

Part 3

Text-Analysis Response

Your Task: Closely read the text provided on pages 22 and 23 and write a well-developed, text-based response of two to three paragraphs. In your response, identify a central idea in the text and analyze how the author's use of **one** writing strategy (literary element or literary technique or rhetorical device) develops this central idea. Use strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis. Do *not* simply summarize the text. You may use the margins to take notes as you read and scrap paper to plan your response. Write your response in the spaces provided on pages 7 through 9 of your essay booklet.

Guidelines:

Be sure to:

- Identify a central idea in the text
- Analyze how the author's use of **one** writing strategy (literary element or literary technique or rhetorical device) develops this central idea. Examples include: characterization, conflict, denotation/connotation, metaphor, simile, irony, language use, point-of-view, setting, structure, symbolism, theme, tone, etc.
- Use strong and thorough evidence from the text to support your analysis
- Organize your ideas in a cohesive and coherent manner
- Maintain a formal style of writing
- Follow the conventions of standard written English

Text

The following excerpt is from a memoir where the author recalls her childhood in post-World War II Poland, when shortages were common and the availability of consumer products was limited.

Objects of Affection

...I was a child of the fifties, growing up in a communist country beset by shortages of practically everything—food, clothes, furniture—and that circumstance may have been responsible for my complicated attitude toward objects. We had few toys or books, and we wore mostly hand-me-downs. A pair of mittens, a teddy bear, and a chocolate bar for Christmas were enough. Once in a while we also got skates, bikes, musical instruments. “Abundance” had no place in our vocabulary and in our world, but we were happy with what we had, in the way that only children can be. We were unaware that our lives were in any way circumscribed,¹ although the reality we lived in trained us early on that there was a huge gap between wanting something and getting it. After all, even people with money had to hustle and resort to underhanded maneuvers, including bribery, to buy things. ...

By the time I graduated from high school, I was a person of substance, or so I thought. The shortages never disappeared, but it was easier to get things. I had a Chinese fountain pen and two ballpoint pens, which I kept in my desk drawer and would only use at home. I boasted several records that my sister and I listened to on a gramophone player she had been given as a name-day present a few years before. Some of them were by the popular Polish rock bands, and one was Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, the only classical music record I had for a long time. I listened to it so often that to this day I can hum the whole piece from beginning to end. I also had a bookcase with a sliding glass front that was filled with books. My parents’ books were arrayed on three broad shelves in the bottom part of a cupboard in what doubled as our living room and their bedroom. Although both my parents were readers, they rarely bought books, borrowing them instead from the public library. I was very possessive of the books I owned and only reluctantly loaned them to friends. When my younger sister took one out, I insisted she put it back in the exact same spot.

My possessiveness may have had a lot to do with how difficult books were to come by. They were published in small numbers, and there was such a huge demand for them among the intelligentsia² that the good ones disappeared from stores very quickly. On my way back from school, I often made a detour and walked by the local bookstore to look in the window where new arrivals would be displayed. That was how I spotted a four-volume *War and Peace* that cost eighty zloty, not a negligible sum. I had only thirty. The clerk told me this was the only copy in the store. I knew the book would be sold soon, so I decided to go to my father’s office and beg him for a loan, which he gave me at once. Clutching the money, I ran back to the bookstore, breathless and worried that the book would no longer be there. I realize that what I’m saying must seem pathetic to a person raised in the comforts of a free market economy³ where it’s enough to think of something to find it immediately in the store.

It might sound more poignant⁴ if I said that books and records helped me escape the surrounding grayness and drabness and that my hunting for them wasn’t solely motivated

¹circumscribed — limited

²intelligentsia — intellectual elite

³free market economy — an economic system based on supply and demand with little to no government control

⁴poignant — profoundly moving

by my newly developed acquisitiveness⁵ or a collector's instinct. But if I said that, I'd be practicing revisionist history.⁶ The truth is that we didn't see the grayness and drabness—not yet. This realization came much later. So if it was aesthetic⁷ escapism, it was the universal kind, not fueled by our peculiar political circumstances.

My youthful materialism thrived in a country where materialism—unless of the Marxist variety—was unanimously condemned as the ugly outgrowth of western consumer societies. We knew this was just an ideological cover-up for the never-ending shortages. My brand of materialism didn't belong in a consumer society, either, because it was a kind of disproportionate attachment to things that was caused by scarcity, something unheard of in a market economy. I couldn't want more, new, or better. Such wanting was at best a futile and abstract exercise, so I learned to practice self-limitation. Paradoxically, however, I knew what I liked and wanted, and would have had no trouble making a choice had I been given the chance. When you're faced with overabundance, assaulted by things and more things, it's often difficult to say what you like or want, but that at least wasn't our problem. I don't mean to praise privation⁸ or claim that we were somehow better or more virtuous than people who inhabited a consumer heaven and whose wishes could be automatically fulfilled. I'm only saying that my relationship to things was developed under a different set of circumstances. I did care about possessions, no question about that. I wanted to hang on to what I had and now and then replenish my stock if I came across the right item. More often than not chance ruled my acquisitions. I had to sift through what was available in the hopes of finding something special among a slew of worthless objects. That was also true of buying the so-called practical items. I might have been walking by a shoe store when I spotted a delivery truck. That sight would have been enough to make me stand in line. If I was lucky, I might have ended up buying a pair of sneakers. I might have also wasted my time because I liked none of the shoes or couldn't get my size. People would often buy things they didn't need or want, just in case. You could never tell when those things might come in handy or be used to barter⁹. ...

—Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough
excerpted from “Objects of Affection”
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⁵acquisitiveness — desire to acquire

⁶revisionist history — rewriting history with an advantage of a later perspective

⁷aesthetic — appreciation of beauty

⁸privation — lack of necessities

⁹barter — trade

