that the text reveals the exploitation and disparaging of Indigenous identity in Green Grass, Running Water through the appropriation and propagation of ‘Indian’ tropes that reduce a complex culture to an oversimplified set of stereotypes. This is shown specifically through the characters Portland and Charlie Looking Bear, as well as the portrayal of the Indigenous in the fictional Western The Mysterious Warrior. King then reclaims Indigenous identity through the rewriting of The Mysterious Warrior, critiquing the perspectives and values enforced in the movie by rescripting the ‘heroic’ Western figures, and by using colour and sound to represent change and the renewal of a Indigenous voice. King's rewriting of these traditional Western sentiments show how identity and individuality can be recovered through the power of storytelling.

Example #2

Wayson Choy probes the claustrophobia of being in the in-between space by writing of a Chinese Canadian family living under the heightened racial and national consciousness of Vancouver in the 1930s and 40s. A central character of the text is Poh-Poh, the matriarchal figure who is never granted a voice herself, but is seen through the eyes of three of her grandchildren as they combat their personal identity crises. Poh-Poh, as the family’s representative of the Old Ways, takes it upon herself to remind her Canadian-born grandchildren of their Chinese heritage. Although emotionally connected to the children’s ethnic selves, the Old One’s adherence to exclusive Chineseness is perceived as a hindrance to their pursuit of new “progressive” identities in the larger Canadian society. Choy’s decision to have the children put Poh-Poh aside to be locked away amongst their other childhood memories may seem appropriate, but it has an element of the bittersweet. While the text explores the detrimental effects of categories of nationhood, its treatment of the grandmother recognises that the Old Ways must inevitably give way to the New if the children are to survive amongst non-Chinatown influences. The note of regret in Poh-Poh’s eventual demise is the children’s rebellion against binary thinking, a rebellion that yearns for a way for the Old Ways to exist alongside the New, but is at a loss as to what it could be.

Example #3

In her thesis, Places spaces and do-it-yourself performance in Vancouver BC, Heather McDermid claims that it is imperative that each sub-culture can find a communal space in order to feel like active participants in their local environment. In Vancouver, “there are overarching governmental rules so the fringe groups and unspoken minorities of the city go ‘underground’ if “their interests are not being supported by legitimate or mainstream cultural platforms” (McDermid 31) to look for identity through “unsanctioned or underground venues” (30) like clubs relating to a particular common interest, political ideology or even artistic movement. Arguably, this brings the minority together in what McDermid calls ‘micro-communities.’ “The underground space [creates] an act of learning and sharing knowledge that is an integral part of a culture that relies too arguably unnecessarily heavy degree on service communities” (55) yet at the same time brings about a type unexpected connection between the many dynamics of a particular group that affect the community as a whole. A so called ‘outsider’ of the group can only be “initiated” into one of these sub-groups of the city by having an insider bring them into the particular group or prove themselves worthy of a micro-community’ ideals and dynamics. Wayde Compton explores these ideas in his short story collection, The Outer Harbour. One such micro-community that Compton explores is that of ‘the secret commonwealth’, a fictionalized game community based in and around Vancouver with only a select few inhabitants. In a later story of the collection entitled “The Outer Harbour”, Compton delves into the expansion of this group and how it displays a symbol for the layering of the city itself. As a result, Compton Shows the reader through both short stories “The Secret Commonwealth” and “The Outer Harbor” that migrations of subcultures in Vancouver society are selective yet make up the majority collective that gives Vancouver its unique cultural identity.