Poetry Comparison

Read the two poems below carefully. Then write an essay in which you explain what characteristics of one poem make it better than the other. Refer specifically to details of both poems. Consider such elements as the relation of form to content, diction, imagery, and completeness of idea.

DEAD COUSIN

The little cousin now is dead,
His spirit's life is quenched;
For him let bitter tears be shed,
For him our hearts are wrenched.

His custom was around the home,
To romp and sing and play,
And with his faithful dog to roam
In meadows sweet and gay.

His father's hope, his mother's joy,
The last of noble kin,
The trump of death has called our boy
To leave a world of sin.

Mournfully jangles the funeral bell,
Dolefully knelling his death,
And soon within his gloomy cell,
He'll know nor light nor breath.

We lift a sad and solemn song
As he in earth is laid,
And pray he will not stay for long
In death's eternal shade.

DEAD BOY

The little cousin is dead, by foul substraction,
A green bough from Virginia's aged tree
And none of the county kin like the transaction,
Nor some of the world of outer dark, like me.

A boy not beautiful, nor good, nor clever,
a black cloud full of storms too hot for keeping,
A sword beneath his mother's heart - yet never
Woman bewept her babe as this is weeping.

A pig with a pasty face, so I had said,
Squealing for cookies, kinned by poor pretense
With noble house. But the little man quite dead,
I see the forebears' antique lineaments.

The elder men have strode by the box of death
To the wide flag porch, and muttering low send round
The bruit of the day. O friendly waste of breath!
Their hearts are hurt with a deep dynastic wound.

He was pale and little, the foolish neighbors say;
The first fruits, saith the Preacher, the Lord hath taken;
But this was the old tree's late branch wrenched away,
Grieving the sapless limbs, the shorn and shaken.