

ELA Grade 8 Unit 2 - Open Response - Print

1

Emily's Smart New Clothes

by Zareh MacPherson Artinian

"Tonight's party will be a ripper," Danielle whispered into Emily's ear as the two walked together through the crowded school hallway.

Emily almost dropped her e-book at the word "ripper." Rippers were dangerous. They were illegal.

It was too late to ask Danielle any more questions—the reader in the doorway of their next classroom was already scanning them, recording their presence.

...

After school, Emily stopped by Veritables department store to buy Danielle a gift. As she passed the shelves and racks, readers scanned her chip, and the disembodied voices of the e-hawkers began vying for her attention.

"Emily, I'm sure juggling your schoolwork, soccer practice, and a social life is stressing you out. I've got something that can help you organize ..."

Emily walked past them. She disliked algorithms telling her what she was supposed to like, but they annoyed her even more when their suggestions were right on target as if they could see right through her, straight into her heart.

She removed a pair of jeans from a shelf and headed for the lone gift purchase terminal by the exit. If she were buying the pants for herself, she could just walk out the door and let the chip reader in the store's doorway scan her and the pants. The reader would send a message to update the government's central database, Emily's bank would deduct money from her debit account, and the garment's manufacturer would update its records to show that Emily owned the pants. But these pants were not for her.

At the gift terminal, she stated, "Gift." The terminal quickly responded, "Thanks, Emily. I've processed the pants as a gift purchase. Please remind the lucky recipient to register them at her earliest convenience."

Later that night, Emily arrived at Danielle's. The reader-greeter at Danielle's house announced that Emily was carrying one pair of unregistered blue jeans, ruining any possibility of surprising Danielle with the gift.

Danielle greeted Emily and led her into the basement. Three other friends were standing around, talking. One of them, Thomas, held a pair of old scissors spotted with rust.

"Where'd you get those?" Emily asked.

"My grandmother had them in her knitting basket," Thomas answered.

"She knits?"

"Yeah, she's always been kind of a rebel."

"They're really chip-free?" Emily asked.

"That's right. No one can track what you cut with them."

"Let's get started," Danielle said eagerly, as she unwrapped the pants. She picked up a hand-held reader and passed it along the length of the pants. When it reached the waistband, a red light went on.

"The chip's here," Danielle announced, handing the pants to Thomas.

He took the pants and cut into the waistband with the scissors. Immediately, microscopic spinnerets in the garment sprang into action, weaving strong fibers to repair the cut.

"Well," said Thomas, "we knew it wasn't going to be easy. Now what?"

As they were thinking about what to do next, they heard the muffled sound of the reader-greeter upstairs. "The police have arrived. Everyone please remain calm."

The friends all looked at Danielle, still holding the hand-held reader. "I thought it was offline. It shouldn't have set off an alert."

"Of course!" said Thomas. "The hand-held reader's tagged, too. One of the other readers in the house must have scanned it when we used it."

The door at the top of the stairs burst open. Police in riot control gear scrambled down the stairs. Emily now wished that she were transparent. She knew that if she could shed her chip-laced clothes, she could run through the streets undetected by the readers that stood sentinel, guarding every doorway and intersection in town. She imagined herself running, running past the eyes that never shut.

The passage "Emily's Smart New Clothes" depicts a society with many technological advances. Write a response that explains how technological advances make Emily's tasks both more simple and more complicated. Be sure to:

- provide an effective introduction
- include well-chosen examples and quotations from the passage to support your explanation
- provide a concluding statement that clearly follows from your explanation

Excerpt from Chapter VIII of *All These Things I've Done*

by Gabrielle Zevin

Anya lives in a violent future world where her mafia family manufactures chocolate, an illegal substance. When one of her friends is poisoned by her family's chocolate, she is blamed and sent to a correctional facility.

Mrs. Cobrawick and I rode the ferry to Liberty Children's Facility. The view from the boat did not necessarily encourage me: several low-rise gray concrete structures, bunkerlike with few windows, surrounded a pedestal. Atop the pedestal was an enormous greenish pair of women's feet in sandals and the bottom of her skirt, both made of what I'd guess was copper. I think my father had once told me some story about what had happened to the rest of the statue (maybe it had been scrapped for parts?) but at that moment, I couldn't remember it and the torsoless woman seemed ominous to me. There was something inscribed on the base of the pedestal but the only words I could make out were tired and free. I was the former, though not the latter. The whole island was surrounded by a chain-link fence, which, I could tell from the coiled structures on the top, was electrified. I told myself that I wouldn't be there long.

"Back when my mother was a girl, Liberty used to be a tourist attraction," Mrs. Cobrawick informed me. "You could climb up the woman's dress and the base was a museum."

What hadn't been? Half the places in my neighborhood used to be museums.

"What you said back at the courthouse? Liberty is not a jail," Mrs. Cobrawick continued. "And you shouldn't think of it as such. We're very proud of Liberty and we like to think of it as a home."

I knew I should probably keep my mouth shut, but I couldn't help replying. "What's the electrified fence for then?"

Mrs. Cobrawick narrowed her eyes at me, and I could tell my question had probably been a mistake. "It's to keep everyone safe," she said.

I didn't comment.

"Did you hear me?" Mrs. Cobrawick asked. "I said, the fence is there to keep everyone safe."

"Yes," I replied.

"Good," Mrs. Cobrawick said. "For the record, it's polite to show some acknowledgment when a person's answered a question you've asked."

I apologized and told her I hadn't meant to be rude. "I'm tired," I explained, "and a bit distracted by what's been happening."

Mrs. Cobrawick nodded. "I'm glad to hear that. I was worried your rudeness was a sign of poor breeding. I'm well versed in your background, Anya. Your family history. It wouldn't come as a surprise to me if you lacked certain refinements."

I could tell she was baiting me, but I wouldn't take it. The boat was docking at the island, and I'd be quit of this woman soon.

"The truth is, Anya, your stay here can be easy or it can be difficult," she said. "It's completely up to you."

I thanked her for the advice, making sure not to sound sarcastic.

"When I heard about your situation this morning, I specifically offered to transport you myself, though normally such responsibilities fall well below my purview. You could say I had an interest in you. You see, I went to

college with your mother. We weren't friends per se but I often saw her on campus, and I'd hate to see you end up like her. I've found that early intervention can make a world of difference in borderline cases."

I took a deep breath and bit my tongue. I mean I literally bit it. I could taste the blood in my mouth.

The boat had stopped, and the captain called for everyone going to Liberty Children's Facility to disembark. "Well," I said, "thanks very much for taking me over."

"I'm coming in with you," she said.

I had assumed she worked at the court, not at Liberty, but, of course, this had been foolish of me. I wondered how she had known that I'd be sent to Liberty, considering how quickly the hearing had progressed. Had my fate been decided before I even arrived at court that morning?

"I'm the headmistress here," Mrs. Cobrawick told me. "Some people call me the warden behind my back," she added with a strange smile. "Though don't you go being one of them."

Read the excerpt from Chapter VIII of *All These Things I've Done*. Write a paragraph comparing Anya and Mrs. Cobrawick. How do the differences between the two characters highlight a conflict in the story? Be sure to:

- use a topic sentence
- include commentary using supporting details from the passage