POETRY (SAMPLE)

POEM:  _A Coney Island Life_____  Poet:  James L. Weil

INTRODUCTION:  An older person reflects upon his/her life and questions how much more time he/she has to live.

PASSAGE

Having lived a Coney Island life  metaphor: life = amusement park
on roller coaster ups and downs  extends metaphor
and seen my helium hopes  implied metaphor - balloons; alliteration
break skyward without me,
now arms filled with dolls  dolls = possessions, prizes of life
I threw so much for  threw = worked hard, effort
I take perhaps my last ride  metaphor for death
on this planet-carousel  metaphor: both spin around
and ask  short line emphasizes "ask" - ask whom?
how many more times round  metaphor: life cycles
I have
to catch that brass-ring sun  metaphor: both round and golden
before the game is up.  metaphor: game of life; three stressed syllable ending

CENTRAL TONE:  Wistful

JUSTIFICATION:  The poet uses the joyful images of an amusement park as a comparison to a persona’s life. This persona is content with his/her life, but hopes for a little more time.

UNDERTONES:  hopeful, contented, reflective, equivocal, resigned
ANALYSIS:

This free-verse, extended metaphor creates a wistful tone through creating comparisons between an amusement park and a life. The central persona compares his life to a roller coaster indicating a life of excitement and adventure filled with emotional and experiential ups and downs and twists and turns. In an implied metaphor he sees many of his hopes and dreams fly away like helium balloons, but he reflects upon his accomplishments comparing them to carnival prizes (dolls) that are justified by his hard work. He then reflects that he is nearing death, his “last ride on this planet-carousel,” and wistfully wonders how much time is left to “catch the brass ring sun/before the game is up.” He seeks the prize of a little more time.

The poem consists of one complex sentence that winds syntactically like his original rollercoaster image. His diction is simple and light, reflecting the world of an amusement park filled with rollercoasters, dolls, carousels, and brass rings. Sonic devices do not play a major role in determining tone. Death is not a grim reaper, rather it is that last ride-the final destination of a “Coney Island Life.”