

The following poem is by Rachel M. Harper. Read the poem carefully. Then, considering such elements as imagery, form and tone, write a well-organized essay in which you analyze the relationship between music and the speaker's complex memories of her family.

- Imagery
 - ~~Music as genetics – family pass down~~
 - ~~Record Player (symbol)~~
 - ~~Hardwood, Damp, November – Struggle/Poverty~~
 - ~~Incomplete – Missing something in the family~~
 - ~~Warmth of Family & Conflict/Complexity that is shown~~
 - ~~Time moving forward "Memories fading..."~~
 - ~~"Saxophone's Blow" – Harshness of remembering~~
- Form
 - 2 Shifts
 - ~~Warm type memories~~
 - ~~Cold type memories~~
 - ~~Solemn "But the music will remain."~~
- Tone
 - ~~Hardwood, Damp, November – Tone of coldness~~
 - ~~"Incomplete" – Tone of loneliness or loss or missing~~
 - ~~"Memories fading... words of a lullaby" – Tone of soft healing vs. saxophone blow (tone of harshness)~~
 - ~~Healing vs. Remembering~~

The correlation between music and the poet's family, is a complex battle of highs and lows. The poet engages her audience with sophisticated and moving language that transposes into a look through her childhood and adolescence moving the reader through a symphony of emotions and into her adult world. Harper employs contrasting imagery such as the fond melodies of her childhood and the harshness of a family in struggle, along with her love of music to convey her memories and growth throughout her adult life.

Harper begins the poem with a very distinct image, that serves to establish the connection between her love and admiration of music and her family. She employs words such as, "Passed on" and "Inheritance" to make this establishment. These words serve to offer a tone of love, and comfort of a family lineage. She includes the line "This melody is my inheritance." With the word melody, offering a sweet and soft connotation to establish her early feelings of her family dynamic, juxtaposed with her love of music and the role that music has played throughout her life.

Through the symbol of the record player, Harper captures the memories of growing up listening to music, but is doubtful of its effect. She states "This is the only myth I know." The word myth serves to offer doubt within the poet's life. She goes on to describe an event sitting on hardwood floors playing cards. Words such as "Hardwood floors", "damp", and "November" paint a grimly picture of a family in struggle. November can symbolize a time of transition and complexity that is mirrored within her family dynamic. Harper describes her brother dealing cards from a deck that is "incomplete". The word incomplete also supports the idea that the family unit is incomplete or broken as well. The entire exchange, offers a tone of struggle, loneliness and coldness within the family itself.

The poem experiences multiple shifts throughout. Harper begins revealing her remembrance of music and the

complexity within her family dynamic. She goes on to reveal the specific struggle with her family by stating, "...when my mother is 2,000 miles away, deciding if she wants to come home..." This line serves to convey a tone of bitterness, neglect and emptiness. With emphasis on the word "deciding" and "if", Harper offers a bitterness towards her mother's contemplative lack of love and maternal duty. This contrasts to the first stanza as Harper jumps from a tone of warmth and familiarity with the line, "...the voice of a horn so familiar..." This shift in voice, also serves to define the passage of time between childhood and a young person growing up too fast.

The second shift, occurs at the end of the second stanza with the line, "But the music will remain." This line juxtaposes Harper's comfort and love of music with the acceptance of her family dynamic. The word "music" can serve to represent her family. The line very well could have read, "But the Family (or memories) will remain." and the same effect of complexity and struggle would have been achieved. However, Harper's reliance on music was integral to her growth as a person.

Harper offers a tone of healing through time. She states, "...stay locked in the rhythm of my childhood, memories fading like the words of a lullaby..." which moves the reader to believe that time has moved on and healing has begun. The word "lullaby" has a tone of softness and comfort, which in turn implies that there was a softness and comfort that came about over time. However, as Harper describes, memories can be suddenly brought back to the forefront "...in a saxophone's blow..." The word "blow" is a harsh word, with an effect of rigid and instant change. A saxophone, offering a loud and harsh tone as well, which supports the idea that in an instant, despite the healing and comfort, a memory can be brought back.

There is no doubt, that Rachel M. Harper has a love and admiration of music. She makes reference to Coltrane and jazz, implying that jazz was her favorite style of music. With the imagery and tones that Harper employs, the poem offers a style of jazz in and of itself. The poem brings the reader up and down, through the music and complexity of her family life. Harper relied, learned, and loved the music and grew with it as well. Her family, was a battle of high moments and low moments, much like the notes within a jazz piece. She leaves her reader with a tone of love towards her father. She states, "I will not

share this air with anyone but you." There is a clear message to her father, that implies admiration, adornment, and affection. The relationships throughout her life, were clearly complex and at sometimes, messy. However, as she claims "But the music will remain." She implies that all will be okay in the end.