

In the poem, "Jasmine," by Yusef Komunyakaa, the speaker reflects on both his own experiences and those of the children harvesting jasmine. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-organized essay, explain the techniques the poet uses to provide a connection between the two. You may wish to consider such devices as imagery, diction, and structure.

## **Jasmine**

by Yusef Komunyakaa (1947-)

I sit beside two women, kitty-corner  
to the stage, as Elvin's sticks blur  
the club into a blue fantasia.  
I thought my body had forgotten the Deep  
South, how I'd cross the street  
if a woman like these two walked  
towards me, as if a cat traversed  
my path beneath the evening star.  
Which one is wearing jasmine?  
If my grandmothers saw me now  
they'd say, Boy, the devil never sleeps.  
My mind is lost among November  
cotton flowers, a soft rain on my face  
as Richard Davis plucks the fat notes  
of chance on his upright  
leaning into the future.  
The blonde, the brunette—  
which one is scented with jasmine?  
I can hear Duke in the right hand  
& Basie in the left  
as the young piano player  
nudges us into the past.  
The trumpet's almost kissed  
by enough pain. Give him a few more years,  
a few more ghosts to embrace—Clifford's  
shadow on the edge of the stage.  
The sign says, *No Talking*.  
Elvin's guardian angel lingers  
at the top of the stairs,  
counting each drop of sweat  
paid in tribute. The blonde  
has her eyes closed, & the brunette  
is looking at me. Our bodies  
sway to each riff, the jasmine  
rising from a valley somewhere  
in Egypt, a white moon  
opening countless false mouths  
of laughter. The midnight  
gatherers are boys & girls  
with the headlights of trucks  
aimed at their backs, because  
their small hands refuse to wound  
the knowing scent hidden in each bloom.