

Questions 1 through 3 refer to the following:**Reading Comprehension Passage — "The Overcoat" (excerpt)**

It had been noisy and crowded at the Milligan's and Mrs. Bishop had eaten too many little sandwiches and too many iced cakes, so that now, out in the street, the air felt good to her, even if it was damp and cold. At the entrance of the apartment house, she took out her change purse and looked through it and found that by counting the pennies, too, she had
5 just eighty-seven cents, which wasn't enough for a taxi from Tenth Street to Seventy-Third. It was horrid never having enough money in your purse, she thought. Playing bridge,¹ when she lost, she often had to give I.O.U.'s and it was faintly embarrassing, although she always managed to make them good. She resented Lila Hardy who could say, "Can anyone change a ten?" and who could take ten dollars from her small, smart bag while the other women
10 scurried about for change.

She decided it was too late to take a bus and that she might as well walk over to the subway, although the air down there would probably make her head ache. It was drizzling a little and the sidewalks were wet. And as she stood on the corner waiting for the traffic lights to change, she felt horribly sorry for herself. She remembered as a young girl, she had
15 always assumed she would have lots of money when she was older. She had planned what to do with it — what clothes to buy and what upholstery she would have in her car. ...

The air in the subway was worse than usual and she stood on the local side waiting for a train. People who took the expresses seemed to push so and she felt tired and wanted to sit down. When the train came, she took a seat near the door and, although inwardly she
20 was seething with rebellion, her face took on the vacuous² look of other faces in the subway. At Eighteenth Street, a great many people got on and she found her vision blocked by a man who had come in and was hanging to the strap in front of her. He was tall and thin and his overcoat which hung loosely on him and swayed with the motion of the train smelled unpleasantly of damp wool. The buttons of the overcoat were of imitation leather
25 and the button directly in front of Mrs. Bishop's eyes evidently had come off and been sewed back on again with black thread, which didn't match the coat at all.

It was what is known as a swagger coat³ but there was nothing very swagger about it now. The sleeve that she could see was almost threadbare around the cuff and a small shred from the lining hung down over the man's hand. She found herself looking intently at his
30 hand. It was long and pallid⁴ and not too clean. The nails were very short as though they had been bitten and there was a discolored callous on his second finger where he probably held his pencil. Mrs. Bishop, who prided herself on her powers of observation, put him in the white collar class. He most likely, she thought, was the father of a large family and had a hard time sending them all through school. He undoubtedly never spent money on
35 himself. That would account for the shabbiness of his overcoat. And he was probably horribly afraid of losing his job. His house was always noisy and smelled of cooking. Mrs. Bishop couldn't decide whether to make his wife a fat slattern⁵ or to have her an invalid. Either would be quite consistent.

She grew warm with sympathy for the man. Every now and then he gave a slight cough,
40 and that increased her interest and her sadness. It was a soft, pleasant sadness and made her feel resigned to life. She decided that she would smile at him when she got off. It would be the sort of smile that couldn't help but make him feel better, as it would be very obvious that she understood and was sorry.

But by the time the train reached Seventy-Second Street, the closeness of the air and
45 the confusion of her own worries had made her feelings less poignant,⁶ so that her smile, when she gave it, lacked something. The man looked away embarrassed.

II

Her apartment was too hot and the smell of broiling chops sickened her after the enormous tea she had eaten. She could see Maude, her maid, setting the table in the dining-room for dinner. Mrs. Bishop had bought smart little uniforms for her, but there was
50 nothing smart about Maude and the uniforms never looked right. ...

For a minute she stood in the doorway trying to control herself and then she walked over to a window and opened it roughly. "Goodness," she said. "Can't we ever have any air in here?"

Robert gave a slight start and sat up. "Hello, Mollie," he said. "You home?"
55 "Yes, I'm home," she answered. "I came home in the subway."

Her voice was reproachful.⁷ She sat down in the chair facing him and spoke more quietly so that Maude couldn't hear what she was saying. "Really, Robert," she said, "it was dreadful. I came out from the tea in all that drizzle and couldn't even take a taxi home. I had just exactly eighty-seven cents. Just eighty-seven cents!"

60 "Say," he said. "That's a shame. Here." He reached in his pocket and took out a small roll of crumpled bills. "Here," he repeated. And handed her one. She saw that it was five dollars.

Mrs. Bishop shook her head. "No, Robert," she told him. "That isn't the point. The point is that I've really got to have some sort of allowance. It isn't fair to me. I never have any
65 money! Never! It's got so it's positively embarrassing!"

Mr. Bishop fingered the five dollar bill thoughtfully. "I see," he said. "You want an allowance. What's the matter? Don't I give you money every time you ask for it?"
"Well, yes," Mrs. Bishop admitted. "But it isn't like my own. An allowance would be more like my own."...

70 Mr. Bishop sat turning the five dollar bill over and over in his hand. "About how much do you think you should have?" he asked.

"Fifty dollars a month," she told him. And her voice was harsh and strained. "That's the very least I can get along on. Why, Lila Hardy would laugh at fifty dollars a month."

"Fifty dollars a month," Mr. Bishop repeated. He coughed a little, nervously, and
75 ran his fingers through his hair. "I've had a lot of things to attend to this month. But, well, maybe if you would be willing to wait until the first of next month, I might manage."

"Oh, next month will be perfectly all right," she said, feeling it wiser not to press her victory. "But don't forget all about it. Because I shan't."

As she walked toward the closet to put away her wraps, she caught sight of Robert's
80 overcoat on the chair near the door. He had tossed it carelessly across the back of the chair as he came in. One sleeve was hanging down and the vibration of her feet on the floor had made it swing gently back and forth. She saw that the cuff was badly worn and a bit of the lining showed. It looked dreadfully like the sleeve of the overcoat she had seen in the subway. And, suddenly, looking at it, she had a horrible sinking feeling, as though she were falling
85 in a dream.

—Sally Benson
excerpted from "The Overcoat"
The American Mercury, July, 1941

¹bridge — a card game

²vacuous — empty

³swagger coat — a popular coat style in the 1930s

⁴pallid — pale

⁵slattern — sloppy woman

⁶poignant — deeply felt

⁷reproachful — critical

- 1) The first paragraph creates a sense of
- A) submission B) frustration C) urgency D) hopelessness
- 2) The use of the word “although” in line 12 signals Mrs. Bishop's
- A) nervousness B) disapproval C) enthusiasm D) resilience
- 3) The "soft, pleasant sadness" (line 40) Mrs. Bishop experiences while listening to the man cough indicates that she is
- A) reassured by those who are less fortunate than she
- B) discouraged by the illnesses spread on the subway
- C) inclined to help those in need
- D) pressured to act graciously in uncomfortable situations

Question 4 refers to the following:

TEXT

...George Willard, the Ohio village boy, was fast growing into manhood and new thoughts had been coming into his mind. All that day, amid the jam of people at the Fair, he had gone about feeling lonely. He was about to leave Winesburg to go away to some city where he hoped to get work on a city newspaper and he felt grown up. The mood that had taken possession of him was a thing known to men and unknown to boys. He felt old and a little tired. Memories awoke in him. To his mind his new sense of maturity set him apart, made of him a half-tragic figure. He wanted someone to understand the feeling that had taken possession of him after his mother's death.

There is a time in the life of every boy when he for the first time takes the backward view of life. Perhaps that is the moment when he crosses the line into manhood. The boy is walking through the street of his town. He is thinking of the future and of the figure he will cut in the world. Ambitions and regrets awake within him. Suddenly something happens; he stops under a tree and waits as for a voice calling his name. Ghosts of old things creep into his consciousness; the voices outside of himself whisper a message concerning the limitations of life. From being quite sure of himself and his future he becomes not at all sure. If he be an imaginative boy a door is torn open and for the first time he looks out upon the world, seeing, as though they marched in procession before him, the countless figures of men who before his time have come out of nothingness into the world, lived their lives and again disappeared into nothingness. The sadness of sophistication has come to the boy. With a little gasp he sees himself as merely a leaf blown by the wind through the streets of his village. He knows that in spite of all the stout talk of his fellows he must live and die in uncertainty, a thing blown by the winds, a thing destined like corn to wilt in the sun. He shivers and looks eagerly about. The eighteen years he has lived seem but a moment, a breathing space in the long march of humanity. Already he hears death calling. With all his heart he wants to come close to some other human, touch someone with his hands, be touched by the hand of another. If he prefers that the other be a woman, that is because he believes that a woman will be gentle, that she will understand. He wants, most of all, understanding.

When the moment of sophistication came to George Willard his mind turned to Helen White, the Winesburg banker's daughter. Always he had been conscious of the girl growing

into womanhood as he grew into manhood. Once on a summer night when he was eighteen, he had walked with her on a country road and in her presence had given way to an impulse to boast, to make himself appear big and significant in her eyes. Now he wanted to see her for another purpose. He wanted to tell her of the new impulses that had come to him.

35 He had tried to make her think of him as a man when he knew nothing of manhood and now he wanted to be with her and to try to make her feel the change he believed had taken place in his nature.

As for Helen White, she also had come to a period of change. What George felt, she in her young woman's way felt also. She was no longer a girl and hungered to reach into the
40 grace and beauty of womanhood. She had come home from Cleveland, where she was attending college, to spend a day at the Fair. She also had begun to have memories. During the day she sat in the grandstand with a young man, one of the instructors from the college, who was a guest of her mother's. The young man was of a pedantic¹ turn of mind and she felt at once he would not do for her purpose. At the Fair she was glad to be seen in
45 his company as he was well dressed and a stranger. She knew that the fact of his presence would create an impression. During the day she was happy, but when night came on she began to grow restless. She wanted to drive the instructor away, to get out of his presence. While they sat together in the grand-stand and while the eyes of former schoolmates were upon them, she paid so much attention to her escort that he grew interested. "A scholar
50 needs money. I should marry a woman with money," he mused.

Helen White was thinking of George Willard even as he wandered gloomily through the crowds thinking of her. She remembered the summer evening when they had walked together and wanted to walk with him again. She thought that the months she had spent in the city, the going to theatres and the seeing of great crowds wandering in lighted
55 thoroughfares, had changed her profoundly. She wanted him to feel and be conscious of the change in her nature.

The summer evening together that had left its mark on the memory of both the young man and woman had, when looked at quite sensibly, been rather stupidly spent. They had walked out of town along a country road. Then they had stopped by a fence near a
60 field of young corn and George had taken off his coat and let it hang on his arm.

"Well, I've stayed here in Winesburg — yes — I've not yet gone away but I'm growing up," he had said. "I've been reading books and I've been thinking. I'm going to try to amount to something in life." ...

—Sherwood Anderson
 excerpted from "Sophistication"
Winesburg, Ohio, 1919
 B.W. Huebsch

¹pedantic — given to showing off knowledge

4)

TEXT-ANALYSIS RESPONSE:

Your Task: Closely read the text provided 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.

- Guidelines:**
- 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
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