

English 12: Stand-Alone Text

Scale: 4

Comment:

Student demonstrates a literal understanding and support is limited but accurate.

In the poem “The Dumka” by B.H. Fairchild, there are many contrasting elements. It begins pleasantly enough as the speaker describes someone’s parents “(sitting) alone together/on the blue divan in the small living room/listening to Dvorjak’s piano quintet” – nothing too cut out of the ordinary, and certainly nothing to suggest anything sinister. But the tone gradually shifts as it moves to stanza two, and they begin to recall the events that have shaped who they are. First there are the “dust storms of the thirties” – The Great Depression that “(smeared) the sky green with doom”, this is followed by “the war,/the white frame rent house/and the homecoming, the homecoming/the homecoming”, five years of horror followed by immense relief. From there the tone shifts to something quieter, gentler, more familiar, as they remember how they rebuilt to get to where they are now in their old age. This new hopefulness and lightheartedness contrasts strongly with the tone set in stanzas two and three.