

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 tradition~~
  - ~~Childhood memories~~
    - ~~Wall Art~~
    - ~~Record Player~~
    - ~~History etc.~~
  - ~~Environment~~
    - ~~Hardwood~~
    - ~~Damp~~
    - ~~November~~
  - ~~Incomplete—Missing something within the family~~
  - ~~Family Warmth~~
  - ~~Time moving forward—"memories fading"~~
  - ~~"Saxophone's Blow"—Harshness of remembering~~
- Form
  - ~~2 Shifts/Movements~~
    - ~~Warm type memories~~
    - ~~Cold type memories~~
    - ~~Solemn "But the music will remain."~~
- Tone
  - ~~Hardwood, Damp, November, etc.—coldness~~
  - ~~Incomplete—loneliness of loss~~
  - ~~"Memories fading...words of a lullaby"—Tone of soft healing vs. harshness of saxophone~~
    - ~~Healing vs. Remembering~~

The bonds between music and family can sometimes be a battle between highs and lows. Much like in music, with high and low elements, family dynamics can experience similar parallels. 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 a glimpse into her adult world. Family dynamics can become extremely complex over the course of history, Harper incorporates images of her childhood memories and her family struggle over time, all of which convey the challenges that can come with a broken family.

Harper begins the poem with a very distinct image, that serves to establish the connection between her love and admiration of music and that of 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, which is juxtaposed with her love of music and the role that music has played throughout her life.

Through symbols such as the record player, the album wall art, and the "history" that was subsequently taught to Harper, she captures the memories of growing up listening and learning from music. Through her incorporation of these symbols, Harper transports the reader to her childhood, implying the lessons learned from the music. However, she offers a doubt to this effect "This is the only myth I know." The word myth serves to offer doubt within the poet's life, which can be a resemblance of situations that may have occurred as a child or young adult. 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. The word November can symbolize a time of transition and complexity that is mirrored within her family dynamic.

Harper describes the image of her brother dealing cards from an incomplete deck. The word "incomplete" offers insight into the family's living situation, it also mirrors and parallels the family dynamic. There is a shift within the poem that reinforces the incompleteness of the family, Harper states "...my mother is 2,000 miles away, deciding if she wants to come home..." This line serves to convey a tone of bitterness, neglect, fear and emptiness. With emphasis on the words "deciding" and "if", Harper offers a bitterness towards her mother's contemplative lack of love and maternal duty. This in turn, 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.

There is a second shift that 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 within her given 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, which is why the word music is so poignant within this line.

Harper offers a tone of healing throughout 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" implies there was a softness and comfort that came about over time, or was present within the family dynamic early on. 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 that she grew up with. Her family, was constantly 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 complex and sometimes, messy or incomplete. However, as she claims "But the music will remain." She implies to her father, that all will be okay in the end, and the music, and the family will remain.