

English 12: Stand-Alone Text

Scale: 2

Comment:

The entire paper relies on three lengthy quotations. There is no analysis and almost no student writing.

Contrast was used many times throughout the poem "The Dumka". It was used in separating the significant events of the old couple's lives into pleasant and unpleasant memories. An example of this in the poem is "...and then the war, the white frame rent house, the homecoming, the homecoming, and afterwards, green lawns and a new piano with its mahogany gleam like pond ice at dawn...". Contrast was used to show how the old couple got to this point in life. "They would sit there in their old age, side by side, quite still, backs rigid, hands in their laps, and look straight ahead at the yellow light of the phonograph...They would sit quietly as something dense and radiant swirled around them, something like the dust storms of the thirties by smearing the sky green with doom but afterwards drenched the air with an amber glow and then vanished...". The difference in lifestyle between time periods also used contrast. "...the farm in the twilight with piano music spiralling out across red roads and fields of maize, bread lines in the city, women and men lining main street like mannequins...the slow mornings of coffee and newspapers and evenings of music and scattered bits of talk...". The use of contrast shaped and molded the poem to reiterate the title.

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Scale: 2

Comment:

This response was awarded a 2 because, while it attempts to address the contrast, both the language and content are inadequate.

In the poem "The Dumka", by B.H. Fairchild, the contrast is between life at home and the war. The author is talking someones parents who are really out of it after the war just occurred. They just sit there and stare at the phonograph, a devic for playing recorded music, with there hands in there laps. The author compares there stares like looking at the 30's during the great depression. The war is over and there happy to be home to there house. The author compares how people were shocked during the ear to how the parents are reacting.

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Scale: 3

Comment:

This response was awarded a 3. It addressed contrast but the analysis is simplistic and the support meagre.

The contrast in B.H. Fairchild's "The Dumka" compares the lifestyle of the speaker's parents in the present, and during the Great Depression of the nineteen thirties.

The speaker uses the Dumka's strong contrasting parts as an example of the horrors of the Great Depression. "and radiant swirled around them, something like the dust storms of the thirties" is an example of the speaker using the music to explain the depression. The lifestyle in the depression was horrible "leaving profiles of children on pillows and a pale gauze over mantles and table tops" had everyone miserable. The lifestyle the parents had now was wonderful. The parents "would sit alone together" and listen to their Dumka music. The lifestyle they had now was calm, relaxing and happy, unlike during the depression.

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Scale: 3

Comment:

This response was awarded a 3, while it recognizes the contrast between the past and the present, the support is barely adequate.

It all started in the Great Depression, but that is not how they live today. “The dust storms of the thirties that began by smearing the sky green with doom,” is how his parents remember that time. “But [now] it was the memory of dust that encircled them and made them smile faintly.” The Author, B.H. Fairchild, masters the contrast in this poem. It is all subtle, but stands out very strongly. In lines five to six, he describes the parents as sitting in their old age, rigid and still, and makes them sound harsh. Right after, in lines seven to nine, he tells of the “lamplit window seen across the plains late at night,” which is very soft and comfortable sounding. “The Dumka” is full of engaging contrasts that take us from the past to the present. It is an example of how much we should appreciate the way we live.

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Scale: 3

Comment:

This response was awarded a 3. While it recognizes the contrast, the understanding of the poem is partially flawed. “...patients were treated wherever possible, ie. Table tops.”

To help the reader understand the significance and value of the parents life now, the author uses contrast – with the parents past emotional events. One of the most drastic changes this couple went through was living their lives in a time of warfare to the point where they could sit, peacefully and quietly, at home and listen to music without any worries. The parents seemed to be, initially, poor because there were, “...children on pillows and a pal gauze over mantles and table tops.” This shows that patients were treated wherever possible, ie table tops. Now the parents had their own home and could afford, “a new piano with its mahogany gleam like pond of ice at dawn.” The description of how the colour of the sky changed from green to amber to “normal” signifies how the parents when from The Great Depression to a time of war and death to a “normal”, peaceful life. By using great amounts of description not only does the author allow the reader to understand the appreciation of life now, but, also, helps to connect with the characters of the story and know hwy they are the way they are.

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Scale: 4

Comment:

This response was awarded a 4 because it presents a superficial yet organized discussion of contrast in the poem. A competent response.

In the poem, "The Dumka," there is contrast between the past lives of parents and the lives that they are living right now. Their past lives were not pleasant "as something dense and radiant swirled around them, something like the dust storms of the thirties." It was not a good time so they reminisce about the war, but they are able to "smile faintly and raise or bow their heads as they spoke," because they are now happy and content since the "homecoming." Instead of sitting with their "hands in their laps" and looking straight ahead, they now possess comfort and "he would reach across and lift her hand as if it were the last unbroken leaf and he would hold her hand in his."

The war brought the parents discomfort and separated them but once the unhappy times of the thirties had finally come to an end, they at last, noticed "the new season" ahead of them and came together.

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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.

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Scale: 4

Comment:

The student displays a good understanding of the task. The writing is clear and the references are appropriate.

In the poem, "The Dumka," there is contrast between the currently sterile life of the old parents, and the reliving of their dynamic and eventful past. Although the parents "sit alone together" and separate themselves from their "vanishing neighborhood" they remain proactive through colorful memories of their lives. The narrator describes the ups and downs in the parents' lives throughout the Great Depression, the mass move to the city, the war and finally the war's conclusion; these momentous events in the parents' lives contrast severely with their now structured lives of morning "coffee and newspaper" and "evenings of music." After having experienced so much in their lives it seems the old parents have retracted from the world and jumped into a simple structure that repeats itself daily. The poem "The Dumka" provides an excellent example of contrast through the difference between the parents' dynamic past and their static present.

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Scale: 5

Comment:

As it addressed the task utilizing a range of examples to support a solid discussion. A thorough analysis.

In Fairchild's "The Dumka", the author uses several different techniques and contrasting images in order to display the successes and tragedies of life.

The poem starts off fairly neatly, with an aged couple sitting together and listening to the music of a phonograph, as the light illuminates dust particles floating around them. But this peaceful image is suddenly contrasted, as the dust reminds them of the brutal dust storms they faced at their farm in the 1930's. They recall the pain and the suffering these storms caused, as they began by "smearing the sky green with doom" and "leaving profiles of children on pillows." Though they may now consider these events calmly, you are given a sense of the changes it caused them. As well, after being reminded of the dust storms, the couple continues to reflect on their past, as they discuss "the farm in twilight with piano music spiraling out..." While the author gives you this seemingly happy image, he then seamlessly transitions into one of great unhappiness: "bread lines in the city, women and men lining the main street like mannequins, and then the war." This method of contrasting two strong images throughout the poem (one of calm and one of turmoil) has a very good effect on the reader. It is much easier to appreciate true suffering when it is reflected in the light of true happiness, and the author uses this technique to masterfully write his Dumka.

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Scale: 5

Comment:

It displays a thoughtful analysis of contrast in the poem complemented by strong controlled writing.

Throughout each varying stage of life comes opportunity for experiences, yet also opportunity for reflection. Old age is coupled with a relatively quieter, simpler way of life than that of younger years and it is in that time that one is able to look back upon the memories of the past.

In the poem “The Dumka,” by B.H. Fairchild, the old couple spends countless evenings sitting side by side as memories of their past flood over them. Their easy-going, quiet lifestyle grants them infinite opportunities to reflect upon prominent times of their younger years. “Alone in the house” (lines 29 and 30), “the music of their lives” (line 39) plays out and they are taken back to the thirties and the years of war.

In contrast to their old age, the 1930’s and 1940’s was a time marked by changes and eventful days. “The dust storms of the thirties” (line 12) stands out in history and the consequent hardships they experienced. Life bustled with excitement, but also with disappointment. They remember the prosperous years following WWII and the “new piano with its mahogany gleam.” (line 28)

Transition to the present time, as they sit motionless, listening to the piano on the old phonograph. The times have changed and now all they’re left with are the memories “[encircling] them.” (line 18) Long gone are the days of new experiences and big changes – and the old couple are alone together, contemplating the days of their lives.

There is a time for making memories, and a time for reflecting back upon them. To everything there is a season...

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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.

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Scale: 5

Comment:

It is a fluid, thorough analysis of the question and provides solid references and support.

Memories from the past are influential to our present and future. In “The Dumka,” B.H. Fairchild vividly illustrates the contrasting images that are abundant in the couples’ life. Their lively and eventful past is contrasted to their slow and still present. The couple sits rigidly together, looking “straight ahead,” as they listen to music. They “sit quietly” as the music entwines with their memories, brining forth images of the “dust storms of the thirties,” and of skies smeared “green with doom,” warning of danger to come. The couple experiences poverty during the war, but celebrate wealth in the post-war economy. As the war hits home, they reside in a “white frame rent house” and must wait in “bread lines” with other struggling Americans. With “the homecoming,” a renewal of their old life is experienced. Once again they have “green lawns” and a “new piano” to play the music which they love so deeply. Despite their love for one another, the couple is isolated. They are “alone together” throughout the monotony of their “slow mornings” in a “vanishing neighborhood.” As old friends and neighbors move on, the couple remains together, listening to the “music of their lives,” while gazing into memories which only they can see.

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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.

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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.

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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).