**Model Essay on “The Butterfly”**

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| **Introduction:** What is your overall interpretation, your theme statement/**universal idea**?  What is the text about? What genre conventions are apparent?  What are some sub-ideas that relate to your central idea that can be developed in the body of the essay? | The short coming of age narrative, “The Butterfly”, promotes the idea that extreme and controlling patriarchal ideology is unacceptable and likely to be challenged by young women just emerging into adulthood. The reader is positioned to align with Isabella Bancroft’s desire to marry for love rather than to satisfy her father’s obsession with order and control by marrying a wealthy man she detests. The complication within the narrative is resolved when Isabella discreetly decides to assert her own will. The text suggests that freewill and self-determination are preferable to submission to the unreasonable expectations of a tyrannical parent and that humanism is a preferable ideology to materialism. |
| **Body Para 1 Binaries**  Topic sentence: What idea will you develop through the application of what reading strategy?  Expand/explain  Support with evidence  Conclude/link | The binary oppositions operating in “The Butterfly” are apparent in the unequal and adversarial child/parent relationship. The father prefers reason over emotion, and head over heart, denigrating women by asking Isabella whether she wants to base her important decision on “*the whims of weak, feminine feeling”.* He further argues that “*one must use one’s head, one’s reason”*. The father also foregrounds his desire for Isabella to marry “*a man of means*” rather than an “*artist*” who has *“no means, no career*” thus pitting the values of art and the humanities against capitalist sentiments. Mr. Bancroft ruthlessly asserts his power over Isabella’s assumed female helplessness and unquestioning submission when she raises the question of marrying for love, “*The answer is no. Now get out”*. The reader is obviously aligned with the values Mr. Bancroft detests. He will undoubtedly be surprised when Isabella takes “*more drastic measures*” to ensure her independence. |
| **Body Para 2 Narration**  Topic sentence: What idea will you develop through the application of what reading strategy?  Expand/explain  Support with evidence  Conclude/link | The third person narration internally focalizes on Isabella as she firstly accepts Edward’s proposal of marriage and, secondly, attempts to broach the topic with her domineering father. The reader is positioned to admire Isabella’s simple promise to “*wait*” for Edward and is repulsed by her reflection on an imminent proposal from Mr. Burberry who “*had leered suggestively at her over dinner*”. Edward is described using positively connoted words such as “*kind, gentle, creative, clever*” while the villainous Mr. Burberry is everything that Isabella hated, “*proud, conceited, bland, cruel*”. Though Isabella’s evaluations of her suitors are undoubtedly biased, the reader accepts the truthfulness of each depiction as they seem to be based on genuine emotion. The reader is further positioned to align with Isabella’s independent viewpoint rather than her father’s sexist ideology because of the way in which her father is represented in the text. |
| **Body Para 3 Representation**  Topic sentence: What idea will you develop through the application of what reading strategy?  Expand/explain  Support with evidence  Conclude/link | Mr. Bancroft is constructed as a dictatorial archetypal father figure from the time of “*carriages*” and chaperones. His values, attitudes and beliefs are bound to collide with those of his daughter. The father’s voice is described as being “*thick and gruff, much like his personality*” and he is obsessive about maintaining order and control in his life; “*if something in the world did not fit this order, then it would be made to”.* This obsession with order manifests itself in his insect collecting hobby. Emotive vocabulary and visceral visual imagery are employed to position the reader; *“the pin went neatly and noiselessly through the thorax of the butterfly*” and the displays “*horrified*” Isabella who thinks that the insects’ lives have been “*robbed from them so that they could be pinned and preserved in her father’s study*.” Mr. Bancroft is depicted as being a cruel and heartless human being and there are obvious parallels between his relationship with the insects and his relationship with his daughter. |
| **Body Para 4 Symbol and Metaphor**  Topic sentence: What idea will you develop through the application of what reading strategy?  Expand/explain  Support with evidence  Conclude/link | The eponymous butterfly is used symbolically to enhance the themes of entrapment and control within the story. Similar to the butterfly, Isabella is to have her life and happiness metaphorically robbed from her by her brutish father. Her lack of self-determination is represented by “*beautiful*” butterfly which seemed to “*shine with health and life*” even though it is now dead and “*stuck between her father’s tweezers, no longer free to move or fly*”. Although Isabella initially seems submissive and hesitant, knocking “*delicately on the door to her father’s study”* and slipping unobtrusively into the room, she is emerging from her chrysalis stronger than her father realizes, determined to marry her penniless art loving law student. Emancipation and self-determination are her guiding values. She is determined to escape the fate of the helpless butterfly. |
| **Body Para 5 Ideology**  Topic sentence: What idea will you develop through the application of what reading strategy?  Expand/explain  Support with evidence  Conclude/link | In depicting this typical conflict between father and daughter, the text also explores the opposing ideologies of humanism and materialist, art and science. For the daughter, human beings are of ultimate value and personal fulfillment through love is of the utmost importance. Her simple argument is that she loves Edward. On the other hand, Mr. Bancroft values the attainment of a “*good husband*”, by which he means a wealthy husband. Additionally, he does not believe in art, and by extension the humanities; he prefers the scientific precision of mounting butterflies, he revels in killing and confining insects, pinning them in their place and displaying them in his study. The reader is positioned to align with Isabella’s caring and liberal values and to wish her well in her quest for emancipation. |
| **Conclusion**  Reiterate central idea  Draw **general/universal** conclusions  End where the story ends…. | This short narrative focuses on the ageless conflict between a conservative, controlling parent and a young adult who is resolved to escape unjust parental expectations, while also exploring the characters’ attitudes towards money. The feminist story also presents a specific gendered perspective in that a father is persecuting a daughter in the context of an unjust patriarchal society. However, an optimistic resolution signals that the younger generation is not content to remain subservient to outdated ideology. The text suggests that values, attitudes and beliefs change for the better with each generation and that there is hope that Isabella’s “drastic measures” will yield positive returns. |

Yellow highlight = w-c-c strategies blue highlight = central idea underline= t-c strategies