Sample Paper

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Honors English 12

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Duality

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times… it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us…” Janie sighed as she was forced to read another British Literature novel. *At least this makes sense*, she thought as she kicked her converse up on the coffee table and settled in the obnoxious wordiness of the Dickens novel.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, for Janie this idea just made her think of stale diner coffee.

How could one concrete noun simultaneously evoke such adoration and such melancholy?

Immediately, her mind wandered to the neighborhood diner. She pumped herself up in the car. *He’s going to be great.*  *We always have such enthralling conversation.* Trying to keep out the negativity: *Do you even know how old he is? He always wears a hat – does he even have hair?*

*Who has their first date at a diner?*

Lucky for her, he was waiting for her at the front door, and after an awkward hug she immediately fell into her comfort zone, and he into his. They talked for three hours, sharing a bottomless cup of stale diner coffee. This guy knew a bargain when he saw one; two hundred and ninety-five pennies bought him a partner for the rest of his life. These moments of what might seem like nothing are what solidified her love for him.

Shuddering, an incoming thought jarred her from her island of teenage love. The thought of the coffee was one thing, but the smell of it turned her stomach.

The setting, a diner on the outside of the city, a place that always held a special place in Janie’s heart. She had spent many an Easter brunch and late night eats with family at this old-timey diner. It was equidistant from both of her grandparents’ houses. It seemed like the obvious place to go for a Friday morning brunch with Grammy.

It was only 10:30 am, but the day was already long. Janie awoke before the sun that morning to pick up her Grammy for a doctor’s appointment downtown. This was becoming routine, her grandmother was to see an ophthalmologist downtown twice a week and she delighted in helping out. It was a special time to spend with Grammy, even moments in traffic became valued lessons in life, past, present, and future.

The doctor came in, joked around, examined Grammy and was on her way. Janie scheduled the next appointment for her grandmother, checking to make sure someone would be available for that morning’s commute. As Janie’s grandmother aged, she watched as she accepted more and more assistance from her family. These trips to the city were one example; the next trip (the one to the ear doctor to get a stuck hearing aid removed) was another.

When the waitress arrived at the table, the two women placed their orders from memory. There was no need to open a menu. There is room in a human’s brain for memories that are tied to strong emotion, like an internal mnemonic device. The conversation turned to applying to college, the next step in Janie’s life, and Grammy’s high regard for Janie’s boyfriend.

The waitress brought over two coffees: one regular, for Janie, one decaf, for Grammy. When the conversation turned to their recent vacation to the beach – the traditional family retreat – Janie watched as her grandmother’s face enlivened. These were the moments that brought Janie’s grandmother the most joy, watching her children and grandchildren, grown up, and enjoying their time together.

“Janie, I just had the funniest feeling in my chest” Grammy whispered.

With that, the stale decaf diner coffee was spilled over the table. Janie heard someone call for an ambulance and she held her Grammy’s hand, trying to decipher what today’s lesson was.

A tear rolled down Janie’s cheek, as it does from time to time, as she refocused on her homework. *Dickens sure got it right*.

Techniques used:

Jargon

Precise vocabulary

Ethos