

English 12: Stand-Alone Text

Scale: 6

Comment:

This response was awarded a 6 because of its superior use of text to support its discussion. Language is sophisticated and depth of insight is strong.

In B.H. Fairchild's poem, "The Dumka", the contrasting themes of old and new, past and present, are illustrated through the usage of imagery and symbolism. The parent, "in their old age" represent a time long gone – a time of war, financial hardship and agricultural living (line 4). As they recall "breadlines in the city" and "the war," they look back with nostalgia on "the farm in twilight with piano music" (lines 21-25). Their wistful recollections of the past are in sharp contrast with the emerging lifestyle, which renders them obsolete – a lifestyle of "green lawns" and a "vanishing neighbourhood" (lines 27, 30). The young have moved away from the neighbourhood, leaving the old clinging to the vestiges of the past that remain in the memories of coffee and newspapers" and are forgotten by most (line 31). While the elderly sit and ponder upon the past, they are aware that their lifestyle is antiquated; yet, they see it as the only thing that remains intact in the lives that they have known. Meanwhile, the forgotten old is symbolized by the phonograph, and the dust which settled upon table-tops; juxtaposed against the "mahogany gleam" of a new piano and the green lawns of suburban life, the contrast between the traditional lives of the elderly and the ostentatious desires of the young is illustrated.