

Name:

Date:

ANALYZE CRAFT AND STRUCTURE ► **MEMOIR AND REFLECTIVE WRITING**

An *autobiography* is a type of nonfiction writing in which an author relates the important events and experiences from his or her own life. A **memoir** is a type of autobiography that focuses on a specific period in the author's life or on an experience that holds particular significance for the author. Both autobiographies and memoirs are written from the **first-person point of view**, (using the pronouns *I, me, my, myself, and mine*) because the author is relating his or her own thoughts and feelings and the events and experiences from his or her own life.

Memoirs often include **reflective writing**, in which an author provides *commentary* on the important events he or she was a part of and the important experiences in his or her life. Commentary may include an author explaining *why* certain events and experiences are significant and what he or she has learned from an experience. Reflective writing may reveal how the author feels about people in his or her life, what the author's position is on the issues of the day, how the author responds to conflict, and so on.

What readers learn about an author through reflective writing in a memoir can help reveal the author's **central ideas**, or main points.

DIRECTIONS: Answer each question by writing the letter of the best answer on the line.

1. ____ Which of these pronouns helps you know you are reading a memoir?
 a. her b. they c. my
2. ____ Why does the author of a memoir use the first-person point of view?
 a. The author uses it to add commentary to events in the narrative.
 b. The author discusses things he or she experienced or remembers.
 c. The author wants to be the first person to tell the story.
3. ____ Which of the following is most likely the title of a memoir?
 a. *Animal Life on the African Savanna*
 b. *My Life on the African Savanna*
 c. *What to See and Do on Your Visit to the African Savanna*
4. ____ Why might an author decide to write a memoir?
 a. to help readers understand causes leading up to a historical event
 b. to describe events from the life of an important person
 c. to share memories of his or her own life during a world-changing event
5. ____ Why might an author offer commentary in a memoir?
 a. to explain why he or she acted in certain ways in the past
 b. to provide explanations for important world events
 c. to analyze the effects of history on modern society

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ANALYZE CRAFT AND STRUCTURE ► MEMOIR AND REFLECTIVE WRITING**DIRECTIONS:** Read the excerpt from a memoir. Then, answer the questions that follow.

- 1 At the time, I didn't know my parents were saving money. I just noticed that our jeans were getting shorter before Mom took us to the store to get a larger size. She was also sewing more than ever before. Dad was working extra hours at the factory, and he had started fixing the car himself instead of taking it to Tony's shop. Also, we didn't take a vacation that year, and my two brothers and me were all unhappy about that.
- 2 Months later, Dad said to me, "Molly, we've put a down payment on a house near here. It's quiet, and you'll each have your own bedroom. There's even a yard where you kids can play and where we can plant a little vegetable garden. We'll finally have a place of our own."
- 3 Back then, I just wanted a better place to live. I didn't fully understand how much Mom and Dad had sacrificed. Now, many years later, I understand that they wanted to give us something that would make our childhoods more enjoyable and that they could also pass down to us one day.

1. List two first-person pronouns used in the first paragraph. _____
2. ____ Which of the following accurately describes the excerpt?
 - a. The author is reflecting on an important experience in her own life.
 - b. The author is reflecting on her part in an important world event.
3. ____ What period from the author's life is she reflecting on in the excerpt?
 - a. an event from her recent past
 - b. an event from her childhood
4. In which paragraph does the author offer commentary? _____
5. Paraphrase the author's commentary about the experience she describes.

6. ____ Which of the following is more likely a central idea of the excerpt?
 - a. Children are not able to understand important life events.
 - b. Time and life experience are sometimes needed to understand events.