

PART A: READING COMPREHENSION
STAND-ALONE TEXT

A dumka is a type of song with strongly contrasting parts.

The Dumka

by B.H. Fairchild

His parents would sit alone together
on the blue divan¹ in the small living room
listening to Dvorjak's² piano quintet.
They would sit there in their old age,
5 side by side, quite still, backs rigid, hands
in their laps, and look straight ahead
at the yellow light of the phonograph³
that seemed as distant as a lamplit
window seen across the plains late at night.
10 They would sit quietly as something dense

and radiant swirled around them, something
like the dust storms of the thirties⁴ that began
by smearing the sky green with doom
but afterwards drenched the air with an amber
15 glow and then vanished, leaving profiles
of children on pillows and a pale gauze
over mantles and table tops. But it was
the memory of dust that encircled them now
and made them smile faintly and raise
20 or bow their heads as they spoke about

¹ divan: *sofa*

² Dvorjak: *Czech composer (1841–1904)*

³ phonograph: *an early device for playing recorded music*

⁴ thirties: *The Great Depression of the 1930s was a time of financial hardship and unemployment. Drought caused crops to fail and dust storms to gather, forcing a mass of people to move to cities in search of the necessities of life.*

the farm in twilight with piano music
spiraling out across red roads and fields
of maize, bread lines in the city, women
and men lining main street like mannequins,
25 and then the war, the white frame rent house,
and the homecoming, the homecoming,
the homecoming, and afterwards, green lawns
and a new piano with its mahogany gleam
like pond ice at dawn, and now alone
30 in the house in the vanishing neighborhood,

the slow mornings of coffee and newspapers
and evenings of music and scattered bits
of talk like leaves suddenly fallen before
one notices the new season. And they would sit
35 there alone and soon he would reach across
and lift her hand as if it were the last unbroken
leaf and he would hold her hand in his hand
for a long time and they would look far off
into the music of their lives as they sat alone
40 together in the room in the house in Kansas.

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INSTRUCTIONS: In paragraph form and in at least **150 words**, answer question 1 in the **Response Booklet**. Write in **ink**. Use the **Organization and Planning** space to plan your work. The mark for your answer will be based on the appropriateness of the examples you use as well as the adequacy of your explanation and the quality of your written expression.

1. Discuss contrast in the poem “The Dumka.”

Suggestions Regarding Response:

EXAMPLE

REFERENCE

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| • “alone,” yet “together” | lines 1; 39–40 |
| • they sit quietly but in their thoughts, “something dense / and radiant swirled around them” | lines 10 and 11 |
| • the sky is smeared green with doom but afterwards the air is drenched with an amber glow | lines 13–15 |
| • “fields of maize” contrast with “bread lines in the city” | lines 22 and 23 |
| • “the war” contrasts with “the homecoming” and the new prosperity that comes with peace | lines 25–28 |
| • the deprivation of the Depression era contrasts with post-war prosperity | lines 12–29 |
| • “the homecoming” contrasts with the later solitude of old age and a vanishing neighbourhood | lines 27–30 |
| • contrast in the overall structure of the poem; the couple is alone together at the beginning and end, but in the middle stanza they are surrounded by the swirl of their memories | various references |
| • contrast between the present as the older couple sits quietly alone together and their memories of past experiences | various references |

This list is not exhaustive.

The exemplars will provide sample responses.

Marks will be awarded for content and written expression.
Refer to the Holistic Scale on page 4 of this key.

SCORING GUIDE FOR STAND-ALONE TEXT

This is a first-draft response and should be assessed as such. The use of paragraph structure is assessed holistically with reference to the clarity of expression and organization.

6

The six response is **superior** and may draw upon any number of factors, such as depth of discussion, effectiveness of argument, or level of insight. It exhibits an effective writing style and a sophisticated use of language. Despite its clarity and precision, the response need not be error-free.

5

The five response is **proficient** and reflects a strong grasp of the topic and the text. The references to the passage may be explicit or implicit and convincingly support a thesis. The writing is well organized and demonstrates a strong command of the conventions of language. Errors may be present, but are not distracting.

4

The four response is **competent**. The assertions tend to be simplistic; there are no significant errors in understanding. References are present and appropriate, but may be limited to only part of the text. The writing is organized and straightforward. Conventions of language are usually followed, but some errors are evident.

3

The three response is **barely adequate**. Understanding of the topic and/or the text may be partially flawed. Support may consist of long references to the text which are not clearly connected to a central idea or may be meagre or repetitive. The response may show some sense of purpose, but errors may be distracting.

2

The two response is **inadequate**. While there is an attempt to address the topic, understanding of the text or the task may be seriously flawed. Errors are recurring, distracting, and often impede meaning.

1

The one response is **unacceptable**. It does not meet the purpose of the task or may be too brief to address the topic. There is a serious lack of control in the writing.

0

The zero response reflects a complete misunderstanding of the text and/or the task, is written in verse, is off-topic, or is a restatement of the question.

*Any zero paper must be cleared by the section leader.

NR

A blank paper with no response given.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Fairchild, B.H. "The Dumka." *Good Poems*. The Penguin Group. 2002.