

English 12: Stand-Alone Text

Scale: 6

Comment:

This response was awarded a 6 because it demonstrates a superior understanding of contrast. The sophisticated use of language guides the reader through this insightful and strongly supported discussion.

A single musician can perform beautiful solos, but in time variety is craved and the magic of the solo is destroyed. The sounds of a single piano playing at twilight from the farm contrasts to the music of the lives of the old couple, for music of their life is created by a symphony consisting of everyone who has ever affected the couple, and is therefore much richer in tone and quality. During the piece composed by the couple there are numerous crescendos, such as during the dust storms in the Thirties. As the green glow of doom changes to become a terrifying pale fire the music increases in tempo and volume, then suddenly dies down to a slower, calmer tune as the couple “smiles faintly” (19) and speaks of “the farm in twilight with piano music spiraling out across red roads and fields of maize.” (21-23). The topic changes to the “bread lines in the city” (23) and the people across the country “lining the street like mannequins” (24) as the music maintains a slow tempo and a mournful tune, then symbols crash and the musicians force a feeling of intensity through their instruments as the scene abruptly changes to on World War Two. The terror and hardship felt during that time is then again rapidly thrown into sharp relief as thoughts turn quickly to the end of the homecoming of soldiers from Europe. This whole sequence of thoughts and events contrasts like black to white when compared to the slow and sedate pace of the earlier lines of the poem. From the homecoming the music begins a gradual *ritardo*, slowing down until the couple arrives where they started; done in their room “in the house in Kansas” (40).