Discuss Baum’s contrast between Kansas and the Land of Oz.

Baum presents the Land of Oz in chapters 1-8 as a sort of escapist fantasy opposed to the grim reality of Kansas. Oz is lush and full of variety, an easy place to meet basic needs where beauty generally reigns supreme. It is like a good dream come true. Kansas, on the other hand, is a bleak place with bleak people; it is more like a nightmare. Admittedly, both places have their dangers, but those in Kansas are unavoidable while those in Oz can be defeated by wit and courage. Dorothy’s obsession with going home thus seems extremely ironic.

[Grade: 5. No supporting evidence (details or quotes from assigned reading).]

Baum presents the Land of Oz in chapters 1-8 as a sort of escapist fantasy opposed to the grim reality of Kansas. Oz is lush and full of variety. Dorothy’s journey along the yellow brick road takes her through neat fields of grain and a large dark forest to a broad river and beautifully flowered meadows. Kansas, on the other hand is a bleak place with bleak people. There Dorothy can see “nothing but the great gray prairie on every side” (10).

[Grade: 10. Supports points with specific examples.]

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[Grade: 15. Good development of points and examples.]

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Dorothy’s obsession with going home thus seems ironic, a point that Baum underlines when the Scarecrow asks the girl why she wants to return to such a drab place. Dorothy dismisses his logical question as the result of his lack of brains, prompting the wry reply: “If your heads were stuffed with straw, like mine, you would probably all live in the beautiful places, and then Kansas would have not people at all” (43). Whether Dorothy’s stubbornness says more about human loyalty or human perverseness is an open question.

[Grade: 20. Unusually thoughtful, with good development of points and questions.]