

Textual Analysis Examination
Admissions by Application, 2023
MA Program in English and American Literature
Graduate Institute of Foreign Languages and Literatures
National Taiwan University

Instructions

Write an analysis of the following excerpts from a novel. Start by discussing the setting, the characters, and the plot. Next, focus on a characteristic or two you find noteworthy regarding the narrative style or other formal aspects, and explicate possible purposes of this kind of novelistic writing.

(I)

The house was in darkness.

Finding the front door locked, Watt went to the back door. He could not very well ring, or knock, for the house was in darkness.

Finding the back door locked also, Watt returned to the front door.

Finding the front door locked still, Watt returned to the back door.

Finding the back door now open, oh not open wide, but on the latch, as the saying is, Watt was able to enter the house.

Watt was surprised to find the back door, so lately locked, now open. Two explanations of this occurred to him. The first was this, that his science of the locked door, so seldom at fault, had been so on this occasion, and that the back door, when he had found it locked, had not been locked, but open. And the second was this, that the back door, when he had found it locked, had in effect been locked, but had subsequently been opened, from within, or without, by some person, while he Watt had been employed in going, to and fro, from the back door to the front door, and from the front door to the back door.

Of these two explanations Watt thought he preferred the latter, as being the more beautiful. For if someone had opened the back door, from within, or without, would not he Watt have seen a light, or heard a sound? Or had the door been unlocked, from within, in the dark, by some person perfectly familiar with the premises, and wearing carpet slippers, or in his stockinged feet? Or, from without, by some person so skilful on his legs, that his footfalls made no sound? Or had a sound been made, a light shown, and Watt not heard the one nor seen the other?

The result of this was that Watt never knew how he got into Mr. Knott's house. He knew that he got in by the back door, but he was never to know, never, never to know, how the back door came to be opened. And if the back door had never opened, but remained shut, then who knows Watt had never got into Mr. Knott's house at all, but turned away, and returned to the station, and caught the first train back to town. Unless he had got in through a window.

No sooner had Watt crossed Mr. Knott's threshold than he saw that the house was not in such darkness as he had at first supposed, for a light was burning in the kitchen.

(II)

Mr. Knott ate this dish with a little plated trowel, such as confectioners and grocers use, and tea-merchants.

This arrangement represented a great saving of labour. Coal also was economized.

To whom, Watt wondered, was this arrangement due? To Mr. Knott himself? Or to some other person, to a past domestic perhaps of genius for example, or a professional dietician? And if not to Mr. Knott himself, but to some other person (or of course persons), did Mr. Knott know that such an arrangement existed, or did he not?

[. . .]

Twelve possibilities occurred to Watt, in this connexion:

1. Mr. Knott was responsible for the arrangement, and knew that he was responsible for the arrangement, and knew that such an arrangement existed, and was content.
2. Mr. Knott was not responsible for the arrangement, but knew who was responsible for the arrangement, and knew that such an arrangement existed, and was content.
3. Mr. Knott was responsible for the arrangement, and knew that he was responsible for the arrangement, but did not know that any such arrangement existed, and was content.
4. Mr. Knott was not responsible for the arrangement, but knew who was responsible for the arrangement, but did not know that such an arrangement existed, and was content.
5. Mr. Knott was responsible for the arrangement, but did not know who was responsible for the arrangement, nor that any such arrangement existed, and was content.
6. Mr. Knott was not responsible for the arrangement, nor knew who was responsible for the arrangement, nor knew that any such arrangement existed, and was content.
7. Mr. Knott was responsible for the arrangement, but did not know who was responsible for the arrangement, and knew that such an arrangement existed, and was content.

8. Mr. Knott was not responsible for the arrangement, nor knew who was responsible for the arrangement, and knew that such an arrangement existed, and was content.

9. Mr. Knott was responsible for the arrangement, but knew who was responsible for the arrangement, and knew that such an arrangement existed, and was content.

10. Mr. Knott was not responsible for the arrangement, but knew that he was responsible for the arrangement, and knew that such an arrangement existed, and was content.

11. Mr. Knott was responsible for the arrangement, but knew who was responsible for the arrangement, but did not know that any such arrangement existed, and was content.

12. Mr. Knott was not responsible for the arrangement, but knew that he was responsible for the arrangement, but did not know that such an arrangement existed, and was content.