

OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 AND 10 WRITING/HOMEWORK 5**NAME (FIRST AND LAST):** _____ **GRADE:** _____

Read the following personal essay, "Eat, Memory: Orange Crush," by Yiyun Li (published in *The New York Times Magazine*, January 22, 2006) and answer the questions that follow. (Web resource: http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/22/magazine/eat-memory-orange-crush.html?_r=0)

During the winter in Beijing, where I grew up, we always had orange and tangerine peels drying on our heater. Oranges were not cheap. My father, who believed that thrift was one of the best virtues, saved the dried peels in a jar; when we had a cough or cold, he would boil them until the water took on a bitter taste and a pale yellow cast, like the color of water drizzling out of a rusty faucet. It was the best cure for colds, he insisted.

I did not know then that I would do the same for my own children, preferring nature's provision over those orange- and pink- and purple-colored medicines. I just felt ashamed, especially when he packed it in my lunch for the annual field trip, where other children brought colorful flavored fruit drinks -- made with "chemicals," my father insisted.

The year I turned 16, a new product caught my eye. Fruit Treasure, as Tang was named for the Chinese market, instantly won everyone's heart. Imagine real oranges condensed into a fine powder! Equally seductive was the TV commercial, which gave us a glimpse of a life that most families, including mine, could hardly afford. The kitchen was spacious and brightly lighted, whereas ours was a small cube -- but at least we had one; half the people we knew cooked in the hallways of their apartment buildings, where every family's dinner was on display and their financial states assessed by the number of meals with meat they ate every week. The family on TV was beautiful, all three of them with healthy complexions and toothy, carefree smiles (the young parents I saw on my bus ride to school were those who had to leave at 6 or even earlier in the morning for the two-hour commute and who had to carry their children, half-asleep and often screaming, with them because the only child care they could afford was that provided by their employers).

The drink itself, steaming hot in an expensive-looking mug that was held between the child's mittened hands, was a vivid orange. The mother talked to the audience as if she were our best friend: "During the cold winter, we need to pay more attention to the health of our family," she said. "That's why I give my husband and my child hot Fruit Treasure for extra warmth and vitamins." The drink's temperature was the only Chinese aspect of the commercial; iced drinks were considered unhealthful and believed to induce stomach disease.

As if the images were not persuasive enough, near the end of the ad an authoritative voice informed us that Tang was the only fruit drink used by NASA for its astronauts -- the exact information my father needed to prove his theory that all orange-flavored drinks other than our orange-peel water were made of suspicious chemicals.

Until this point, all commercials were short and boring, with catchy phrases like "Our Product Is Loved by People Around the World" flashing on screen. The Tang ad was a revolution in itself: the lifestyle it represented -- a more healthful and richer one, a Western luxury -- was

just starting to become legitimate in China as it was beginning to embrace the West and its capitalism.

Even though Tang was the most expensive fruit drink available, its sales soared. A simple bottle cost 17 yuan, a month's worth of lunch money. A boxed set of two became a status hostess gift. Even the sturdy glass containers that the powder came in were coveted. People used them as tea mugs, the orange label still on, a sign that you could afford the modern American drink. Even my mother had an empty Tang bottle with a snug orange nylon net over it, a present from one of her fellow schoolteachers. She carried it from the office to the classroom and back again as if our family had also consumed a full bottle.

The truth was, our family had never tasted Tang. Just think of how many oranges we could buy with the money spent on a bottle, my father reasoned. His resistance sent me into a long adolescent melancholy. I was ashamed by our lack of style and our life, with its taste of orange-peel water. I could not wait until I grew up and could have my own Tang-filled life.

To add to my agony, our neighbor's son brought over his first girlfriend, for whom he had just bought a bottle of Tang. He was five years older and a college sophomore; we had nothing in common and had not spoken more than 10 sentences. But this didn't stop me from having a painful crush on him. The beautiful girlfriend opened the Tang in our flat and insisted that we all try it. When it was my turn to scoop some into a glass of water, the fine orange powder almost choked me to tears. It was the first time I had drunk Tang, and the taste was not like real oranges but stronger, as if it were made of the essence of all the oranges I had ever eaten. This would be the love I would seek, a boy unlike my father, a boy who would not blink to buy a bottle of Tang for me. I looked at the beautiful girlfriend and wished to replace her.

My agony and jealousy did not last long, however. Two months later the beautiful girlfriend left the boy for an older and richer man. Soon after, the boy's mother came to visit and was still outraged about the Tang. "What a waste of money on someone who didn't become his wife!" she said.

"That's how it goes with young people," my mother said. "Once he has a wife, he'll have a better brain and won't throw his money away."

"True. He's just like his father. When he courted me, he once invited me to an expensive restaurant and ordered two fish for me. After we were married, he wouldn't even allow two fish for the whole family for one meal!"

That was the end of my desire for a Tangy life. I realized that every dream ended with this bland, ordinary existence, where a prince would one day become a man who boiled orange peels for his family. I had not thought about the boy much until I moved to America 10 years later and discovered Tang in a grocery store. It was just how I remembered it -- fine powder in a sturdy bottle -- but its glamour had lost its gloss because, alas, it was neither expensive nor trendy. To think that all the dreams of my youth were once contained in this commercial drink! I picked up a bottle and then returned it to the shelf.

READING COMPREHENSION

1. Why did the narrator's family have orange and tangerine peels drying on the heater?

2. As a child, why did the narrator feel ashamed?

3. What happened during the year the narrator turned sixteen years old?

4. Why was the Tang TV commercial "seductive"?

5. According to the narrator, how did the "authoritative voice" make the commercial sound even more persuasive?

6. Why does the narrator mean when she writes, "The Tang ad was a revolution in itself: the lifestyle it represented -- a more healthful and richer one, a Western luxury -- was just starting to become legitimate in China as it was beginning to embrace the West and its capitalism"? Paraphrase this sentence to show that you understand the narrator's point of view.

10. Have you had an experience like the narrator's before? Describe your personal experience and share your thoughts and feelings about it.

WRITING SKILLS

FORMAL LETTER WRITING

Write a formal letter to Yiyun Li, the author of the personal essay, “Eat, Memory: Orange Crush.” In your letter, express your thoughts and feelings about her essay. There should be at least three paragraphs (i.e., an introduction, a body paragraph, and a conclusion). The letter should have a thesis statement or at least some kind of topic sentence, and you will need evidence from the Li’s essay to support your thesis statement/topic sentence. Follow the format below.

Example:

1800 Stone Ridge Street
Los Angeles, CA 90001

Your street address
City, State Zip

6 July 2009

Date

Mr. William Shatner
President, Shatner Foundation
344 Final Frontier Lane
New York, NY 10027

Prefix & Full Name of Recipient
Title of Recipient, Organization
Recipient’s Street Address
City, State Zip

Dear Mr. Shatner:

or **To Whom It May Concern:**

When using this format, you do not want to indent. Margins on all sides should be one-inch. Start the first paragraph by introducing yourself in a friendly way, and then state the purpose of your letter. Know your audience because it is very important that you keep their attention. Remember, you are not writing to yourself. Use a couple of sentences to explain the purpose, but save the detail for the body paragraphs.

Start the body paragraph by justifying the importance of the main point. In the next few paragraphs, continue the justification with background information and supporting details. Body paragraphs are where you offer solutions, advice, suggestions, or proposals. Write as many body paragraphs as you want, however, keep it short and straight to the point. You do not want to bore the reader to death or look like you’re writing an academic essay.

In the closing paragraph, you should restate the purpose of the letter and in some cases, request some type of action. Remind the reader where they can contact you, and make sure to close the letter in a friendly manner.

Sincerely,

Closing,

Leave 4 Spaces to Sign Your Name

Leonard Nemoy
Owner, Android’s Lair Comic Book Shop

Your Full Name
Your title, company name

Enclosures (3)

Attachments (# of attachments)

GRAMMAR

APPOSITIVES

An appositive is a noun or noun phrase placed next to or very near another noun or noun phrase to identify, explain, or supplement its meaning.

Example:

- Mr. Wang, our Mathematics teacher, is very intelligent. (Without the appositive, the sentence would be: "Mr Wang is very intelligent.")
- Shu Yun, my sister, left immediately. (Without the appositive, the sentence would be: "Shu Yun left immediately.")
- His car, a vintage roaster, crashed. (Without the appositive, the sentence would be: "His car crashed.")

In each of the following sentences, underline the appositive and circle the noun it explains.

1. That man, the village chief, will command.
2. Baseball, my favourite sport, ended yesterday.
3. The senator, a Democrat, voted today.
4. Mr. Ho, our Latin teacher, was nominated.
5. His house, a rambling shack, burned down.
6. The dog, a huge German shepherd, jumped up.
7. The boat, a sleek cruiser, slid past.
8. My cat, a grey darling, stretched and hissed at me.
9. Did you see the film at Studio 28, the movie theatre?
10. My favourite ice cream, chocolate fried chicken, was on sale.

THE END