

English 12: Stand-Alone Text

Scale: 6

Comment:

This response was awarded a 6 because of its insightful discussion. There is an appreciation of the significance of the contrast. While the writing lacks some of the sophisticated language of a traditional 6, the writing is clear and precise and illustrates an upper-level appreciation of the poem.

Contrast in B.H. Fairchild's "The Dumka" is evident not only in the poem itself, but in the poems' title as well. Essentially the two elderly people in the poem are sitting in their home reflecting on the "music of their lives" (line 39). This music can be classified as a dumka since they have experienced so many contrasting events in their lives. The couple fondly remembers "the farm in twilight with piano music" (line 24) and then immediately after talks about the hardships of the Depression where "women and men [lined] main street like mannequins" (line 24) waiting for any sort of government aid. The war is contrasted with the relief of coming home safe, which is emphasized by repetition of "homecoming" (line 26). Eventually the poem ends the way it started, with the elderly couple sitting together at home, but the one small difference is he holds hand at this point. From this small gesture the reader knows despite all the bad that has happened to them, the good memories are more important and the love between them is as strong as ever.