findings and how the examples contribute to the persona Vowell presents in this essay. What relationship does she establish with her readers?

**QUESTIONS ON MEANING**

1. Throughout their lives, Vowell and her father have been at odds over political issues and divided in their interests—she the liberal, he the conservative; she antigun, he progun; she artistic, he mechanical. The division is made explicit in paragraphs 1-2, 5, 7-8, and 13.

2. Vowell writes that both her parents grew up in controlling households "where children were considered puppets and/or slaves" (par. 12). In reaction to the rigidity of his own parents, her father wanted his children to have the freedom to make their own choices. We see him, then, as fundamentally open-minded.

3. Vowell had reached a point in adulthood where she wanted to connect more closely with her father and decided that sharing in this major project of his was a good place to start—particularly since it represents "a map of all his obsessions" (par. 19). She isn't bothered by her father's cannon as she is by other guns because it is a completely ceremonial object (30), not a weapon that could readily be used to harm others. Also, she enjoys the noise it makes and the way its smoke fills the air.

4. Vowell's father is proud to be the descendant of reactionaries and renegades and enjoys recalling tales of his "necrophile" ancestors (par. 18). His slyly ornery streak helps explain his outspoken individualism.

5. Vowell's purpose seems to be to trace her evolving view of her father, from seeing him as her polar opposite to realizing that they have more in common—in terms of being "smart, sleekly louche with goofy projects and weird equipment" (par. 20)—than she ever expected. She creates the impression of a man who is exasperating, obsessive in his beliefs and habits, but somehow endearing, finally, because of his idiosyncratic devotion to "his art" (31).

**QUESTIONS ON WRITING STRATEGY**

1. The anecdote demonstrates in a nutshell her father's penchant for guns and his tendency to behave as he sees fit. It also shows that, even at eleven, Vowell saw things completely differently and welcomed the restrictions that town life would place on her father's behavior.

2. The paragraph provides a bit of humor with its suggestion that boyfriends feared Vowell just might shoot them if they betrayed her. It also acts as a transition into the following paragraph, where Vowell admits that she has shot a gun only once in her life. While this aside doesn't contribute directly to the portrait of Vowell's father, it does bring in outsiders' views of her father's guns.

3. The final sentence suggests the depth of Vowell's feelings for her father: When he dies, she will want to feel pain. The double meaning of "hurt"—the pain of the cannon noise and the pain of loss—ties together the threads of guns and father and sharply etches Vowell's love for her father.

4. Comparison and contrast is found in paragraphs 1-2, 6-7, 13, and 29. The method is important to show how different Vowell believed herself and her father to be until she came to share one of his pleasures and realized that they were surprisingly alike.

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**ELIZABETH GILBERT**

The Best Pizza in the World

An excerpt from one of the most widely read memoirs in recent memory, "The Best Pizza in the World" is great fun to read. Most of us have, at one point or another, experienced gastronomic delight of the kind Gilbert describes, but few could express it as forcefully or with as much originality as she does. Students should enjoy both Gilbert's infectious enthusiasm for her subject and her strikingly fresh figures of speech, many of which are irresistible.

You may want to spend some time considering Gilbert's overwhelmingly colloquial language (see question 2 on language). Such casual, everyday usage is normally frowned upon in formal writing, but in Gilbert's case it works quite well, creating a strong writer's voice, infusing a sense of intimacy with her readers, and forging an unmistakably clear emotional image of her joy at being in Naples.