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Title: **The Pursuits and Perks of Poverty: The Development of Egalitarian Ideologies in Medieval Europe Through textiles**

Word Count: 249

Effective two-part title; catchy primary title and informative subtitle

The use of alternative textile materials and the observance of Church doctrines and dress codes in medieval Western Europe reveal emergent egalitarian ideologies despite restrictions placed by the upper class. According to anthropologist Thorsten Veblen's theory of pecuniary emulation, the wealthy obtain power over the poor through the evidence of their wealth. Those with access to silks and dyes, the evidence of wealth in the Middle Ages, had the proof of power.

Opening sentence provides context and relevance of project

Through power of possessions, the wealthy of medieval Western Europe demonstrated a seemingly accepted authority over the lower classes. The upper class had dominated the textile trade through the barrier of high cost and also enacted sumptuary laws to retain exclusivity in the market. Despite these devices, the introduction of alternative textiles and cheaper dyes from local ingredients allowed the poor to acquire luxuries similar to the ruling class', therefore diminishing their authority and revealing strains of egalitarianism. For example, using a hue of purple created from madder, an inexpensive plant native to Western Europe (Jacoby 211), allowed them to circumvent sumptuary laws restricting royal Murex purple.

Logical break between paragraphs; second paragraph demonstrates problem to be addressed.

Presents key research concept with citation

Although some religious houses moved toward ornamentation and luxury, affording nobles the power of emulation, early Christian doctrine and simpler monastic dress codes combated this because of poverty's role in the gospels. In their veneration of poverty as virtue (Tuttle 91), the Franciscan order in particular reversed the Veblenian theory by emulating those without means, instead of those with means, through their voluntary poverty, thus providing growing egalitarianism in the medieval Europe.

Articulates research conclusion and delineates specific solutions

Effective concluding sentence quotes key sources and reiterates

Works Cited

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- Tuttle, Virginia G. "Bosch's Image of Poverty." *The Art Bulletin* 63.1 (1981): 88-95. Web. 30 Nov. 2011.