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Summary-Response: The Design of Everyday Objects

In the article, “The Design of Everyday Objects,” Jo McEntire explains how good design influences and makes our everyday life better. First, McEntire opens her article by analyzing objects we use every day and how they were designed with artistic and engineering perspectives. Second, she explains how design has changed as more objects are made by machines. Because of this change, objects have become available with lower costs for everyone and stopped being status symbols for the wealthy. Next, she rejects the idea that design conflicts with function. McEntire **emphasizes** that a good design means an object is easy to understand and use. To explain, she shows some examples how **visual** signs improve usability such as using a long horizontal bar on a door to remind users to pull it. In the next paragraph, she analyzes emotional responses to everyday objects. The design of those objects do not only serve to bring pleasure, but also function as a way people express their identity. After that, she argues that the big adventure in future for designers is **sustainability**. She concludes the article by writing that good design today needs to focus on the three principles: functionality, usability, and emotional response.

McEntire argues that good design must create a positive emotional response and be functional. I mostly agree with her ideas; however, she is missing a few key points. First, it is true that most people buy objects that bring pleasure, but good design can also cause negative emotional responses. For example, smoke alarms are loud and irritating. When people hear these

loud noises, they want to turn the alarm off as quickly as possible. This means that they must act quickly to remove the smoke from their homes. Because of their annoying noise, smoke alarms save people. If smoke alarms played soft relaxing music, people might ignore them. This example illustrates how good design can also include negative emotional reactions. Antifreeze is another example of a product that causes a negative emotional response. In the past, antifreeze used to smell sweet, like candy. Because of this, many children used to drink it and die. Antifreeze companies had to change their formula. They made the antifreeze have an unpleasant smell and taste so children would not drink it. This change in design saved many lives. In the article, McEntire asks, “Does the product bring pleasure?” (177), but she does not ask if products can cause displeasure. Sometimes, it is necessary for products to bring unpleasurable responses. This is part of good design.

Next, McEntire explains that good design must also be **functional**. She writes, “A functional product does what it is supposed to do” and “[d]esign should not conflict with functionality” (176). It is true that most people want to buy products that are **usable**; however, sometimes design is more important than functionality. This is especially true in the fashion world. For example, Lady Gaga wore a dress made out of meat to a special event. The dress did not look comfortable, but since that day, many people have been talking about it. Because of this dress, Lady Gaga became famous for her fashion. It did not matter that she could not wear the dress again. This example illustrates that sometimes, **visual** aspects are more important than functionality. Another example of this idea are shutter shades. A few years ago, Kanye West started wearing shutter shades at his concerts. These “sunglasses” do not protect people’s eyes from the sun because they have many slits and holes. Since then, young people have been wearing them because they liked the style. The shutter shade company made a lot of money by

selling these unique glasses. This example shows that people will buy products that do not work if the style is appealing.

McEntire has many great ideas in the article “The Design of Everyday Objects.” I agree with most of her points, but she should write more about pleasurable design and functionality. Sometimes, negative reactions are part of good design because they keep people safe. Smoke alarms and antifreeze are two examples of this idea. Also, design is sometimes more important than functionality. Two examples of this are Lady Gaga’s meat dress and Kanye West’s shutter shades. Since consumers will be buying products every day, I recommend that they consider all these aspects.