

English 12: Stand-Alone Text

Scale: 5

Comment:

A thorough and convincing discussion of contrast throughout the poem. Although a proficient response it lacks the insight of a 6.

The poem "The Dumka" by B.H. Fairchild is a work rich with contrast. The title itself, deriving from the song type "dumka", a song with strong contrast, shows the reader that the poem has many different contrasting parts. Although there are many examples of contrast throughout the work, the most evident is the continual contrast between the couple's lives present and past. The poem begins with the couple in their old age reminiscing about the many events of their lives. The speaker describes the couple as "dense" (line 10) showing their full lives and many experiences. The idea of the couple being full of experiences is, in itself, contrasting. This is because to be well rounded, or full, one has to be full of good, and in contrast, bad experiences. Furthermore, the poem shows strong contrast illustrating these hardships and pleasantries. In the beginning of the second stanza, the speaker talks of the couple's memories of living through the Great Depression of the 1930's "The dust storms of the thirties" (line 12). The speaker then goes on to further show times of hardship by mentioning the following: poverty "bread lines in the city" (line 23), the loss of spirit brought on by the depression "men lining main street like mannequins" (line 24), and the loss of means of war "and then the war" (line 25). At line 26 in "The Dumka" a shift occurs which then portrays the positive times of the couple's lives. This is shown by the end of the war "The homecoming" (line 26), the increase in wealth "green lawns and a new piano" (line 27-28), and their new relaxed lives "slow mornings of coffee..." (line 31-32). Through the speaker's use of the positive and negative events of the couple's lives in "The Dumka" one can see that the poem possesses strong contrast.