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## Distant Music

John Palen

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**Distant Music**

John Palen

How quiet the farm must seem  
with you grown up and gone away,  
no longer 14 and practicing  
cello in the machine shed  
so your mother can sleep  
after an all-night shift.

You've been at it three hours  
Penny dozing at your feet  
an old dog lulled by low  
vibrations through her belly.

Today, listening to you  
in the life we share, still practicing,  
I hear them across 60 years,

those simple, graceful tunes  
drifting out into Missouri heat:  
Bach and Haydn, French folk airs  
in a student work by Bazelaire.

They carry down your dusty lane  
across the pasture,  
even perhaps  
as far as the shady creek,

where water  
at its summer low  
seems hardly to move  
downstream at all.

Discussion questions for the poem *Distant Music*:

1. Does life in rural communities change? Explain.
2. Do most people in rural communities want change? Explain.
3. Does a desire for change vary from age group to age group? Explain.
4. Do you think that many rural people would like to have life remain the same with few changes? Explain.