LESSON I:

Diction & Interpretation

A. Diction

One of degree that makes poetry different from prose is not only by a matter of the rhyming lines and the line-arrangement but also the fewest number of words that poetry employs. Hence, Perrine says (1977:9) that poetry is "the most condensed and concentrated form of literature". Furthermore, he states that the language of poetry has "a higher voltage"; it grows while giving "light" and "heat". The words employed in poetry are singled out with great care. In line with this view, the preference of these words must be in accordance with the poet's purpose in a given poem since, as Altenbernd and Lewis (1966:9) assert, "the whole range of human activities, ideas, and emotion is now within the province of poetry".

Although it is hard, there are many who derive a great deal of pleasure of reading poetry, and what makes it difficult to understand is the nature of poetry itself, of which language use is different from the ordinary one.

"Reading poetry is an-act of discovery". Exhaustive concentration should be given to any particular words and the way they are related to the others, which make up the basic elements of poetry to respond, i.e. imagery, figurative language, and musical devices.

The word choice in poetry is accurately and steadfastly selected and therefore, it does not acknowledge synonyms. It is invented by manipulating the small differences in meaning between synonyms. This selection of words, which is the foundation of every poem, is called **diction**.

There are two aspects of a word which need usefully distinguishing: **denotation** and connotation. In a poem, there may be a word that demands special attention because either what it means is uncertain exactly or there is something curious or exciting about how it is used. In understanding such a literary piece, the reader is often sent to a dictionary to look up the precise definition of the word or its **denotative meaning**—"the thing that the word names, describes, or

narrates, presumably considered in a detached, scientific, and descriptive (rather than evaluative) manner" (Altenbernd & Lewis, 1966:10). However, a single word often has more than one denotative meaning. This leads the reader to think carefully of its meaning in its specific context. The common word "fire", for instance, has some various meanings and may stand as a noun, a verb, or an adjective.

In fully understanding a poem, the connotative meaning of words is needed grasping as it often carries with it certain associations and emotive values in particular context. On the subject of connotation, Leech (1976:41) has this to say

> When we talk of connotative meaning, we refer, in part, to this power of a word, sentence, etc., to conjure up the typical context of its occurrence. But this is not the whole explanation of 'connotation', for this term is used not only of the associations which go with the use of the linguistic item itself, but also of the association of what it refers to.

According to Hornby (1980:403), the word "highland" bears the denotative meaning of "mountainous region; (plural) mountainous parts of a country". However, the same word, pluralized, with a definite article, and capitalized T, connotes "the mountainous part of North West Scotland". Connotation is very significant in poetry, for it may be observed in such various expressions as metaphor, simile, personification, allegory, and the other kinds.

B. Interpretation

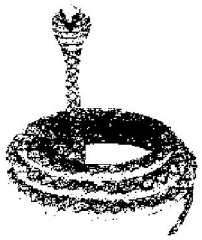
Alexander (1975:4) resolutely hints that the same poem may be seen differently by different people. This does not mean, however, that poetry can mean anything that anybody finds in it. All the interpretations are not automatically acceptable; some may have been quite wrong albeit what is considered to be 'right' is not always exactly the same. This is underpinned by Hall (1983:VI) by stating that "although differing, equally defensible opinions are common, error is even more common".

Poetry, and literature in general, is greatly different from arithmetic text. It is a complex work and, therefore, its meaning cannot be reduced into a

simple, correct one. Hall (1983:VI) admits that literature is inexact and therefore **literary truth** is also "inexact, changeable, and subject to argument" which constitutes the price that literature has to pay "for representing whole human beings" who are themselves complex, ambiguous, and mutable. In fact, this sort of truth is not solely monopolized in works of art. Hall compares literature to law. Legal truth, according to him, "is dependent on context and circumstance", on the agreement of a jury to bring in a verdict of guilty or not guilty. It may, then, be inferred that all poems cannot be loosely interpreted. Certainly there are poems of which meaning is simple and obvious. As far as the meaning is concerned, Alexander (1975:4) has given a warning that "a piece of writing need not always have a 'deep' meaning simply because it happens to be a poem", for example "The Cobra" by Ogden Nash. This short poem simply sounds a note of warning of the danger of cobras as these venomous reptiles give a deadly bite.

The Cobra
(Ogden Nash, 1902—)

This creature fills its mouth with venom,
And walks upon its duodenum[1)];
He who attempts to tease the cobra
Is soon a sadder he, and sobra[2)].



Vocabulary:

1) the lower part of the stomach
2) possibly it refers to "sober' which means "grave, inactive, indicating great danger or inert".

Based upon the exposition above, pensive concentration on particular words in poetry and on the way they connect with each other are the key to reading poetry. Coinciding with this view, Alexander (1975:4) posits that the reader should examine closely what the poet has actually written. He has also provided **three important rules** that require the reader:

01. not to read lazily so that the poem is not altogether misread;

02. always to look for a simple explanation and not to be afraid to express it;

03. to avoid, as far as s/he can, putting his/her own ideas and feelings into the poem.

If the proposition above as well as Alexander's idea is given a close attention, it is obvious that either of these two nominates the textual approach to poetry understanding. In fact, it is the approach to be employed in this poetry unit. To demonstrate these rules, Alexander opts Tennyson's "Break, break, break".

Break, Break, Break

(Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1809—1892)

Break, break, break,
On thy cold, grey stones, O sea!
And I would[1] that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arises in me.

O well[2] for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately[3] ships go on
To their haven[4] under the hill;
But O for the touch of vanish'd[5] hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags[6], O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

Vocabulary:

1) I wish	*3) dignified*	*5) disappeared*
2) it is well	*4) harbour*	*6) steep rocks*

01. If this poem were carelessly read, it might be taken to be simply about the sea.

02. However, the lines

And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arises in me.

shows that the poet is pensive. The lines

But O for the touch of vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

tell the reader why the lyrical speaker in the poem is sad. In other words, s/he is unhappy because s/he has lost someone s/he loves, whereas the sea, the people near it ('the fisherman's boy' and 'the sailor lad'), and the stately ship' are unaware and untroubled. This is the simple explanation of the poem.

03. If the reader tries to put his own ideas into the poem, s/he might be led to assume that the speaker is sad because someone s/he loves has been drowned. As this idea is not expressed or implied, it cannot be true.

Alfred Tennyson, engraving from a daguerrotype

LESSON V:
Figurative Language
(Part I)

Figurative language is used not in the literal sense but in an imaginative way. It is a deviation from what a speaker of a language apprehends as the ordinary, or "standard significance or sequence of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect" (Abrams, 1971:60). However, it must be seen not far from the conventions of daily speech seeing that the figurative expressions are alive in daily usage. The strength of figurative language lies in its connotative, rather than its denotative, power to evoke and ability to deal suggestively with feelings and qualities in the context of the work being discussed. In other words, its employment is to make it easy for the reader to grasp what is actually expressed by the poet as long as its connotative meaning inherent is interpreted within its cultural, social, or intellectual context. The full moon, for example, always adheres to the image of beauty; a buffalo in the Javanese cultural context connotes strength and foolishness. As a language, figurative language clarifies the abstract by comparisons with the concrete, by associations, and by contrasts. Thus, the connotative meaning exploited in a literary work may be based upon these three main categories. Owing to the limitation, this unit explores only the kinds categorized by comparisons. The rest will be addressed in *Poetry II*.

A. Figurative Language by Comparisons

Based on comparisons, there are four types to note. They are metaphor, simile, personification, and apostrophe.

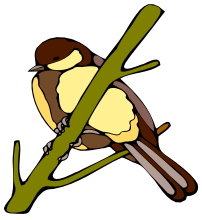
01. Simile (Latin, *'like'*)

Both a simile and a metaphor are sense devices invented by a poet to make an unusual comparison of things or objects or ideas which are basically dissimilar to give rise to strong images. In a simile, the comparisons are made explicit by the employment of such connectives as *like, as, than, similar to*, or a verb such as

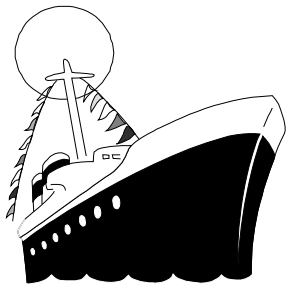
resemble, appear, seem. In other words, this type of figurative language functions to present images through a direct comparison between two dissimilar things or objects or ideas. Hence, Burns' first line of his famous poem "A Red, Red Rose", *'Oh, my love is like a red, red rose'* uses a simile. The same is also true if the phrase *'is like'* is replaced by the verb *'resemble', 'Oh, my love resembles a red, red rose'.* To clarify this, Roberts and Jacobs (2003:535) remark that "a simile illustrates the *similarity* or *comparability* of the known to something unknown or to be explained. Whereas a metaphor merges identities, a simile focuses on resemblances". An expression like *"the steak is tough"* is often heard in everyday life. However, to create a strong image, a figure of simile may be used: *"the steak is as tough as leather"*. *"You are like the sunshine in my life"* and *"all the world merely resembles to a stage"* are the other easily understood examples.

The poem entitled "The Ancient Mariner" below are, actually, taken from Coleridge' s long poem with the same title which relates the story of a cursed ship in consequence of the reckless conduct of one of the sailors who shoots an innocent albatross. The events being recounted occur immediately after the killing when the ship enters the Pacific Ocean.

The use of a simile is spotted in lines 14—6 of stanza three, "*We stuck, nor breath nor motion;/As idle as a painted ship/Upon a painted ocean*." Here, in his attempt to create the image of how motionless the 'cursed ship' in the vast Pacific Ocean is, Coleridge compares the 'stuck ship' to 'a painted ship on a painted ocean'. Hence, the comparison between these two dissimilar things—the actual ship and its painting—is to bring about a similarity i.e. the idea of stagnancy.



Exercises



The Ancient Mariner

(Samuel Taylor Coleridge 1772-1834)

The fair breeze[1] blew, the white foam[2] flew,
The furrow[3] that followed free;
We were the first that ever burst[4]
Into that silent sea.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas[5] sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper[6] sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast[7] did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;
As idle[8] as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink[9];
Water, water, everywhere
Nor any drop to drink.

Vocabulary:

1) *favourable wind*
2) *white mass of small air bubbles formed in or on a liquid by motion*
3) *deep line made in the earth by a plough. Here, of course, the word refers to the water behind the moving ship.*
4) *broke out*
5) *i.e., it was*
6) *common reddish-brown metal (symbol Cu)*
7) *upright pole for a ship's sails*
8) *unmoving, inactive*
9) *become smaller*

Questions:

01. Quote the lines that state that no other ship had ever sailed in this sea.

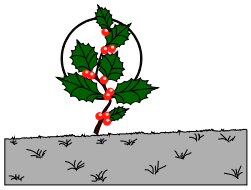
02. Which line shows that the wind suddenly stopped blowing?

03. What type of imagery is observed in lines 01 and 02?

04. Does the last sentence of the first stanza contain imagery? What about lines 07— 08?

05. Identify the kind of imagery used in lines 09—10!

06. State stanza 03 in your own words.



All Morning

(Gregory Orr)

All morning the dream lingers[1)],
I am like the thick grass
in a meadow[2)], still
soaked[3)] with dew at noon.

Vocabulary:

1) remains longer than is expected, as if from reluctance to leave
2) grassland, pasture
3) thoroughly wet

Questions:

01. What does the lyrical speaker say about his dream?

02. What types of imagery does the poet use?

03. Why does he compare himself to the grass?

04. What are the implications to the simile used in the poem?

Snow in the Suburbs

(Thomas Hardy, 1840-1928)

Every branch big with it,
Bent every twig with it;
Every fork[1)] like a white web-foot[2)];
Every street and pavement mute:
Some flakes[3)] have lost their way, and grope[4)] back upward when
Meeting those meandering[5)] down they turn and descend again.
The palings[6)] are glued together like a wall,
And there is no waft[7)] of wind with the fleecy[8)] fall.

A sparrow enters the tree,
Whereupon[9)] immediately
A snow-lump thrice his own size
Descends on him and showers his head and eyes,
And overturns[10)] him,
And near inurns[11)] him,
And lights[12)] on a nether[13)] twig, when its brush[14)]
Starts off[15)] a volley[16)] of other lodging lumps[17)] with a rush.

The steps are a blanched[18] slope,
Up which with feeble hope,
A black cat comes, wide-eyed and thin;
And we take him in. *20*

Vocabulary:

1) part at which a thing branches
2) a foot with the toes joined by a web
3) small, light, leaf-like pieces (of snow)
4) search about as one does in the dark
5) following a winding course
6) fences made of pointed pieces of wood
7) waving movement
8) resembling wool (of a sheep)
9) … and then …
10) knock over
11) bury
12) skim/brush against
13) lower
14) skimming/glance/friction
15) brings about/begins
16) a series of violent flow
17) lumps of snow being held together by the branches of the tree
18) make or become white

Questions:

01. What words in the first two lines show us that there has been a heavy fall of snow?
02. Find another line which suggests the same thing!
03. What does it mean by 'fork' (line 03)? Why is it called to be like 'web-foot' ?
04. Why are the streets and pavements mute?
05. Is line 07 of stanza 01 a simile? Why?
06. What types of imagery are found in stanza 03?
07. What has happened to the sparrow?

02. Metaphor (Greek, *'carrying from one place to another'*)

In relation to what is previously discussed, metaphor is one element to master for poetry recuperation (*merebut makna puisi oleh pembaca*), and different from a simile which uses an explicit comparison, a metaphor uses an implicit comparison although they principally operate on the same ground, that is, both figures compare things or objects or ideas which are basically unlike. Such a comparison as *'Bandung is Paris of Java'* is not a metaphor at all because the things being compared are basically equal; *Bandung* is a city and *Paris* is also a city. *'Oh, my love is a red rose'* is a metaphor as this altered line from Robert Burns' "A Red, Red

Rose" **equates** *'my love'* (human being) and *'a rose'* (an inanimate object). The two objects being compared are basically unlike, but the comparison may involve a certain respect: my love shares a quality with a rose, i.e. beauty. Roberts and Jacobs (2003:535) assert that "a metaphor *equates* known objects or actions with something that is unknown or to be explained. Some common examples are *'You are the sunshine of my life', 'all the world is merely a stage', 'Jack has a heart of stone' and Jill has a heart of gold'.*

It should be noted that if it is thoroughly explored, there is a type of a metaphor of which usage has been common, and, therefore, its figurative meaning has been ceased to be aware of. This sort of metaphor is categorized as a ***dead metaphor*** *'The legs of the tables'*, '*the arms of a chair'*, '*the heart of the matter'* and '*Malioboro is the heart of the city of Yogyakarta'* are examples of dead metaphor.

Perrine (1977:62—3) explicitly affirms that there are metaphorical forms in which both the literal and the figurative terms are named or only either the literal term or the figurative term is named. As demonstrated in the example previously: the literal term *'my love'* and the figurative term *'a red rose'* are mentioned. In the expression *'the wind from the top of the cold hill neighed, galloping fast'*, the literal term *'the wind'* is named whereas the figurative term *'the running horse'* is implied. Indeed, the Indonesians use metaphor when they are cursing, "*bangsat lu"*, or "*dasar monyet kamu … ya..*".

Leech (1969: 151—5) introduces three elements that can be analyzed in a metaphor, i.e., **tenor**, **vehicle**, and **ground**. **Tenor** is the subject to which the metaphoric word is applied and **vehicle** is the metaphoric word itself whereas **ground** is the aspect of vehicle which applies to tenor.

Leech also introduces what is called as the **metaphoric rule**, that is, a particular rule of transference which is associated with metaphor. He formulates the rule as follows:

F = 'like' L

Here, the figurative meaning 'F' is derived from the literal meaning 'L' in having the sense 'like L', or perhaps 'it is as if L'. With the aid of this rule, Burn's line 'Oh my love is a red, red rose', for example, can be understood that 'my love is a red rose' as 'my love is like a red rose', or 'my love is, as she were, a red rose'. In notional term, 'my love' is the tenor of the metaphor—the actual subject under discussion—and the purported definition 'a red rose' is its vehicle, that is, the image or analogue in terms of which the tenor is represented whereas the ground is the beauty shared by both. Consider the following poem by R. L. Stevenson.

The Land of Counterpane[1)]

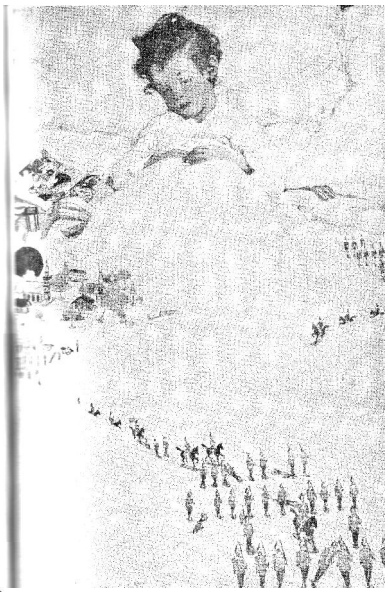
(*Robert Louis Stevenson,1850—94*)

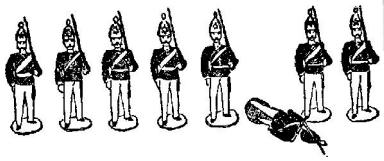
When I was sick and lay a-bed,
I had two pillows at my head,
And all my toys beside me lay
To keep me happy all the day.

And sometimes for an hour or so
I watched my leaden[2)] *soldiers go,*
With different uniforms and drills,
Among the bed-clothes, through the hills;

And sometimes sent my ships in fleets
All up and down among the sheets;
Or brought my trees and houses out,
And planted cities all about.

I was the giant great and still
That sits upon the pillow-hill,
And sees before him, dale[3)] *and plain,*
The pleasant land of counterpane.





Vocabulary:
1) a bed-spread
2) made of lead
3) valley

In this poem, Stevenson employs metaphor is lines 08, 09—10, 11—12, 13—16. In line 08, two things which are basically unequal are compared. The 'bed-clothes' are compared to the 'hills' on which the sick child is playing with his 'toy soldiers'. Here, 'the bed-clothes are the hills' as 'the bed-clothes are like the hills', or 'the bed-clothes are, as they were, the hills'. In theoretical term, 'the bed-clothes' are the tenor of the metaphor, i.e., the actual subject under discussion whereas 'the hills' are its vehicle—that is, the image with which the tenor is identical. This brings the third notional element of metaphor: the ground of the comparison. Hence, the 'tenor' is LIKE the 'vehicle' in respect of the 'ground'; the 'bed-clothes' are like the 'hills' as regards the likeness between the two, that is, the actual subject of the bed-clothes are, in the mind's eyes of the sick child's, seen as the hills on which he can play with his toys.

Exercises

Food

(Victor M. Valle, 1950—)

One eats
the moon in a tortilla[1)]
Eat frijoles[2)]
and you eat the earth
Eat Chile[3)]
and you eat the sun and fire
Drink water
And you drink sky

Vocabulary:

1) pancake omelette (Mexican style)
2) beans with brown colour (made as food in Mexican style)
3) chili

Questions:

01. Who is the poet referring to with the pronouns "One" and "you"?
02. Work with a partner to find the metaphors the poet uses for foods. Write each food, aspect of nature, and similarity in the chart below. Number one has been done for you as an example.

Food	Part of Nature	Similarity
a) tortilla	moon	round
b)		
c)		
d)		

To see a World in a Grain of Sand

(*William Blake 1757-1827*)

To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower,
Hold infinity[1] in the palm of your hand
And eternity[2] in an hour.

Vocabulary:

1) boundlessness
2) everlastingness, endlessness

Questions:

01. Despite his apparently simple word employment, Blake's use of the metaphors is one of significance in enriching the poem. In which lines do you see the metaphors?
02. What things are compared? And what are the similarities?
03. What philosophical value can you learn from the poem?

The Hound

(Robert Francis, 1901—)

Life the hound[1]
Equivocal[2]
Comes at a bound[3]
Either to rend[4] me
Or to befriend me.
I cannot tell[5]
The hound's intent
Till he has sprung[6]
At my bare hand
With teeth or tongue.
Meanwhile I stand
And wait the event.

Vocabulary:

1) a kind of dog for hunting and racing
2) dubious, questionable
3) border, limit
4) rip, tear apart
5) be sure, make out
6) jumped

Questions:

01. In which lines do you observe the metaphor?

02. What two things are compared?

03. Is the use of metaphor here effective? Why?

04. Show how the use of the adjective "equivocal" is the key word in the poem!

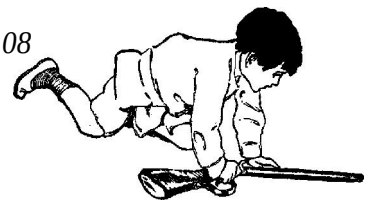
05. How is the imagery employed in the poem?

06. Does the speaker know what the hound is going to do to him? Why?

The Land of the Story Books
(Robert Louis Stevenson, 1850—94)

At evening when the lamp is lit,
Around the fire my parents sit;
They sit at home and talk and sing,
And do not play at anything. *04*

Now, with my little gun, I crawl
All in the dark along the wall,
And follow round the forest track
Away behind the sofa back. *08*



There, in the night, where none can spy,
All in my hunter's camp I lie,
And play at books that I have read
Till it is time to go to bed. *12*

These the hills, these are the woods,
These are my starry solitudes[1)];
And there the river by whose brink[2)]
The roaring lions come to drink *16*

I see the others far away
As if in firelit camp they lay,
And I, like to an Indian scout,
Around their party prowled[3)] about. *20*

So, when my nurse comes in for me,
Home I return across the sea,
And go to bed with backward looks
At my dear land of Story-books. *24*

Vocabulary:

1) lonely places
2) border (of water, esp. when deep)
3) went about

Questions:

01. What does the subjective pronoun 'I' refer to?

02. Is the employment of the verb 'play' in line 04 appropriate? Why?

03. What sort of metaphorical form is used in lines 06—08 and line 22?

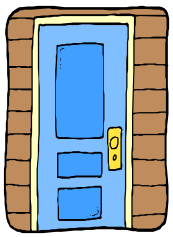
04. What may the speaker mean by 'none' in line 09?

05. What does the pronoun 'the others' in line 17 refer to?

06. Is the use of 'prowled about' in line 20 appropriate? Why?

Bereft[1)]
(Robert Frost, 1874-1963)

Where had I heard this wind before
Change like this to a deeper roar?
What would it take my standing there for,
Holding open a restive[1)] door,
Looking downhill to a frothy[2)] shore? *05*
Summer was past and day was past.
Somber[3)] clouds in the west were massed.
Out in the porch's sagging[4)] floor
Leaves got up in a coil and hissed,
Blindly struck at my knee and missed. *10*
Something sinister in the tone
Told me my secret must be known:
Word I was in the house alone
Somehow must have gotten abroad,
Word I was in my life alone, *15*
Word I had no one left but God.



Vocabulary:

1) Dispossessed (of sth immaterial)
2) hard to be controlled
3) foamy

4) gloomy; dark-coloured
5) sinking, esp. in the middle, as from weight

Questions:

01. Describe the setting of place and time of the poem!

02. State in your words the weather conditioned as mentioned by the speaker.

03. What types of imagery do you find in lines 02 and 09?

04. To what are the leaves in lines 09-10 compared?

05. To what is the wind ('it') compared in line 03?

06. To what is the speaker's 'life' compared (line 15)?

07. Why is the door (line 04) 'restive' and what does this do (figuratively) to the door?

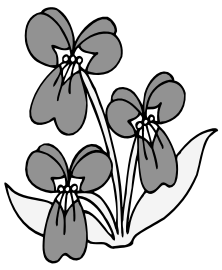
It sifts from Leaden Sieves
(Emily Dickinson, 1830—1886)

It sifts[1] from leaden[2] sieves[3],
It powders all the wood.
It fills with alabaster[4] wool
The wrinkles of the road. *04*

It makes an even face
Of mountain and of plain—
Unbroken forehead from the east
Unto the east again. *08*

It reaches to the fence,
It wraps it rail by rail
Till it is lost in fleeces[5];
It deals celestial veil *12*

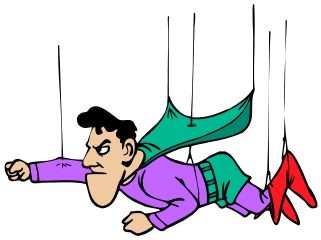
To stump and stack and stem—
A summer's empty room—
Acres of joints where harvests were,
Recordles[6], but for them. *16*



It ruffles[7] wrists of posts
As ankles of a queen,
Then stills its artisans[8] like ghosts,
Denying they have been. *20*

Vocabulary:

1) *filters/separates by putting, through a sieve*
2) *dark*
3) *(kitchen) utensils with wire network for separating finer grains etc.*
4) *soft, white stone like marble in appearance, used for ornaments*
5) *(resembling) woolly coverings of a sheep or similar animal*
6) *unrecorded*
7) *disturb; mess up; upset*
8) *skilled workmen in industry or trade; mechanic*



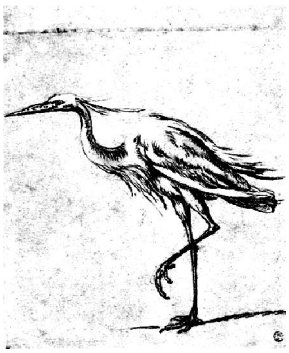
Questions:

01. The literal term of the metaphorical form used in the poem is identified as 'it'. What is 'It'?

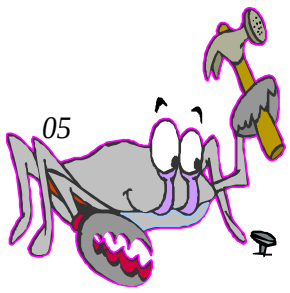
02. In the other form, the figurative terms are named. However, there is a form in which neither the literal nor figurative terms are named. To what is 'It' compared in lines 01—02? In lines 17—18?

03. Comment on the additional metaphorical expressions or complications contained in 'leaden sieves' (01), 'alabaster wool' (03), 'even face' (05), 'unbroken forehead' (07), 'a summer's empty room' (14), and 'artisans' (19).

The Dead Crab
(Andrew Young, --)



A rosy shield upon its back,
That not the hardest storm could crack,
From whose sharp edge projected out[1)]
Black pin-point eyes staring about;
Beneath, the well-knit cote-armure[2)]
That gave to its weak belly power;
The clustered[3)] *legs with plate*[4)] *joints*
That ended in stiletto[5)] *points;*
The claws like mouths it held outside:—
I cannot think this creature died
By storm or fish or sea-fowl[6)] *harmed*
Walking the sea so heavily armed;
Or does it make for death to be
Oneself a living armoury[7)]*?*



Vocabulary:

1) *stood out beyond the surface nearby*
2) *coat of mail, armour*
5) *dagger, a small, very sharp knife*
6) *seabird*

3) *gathered together in a bunch*
4) *covered with a hard outer shell for protection*
7) *place where weapons and ammunition are kept*

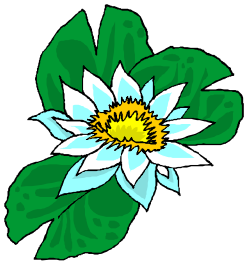
Questions:

01. Is the word 'shield' in the first line of the poem above a metaphor?
02. Explain that 'Black pin-point eyes' (04), is a metaphor. Find three more metaphors and comment on them.
03. What sort of device is found in the phrase 'claws like mouth'? (09). What does the phrase suggest to you?
04. How would you comment on the second line?
05. What does it mean by /… death to be/Oneself a living armoury//?
06. What makes the poet's description of the crab so vivid?

The Iceberg Seven-eights Under

(Abbie Huston Evans, 1881—1983)

Under the sky at night, stunned by our guesses,
We know incredibly much and incredibly little.
Wrapped in the enveloppe of gossamer air,
A clinging mote whirled round in a blizzard of stars,
A chaff-cloud of great suns that has not settled, *05*
By the barn's black shoulder where the gibbous moon
Hangs low, no other light making a glimmer
In the dark country, hearing the breathing of cattle—
I do not need that anyone should tell me
Most real goes secret, sunken, night-submerged: *10*
Yet does it dazzle with its least part showing,
Like the iceberg seven-eighths under.



Vocabulary:

1) *delicate*
2) *(of a heavenly body) so viewed as to appear convex on both margins*
3) *gleam*
4) *a large floating mass of ice*

Questions:

01. How does the simile of 'the iceberg seven-eighths under' explain the 'Most real' that 'goes secret'? In what way is this simile, together with line 11, an extension of the idea in line 02?

02. What metaphors does the poet use to describe the earth and the people ('We') on it?

03. Explain the contrast between the metaphors of night and darkness (lines 01, 06, 08) and the use of the word 'dazzle' in line 11. How does the poem express awe about the visible universe?

Harlem

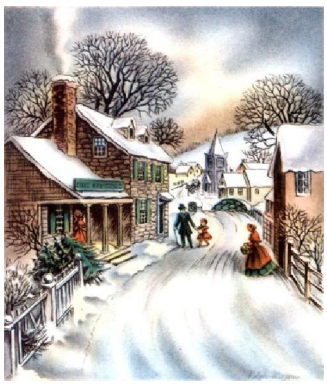
(Langston Hughes, 1902—1967)

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester[1] like a sore[2]—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust[3] and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags[4]
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?



Vocabulary:

1) rankle
2) wound
3) cover with or as with a crust
4) hangs down

Questions:

01. In the light of the black experience with the 'American Dream,' what do you think is meant by the phrase 'dream deferred'?

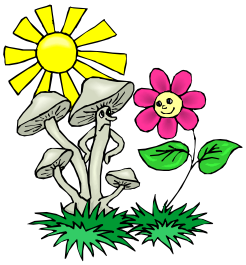
02. Explain the structure of the poem in terms of the speaker's questions and answers.

03. Explain the similes in lines 03, 04, 06, 08, and 10. Why are these apt comparisons? What sorts of human actions are implied in these figures?

04. What is the meaning of the metaphor in line 11? Why do you think Hughes shifted from similes to a metaphor in this line?

A Work of Artifice
(Marge Piercy, b. 1934)

The bonsai tree
in the attractive pot
could have grown eighty feet tall
on the side of a mountain
till split by lightning.
But a gardener
carefully pruned it.
It is nine inches high.
Every day as he
whittles[1] back the branches
the gardener croons[2],
It is your nature
to be small and cozy,
domestic and weak;
how lucky, little tree,
to have a pot to grow in.
With living creatures
one must begin very early
to dwarf their growth:
the bound feet,
the crippled brain,
the hair in curlers[3],
the hands you
love to touch.



Vocabulary:
1) reduces the size of by cutting away slices
2) hums or sings gently
3) small cylindrical objects round which warmed or wet hair is wound to create a curl

Questions:

01. What is a bonsai tree? In what ways is it an apt metaphor for women? The tree 'could have grown eighty feet tall.' What would be the comparable growth and development of a woman?

02. What do you make of the gardener's song (ll. 12—16)? If the bonsai tree were able to respond, would it accept the gardener's consolation? What conclusions about women's lives are implied by the metaphor of the tree?

03. How does the poem shift at line 17? To what extent do the next images (ll. 20—24) embody women's lives? How are the images metaphorical?

03. Personification (Latin, '*mask*')

In a personification, either an inanimate object or abstract concept or a quality is spoken of as though it were a person, and thus, endowed with life or with human attributes or feelings. This figure is observed in the following expressions, '*an angry volcano*', '*storms rage*', '*meadows look cheerful*', '*the wind whistles*', '*the beautiful moon looks inviting*', and '*the heat is happy*.' The use of the third pronoun gender to refer to inanimate objects like 'a ship' or 'a country' shows that this figure is inherent in the daily use of language.

Wind and River Romance

(John Agard, —)

Wind forever playing loverboy[1)]
bringing his breeze joy
to everything he touch
but Wind you can't trust

Forever playing fresh[2)]
with big woman like me
He forget I name River[3)]—
passing he hands[4)] over me face[5)]
tickling[6)] me bellyskin[7)]
talking to me in whisper

Promising to bring down
the moon and the stars
and lay them in me lap
even when hot sun shining
but sweet whispering don't catch me[8)]

I know Wind too good
I does just flow along to faithful Sea
and let Wind sweet words pass by
like cool breeze

Vocabulary:

1) *always trying to attract women*
2) *acting in a bold, rude, or disrespectful*
5) *my face*
6) *touching someone to make him or her laugh*

3) *He forgets my name is River*
4) *his hand*
7) *my stomach*
8) *doesn't impress or trick me*

Questions:

01. Who is telling the story in the poem?
02. What does the Wind promise the River? What does he means by this?
03. Why does the River choose the Sea instead of the Wind?
04. How do you think the Wind would define love? Why?
05. How do you think the River would define love? Why?
06. State how Agard personifies the Wind, River, and Sea in the correct column of the chart by opting these human qualities: plays loverboy, can't be trusted, is not fooled or tricked, is a big woman, is faithful, talks fresh, whispers sweetly, brings others joy, and, tickles others.

Wind	River	Sea

The Wind
(James Stephens 1882-1950)

The wind stood up and gave a shout.
He whistled on his fingers and

Kicked the withered leaves about
And <u>thumped</u>[1] the branches with his hand

And said he'd kill and kill and kill,
And so he will and so he will.

Vocabulary:
1) strike heavily

Questions:

01. To what central fact do all the personifications in the poem refer?

02. What imagery do you find in lines 01, 02, and 04?

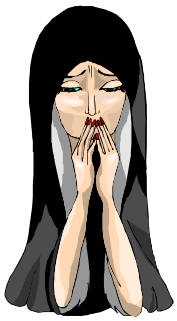
03. What does it mean by 'the wind kicked leaves about'?

04. What does the last line mean? Why does it use the present tense?

05. Retell briefly the story in your own words!

Beach Burial

(Kenneth Slessor, 1901-71)



Softly and humbly[1] to the Gulf of Arabs
The convoys of dead sailors come;
At night they sway and wander in the waters far under,
But morning rolls them in the foam.

Between the sob and clubbing[2] of the gunfire
Someone, it seems, has time for this,
To pluck[3] them from the shallows and bury them in burrows[4]
And tread the sand upon their nakedness;

And each cross, the driven stake[5] of tidewood,
Bears the last signature of men,
Written with such perplexity[6], with such bewildered pity[7],
*The words choke[8] as **they** begin---*

"Unknown Seaman"---the ghostly[9] pencil
Wavers[10] and fades, the purple drips,
The breath of the wet season has washed their inscriptions
As blue as drowned men's lips,

Dead seamen, gone in search of the same landfall[11],
Whether as enemies they fought,
Or fought with us, or neither; the sand joins them together,
Enlisted on the other front.

El Alamein, 1949

NOTE:

This poem is an elegy written by an Australian poet. On the surface, it appears to be a lament for the sailors killed in the North African campaign during the Second World War, but the poet meant it to have a wider significance.

Vocabulary:

1) *meekly*
2) *banging*
3) *pull out*
4) *holes made in the ground (by foxes, rabbits, etc)*
5) *post pointed at one end for driving into the ground*
6) *confusion*
7) *sympathetic grief for the suffering or misfortune of others*
8) *hinder the breathing of*
9) *indistinct*
10) *is indecisive*
11) *land to reach, esp. for the first time during a voyage*

Questions:

01. What does the underlined pronoun 'they' (line 12) refer to?

02. What figure of speech do you see in the title?

03. What figure of speech do you see in lines 4, 12, 16, and 19?

04. What imagery do you find in lines 02, 05, and 09—10? Give each a brief explanation.

05. Is 'nakedness' (line 08) used literally or figuratively?

06. What may the expression 'each cross bears the last signature of men' mean?

07. Why is the pencil described as being 'ghostly'?

08. The employment of "landfall" in line 17 bears specialty. Give a brief comment on this!

09. In what stanza is the climax? Explain!

10. What does the phrase "the other front" in line 20 connote?

The Dead

(Rupert Brooke,1887-1915)

These hearts were woven[1] of human joys and cares,
Washed marvelously[2] with sorrow, swift[3] to mirth[4].
The years had given ***them*** *kindness. Dawn was theirs,*
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.
These had seen movement, and heard music; known
Slumber[5] and waking; loved; gone proudly friended[6];
Felt the quick stir[7] of wonder; sat alone[8];
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.

There are waters blown by changing winds to laughter
And lit by the rich skies, all day. And after,
Frost, with a gesture, stays the waves that dance
And wandering loveliness. He leaves a white
Unbroken glory, a gathered radiance[9],
A width, a shining peace, under the night.

Vocabulary:

1) *were put together*
2) *magnificently*
3) *quick*
4) *being merry, happy and bright*
5) *sleep soundly*
6) *friendship*
7) *excitement*
8) *meditation*
9) *brightness*

Questions:

01. How does the poet employ the imagery?
02. What does the pronoun 'them' (line 03) refer to?
03. Point out the contrast in the poem.
04. How does the poet show that there is a great deal of variety in life?
05. What are the poet's feelings about death?
06. In what way does the metaphor in the second stanza suit the subject-matter?
07. Besides metaphor, are there any other kinds of figurative language used?
08. The employment of the verb 'known' in line 05 is problematic. Why?

04. Apostrophe (Greek, *'turning away'*)

Closely related to personification is ***apostrophe***, that is, a way of addressing a particular person who may be dead or absent or an abstract or inanimate object or even a spirit or something not ordinarily spoken to as if he or it were alive or present and could reply to what is being said. It is more often that "the poet uses apostrophe to announce a lofty or serious tone" (Kennedy, 1982;92). When the speaker in Joyce's poem entitled "I Hear An Army" cries out, *'My love, my love, my love, why have you left me alone?'*, he is apostrophizing his departed sweetheart.

London, 1802

Composed September 1802. -Published 1807

(William Wordsworth, 1770-1850)

MILTON! thou shouldst be living at this hour :
*England hath need of thee: **she** is a fen[1)]*
Of stagnant[2)] waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside[3)], the heroic wealth of hall and bower[4)],
Have forfeited[5)] their ancient English dower[6)] 05
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners[7)], virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea: 10
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,

In cheerful godliness[8]; and yet thy heart
*The lowliest[9] duties on **herself** did lay.*

NOTE:

***John Milton** (1608-74), English poet.His major works are the epics "Paradise Lost", "Paradise Regained", and the tragedy "Samson Agonistes". He tried to make the sonnet something more than a declaration of love or verbal representation of natural beauty. His literary influence on Wordsworth is seen in this sonnet.*

Vocabulary:

1) area of low marshy land, bog, marsh
2) (of water) without current or tide
3) part of a room round the fireplace
4) leafy shelter or recess
5) (have to) suffer the loss of something as a consequence, or because of rules
6) widow's inheritance
7) customs, moral codes of social and political conduct
8) devoutness
9) humble, simple, modest

Questions:

01. What do the underlined words 'she' (line 02) and 'herself' (line 14) refer to?
02. Identify which line contains apostrophe!
04. What elements of Milton's career as a writer does Wordsworth emphasize?
05. Is the comparison appropriate and effective?
06. What other figures of speech does the poem make use of?
07. What types of imagery do you see in lines 09 and 10?
08. Why does the lyrical speaker need Milton? (You may refer to any information provided by encyclopedias)

To Daffodils

(Robert Herrick 1591-1674)

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see
You haste[1] away so soon;
As yet[2] the early-rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong[3];
And having prayed together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay as you;

We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay
As you, or anything.
We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew
Ne'er[4] to be found again.

Vocabulary:

1) *hurry*
2) *up to now*
3) *(archaic) evening prayer in the Church of England*
4) *never*

Questions:

01. What figures of speech are used in the poem?

02. Is the statement made in line 11 literally true?

03. Why does the poet use 'evensong'? Is its use significant here?

04. What types of imagery are found in lines 01, 03, 08—09, and 18—19?

05. What is the poem about? Try rewriting this poem in your own words!

06. How many kinds of imagery do you find in the poem? Give examples of each!

The Tiger

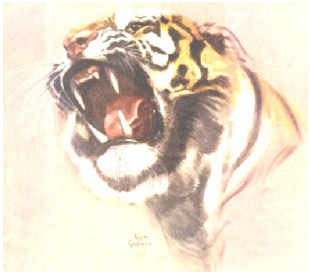
(William Blake,1757—1827)

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal[1] hand or eye
Could frame[2] thy fearful symmetry[3]?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare[4] he aspire[5]?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart[6]?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread[7] hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer[8]? what the chain?



In what furnace[9] was they brain?
What the anvil[10]? what dread grasp[11]
Dare its deadly terrors clasp[12]? 16

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee? 20

Tiger! Tiger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry? 24

Vocabulary:

1) eternal, never-ending
2) was able to make
3) balance, quality of harmony (of perfection)
4) be brave enough to
5) be filled with high ambition
6) i.e. have the power to shape and fit them into place
7) fear
8) God creating the tiger is compared to a blacksmith creating from the furnace
9) enclosed space for heating metals
10) large, heavy block of iron on which a smith hammers heated metal into shape
11) dreadful hold
12) hold onto, grasp

Questions:

01. Whom does the poet apostrophize in his poem?
02. What does Blake intend to convey through his poem?
03. What does the poet refer to by lines 1—3?
04. What does the poet mean by "thy fearful symmetry"?
05. Whom does the pronoun "he" (line 7) refer to? And what does it mean by this line?
06. What comparison does the poet try to make in stanza four?
07. Whom do the pronouns "he" (lines 19 and 20) and "thee" (line 20) refer to?

LESSON VI:
Theme and Subject-Matter

Poetry and words are in each other's pocket; for one thing, it may make utmost use words as its medium of expression. Regardless of their old publication, Brooks and Warren (1960:340) inferring the philosopher George Santayana say that "words inevitably carry with them some weight of idea", and this idea has a reciprocal link with moods. For this, Brooks and Warren (1960:341) exemplify Keats' "Ode to Autumn"*) in which no statement of idea is explicitly mentioned but "the general mood built up by the rhythm and imagery" which "inevitably leads to a certain attitude toward life—that is, to an idea, a theme". As a final point with this, they conclude that the relation between idea and mood is "at the root of all poetry".

A. Theme and Subject-Matter

Kennedy (1982:3) proposes that theme must be distinguished from subject. Whereas theme is the central thought of a poem, subject is its central topic. To illustrate this notion in practice, he uses Housman's "Loveliest of Trees, The Cheery Now".

Loveliest of Trees, the Cheery Now
(A.E. Housman, 1859-1936)

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride[1)]
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore[2)] *years and ten,*
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score[3)]*,*
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

*) *This poem is further analyzed in Poetry II under the topic of "Figurative Language II".*

Vocabulary:

1) track *2) sixty* *3) twenty*

Here, according to Kennedy, the subject of the poem is "cheery blossom, or the need to look at them" whereas the theme is "Time flies: enjoy beauty now!" or its favourite Latin expression: *carpe diem* ("seize the day").

Even though similar, Babusci (et al) (1989:148) elaborate the term, "theme is the general idea about life that is revealed through the story", and they divide it into a stated theme and unstated theme. In the former, the poet/ess or his/her invented persona declares clearly the theme. Again, Kennedy (1984:3) provides a good example for this by asserting that Herrick's "To the Virgin, to Make Much of Time" explicitly states the theme in its opening line, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," which he paraphrases into "enjoy love before it is too late", and again this is a favourite theme employed from Horace to Houseman which is familiar in its Latin *carpe diem*.

To The Virgins, To Make Much Of Time

(Robert Herrick, 1591-1674)

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the Sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time;
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry[1)].

Vocabulary:
1) keep on, persist in

Sadler (et al) (1989:1) opt the term subject-matter for subject and purpose or message of the poet for theme. They also provide a tip-off for the terms they introduce. Subject-matter, according to them, has something to do with such a question as "what event, situation, or experience does the poem describe or record?"; purpose or theme, with "what is the poet's purpose in writing this—what message does he or she want to communicate?" To demonstrate how these ideas work, they use "It Was Long Ago" as an example.

It Was Long Ago
(Eleanor Farjeon)

I'll tell you, shall I, something I remember?
Something that still means a great deal to me.
It was long ago.

A dusty road in summer I remember,
A mountain, and an old house, and a tree
That stood, you know

Behind the house. And old woman I remember,
But then perhaps I was not more than three.
It was long ago.

I dragged on the dusty road, and I remember
How the old woman looked over the fence at me
And seemed to know

How it felt to be three, and called out, I remember
'Do you like bilberries and cream for tea?'
I went under the tree

And while she hummed, and the cat purred, I remember
How she filled a saucer with berries and cream for me
So long ago,

Such berries and such cream as I remember
I never had seen before, and never see
To-day, you know.

And that is almost all I can remember,
The house, the mountain, the grey cat on her knee,
Her red shawl, and the tree,

And the taste of the berries, the feel of the sun I remember,
And the smell of everything that used to be
So long ago,

Till the heat on the road outside again I remember,
And how the long dusty road seemed to have for me
No end, you know.

That is the farthest thing I can remember.
It won't mean much to you. It does to me.
Then I grew up, you see.

According to them, the subject-matter of the poem is the poet's earliest memory, which happened to her when she was around 3 years old. While walking along a dusty road, she saw an old lady sitting under a tree who, then, invited her over and gave her bilberries and cream to eat. She regarded it as a 'feast' that she always recalls with pleasure. Concerning with the purpose (theme), they say that at the first glance, the poem does not show a serious purpose. It is simply the recording of an early memory. However, the last line reveals that it bears significance. The poet shows that this simple, pleasant memory means much to her because 'then I grew up, you see'. This is a sort of a reminder which shows that 'growing up' is not always so pleasant. Growing up as an adult can be so dull that one may no longer appreciate the simple pleasure of life.

To sum up, Reaske (1966:42) in *How to Analyze Poetry* affirms that "the theme is ..... the poet's reason for writing the poem in the first place" and "it is usually an abstract concept which becomes concrete through the idiom and imagery". The following poems demonstrate how theme and subject-matter are employed.

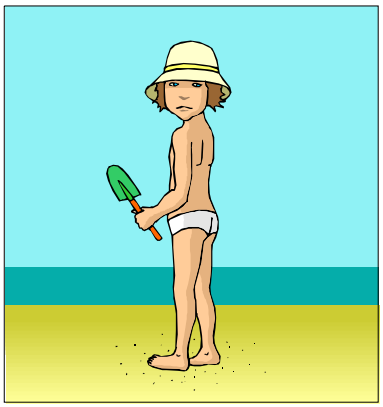
Exercises

When I Was Young on an Island

(*Diane Kahanu*[*])

When I was young on an island
my brother caught gray baby sharks
on his bamboo fishing pole[1)].
When he'd catch a shark,
he'd call the other kids and
we'd come running with clubs[2)]
of driftwood[3)] *to beat the shark*
to death.

When I was young on an island
my brother made moray eel[4)] *traps*[5)]
of silver pineapple juice cans
and a can opener, the kind that
makes triangle holes. When he'd
catch an eel, he'd give it to the
neighbor cat and we'd all watch
the tiger-striped cat
take the eel out of the can
and eat it.



When we were young on Paiko Drive
in Kuli'ou'ou and we played war,
my brother invented the battle charge[6)].
He'd wait for a hard wind to pick
up the sand and just when the wind
was strongest, he'd yell, "Charge,"
and we'd run, head down, into a zillion[7)]
tiny bullets of stinging[8)] *sand*
hurled by the wind's hand.

When we were young on an island
my brother invented the jellyfish
test. He was an Apache Indian[9)] *that day.*
Tortured,[10)] *he would not cry out.*
We caught see-through jellyfish
in our hands and held them
while they stung us. Whoever
cried out first or dropped their
jellyfish lost. I remember sinking
to my knees with pain and finally

[*])*Diane Kahanu grew up in Hawaii. Her brother, Wayne, was her role model when she was growing up.*

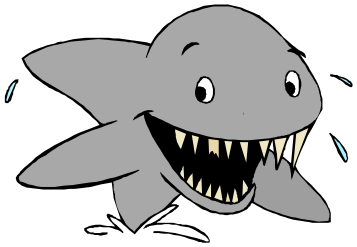
laying down in the cool shallow water.
Only my burning jellyfish hand
held out. *40*

Vocabulary:

1) *a fishing rod; a long, thin stick with a long string and hook used to catch fish*
2) *heavy sticks used to hit people or things*
3) *wood floating on the ocean or left on the beach*
4) *a long, thin fish that look like a snake*
5) *equipment used to catch fish or animals*
6) *an attack in which people move forward quickly*
7) *(informal) an extremely large number*
8) *causing sudden and very bad pain*
9) *a Native American of the southwestern United Sates*
10) *hurt or injured on purpose*

Questions

01. Notice how the poem is divided into four stanzas. What game or activity is described in each stanza?
02. Where does the poem take place? How does the location influence the games and activities?
03. How is the main "character" in the poem?
04. How is the poet related to the main character?
05. What examples or details are given about the poet? What inferences can you make about her?
06. What examples or details are given about the poet's brother? What inferences can you make about him?
07. What examples or details are given about life on an island? What inferences can you make about the children's lives?
08. Sometimes writers use personification to describe a thing or quality as if it were a person. Reread lines 22—27. What is the poet describing? What human qualities does she give it?
09. Decide the theme and subject-matter of the poem.



The Delight Song of Tsoai—Talee[1)]

(*N. Scott Momaday*[*)], *1934—*)

I am a father on the bright sky
I am the glue horse that runs on the plain[2)]
I am the fish that rolls, shining, in the water
I am the shadow that follows a child
I am the evening light, the lustre[3)] *of meadows*[4)]
I am an eagle playing in the wind
I am a cluster[5)] *of bright beads*
I am the farthest star
I am the cold of the dawn
I am the roaring of the rain
I am the glitter[6)] *on the crust*[7)] *of the snow*
I am the long track[8)] *of the moon in a lake*
I am a flame of four colors
I am a deer standing away in the dusk[9)]
I am a field of sumac[10)] *and the pomme blanche*[11)]
I am an angle of geese in the winter sky
I am the hunger of a young wolf
I am the whole dream of these things

You see, I am alive, I am alive
I stand in good relation[12)] *to the earth*
I stand in good relation to the gods
I stand in good relation to all that is beautiful
I stand in good relation to the daughter of Tsen—tainte[13)]
You see, I am alive, I am alive

Vocabulary:

1) *Rock-tree boy (N.S. Mamaday's Kiowa name)*
2) *a large area of flat land*
3) *brightness, shine*
4) *open areas of land with grass and flowers*
5) *a group of similar things that are close together*
6) *shine, small bits of bright light*
7) *the hard outer surface*
8) *a reflection*
9) *twilight, when daylight is disappearing*
10) *a kind of tree or bush*
11) *(French) a white apple*
12) *in harmony with*
13) *White Horse*

**) N. Scott Momaday, born in Lawton, Oklahoma, is a member of the Kiowa nation which lived on the southern plains of the United States, before being forced onto reservations in the middle and late nineteenth century. Like many Native Americans, the Kiowa have used storytelling to pass on their traditions for hundreds of years. Native Americans consider words very powerful—so powerful, in fact, that they can create and shape the world.*

Momaday grew up on various reservations where he attended Indian schools. He received a Ph. D. in Literature from Stanford University, where he became a professor of English and Comparative Literature. He is currently Regents Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Arizona. (Preston, 2003:198 & 201)

Questions

01. The poem has two stanzas. Which stanza has a narrower, more specific focus? Which stanza has a broader, more general focus?
02. What subject pronoun does the poet use in the first part? What do you think he is talking to?
03. What additional subject pronoun does the poet use in the second part? What do you think he is talking to?
04. What verbs does the poet repeat in the poem? Why do you think he repeats them?
05. What kinds of items are listed in the poem? Why do you think these items have special meaning to the poet?
06. What main idea or theme do you think the poet is trying to express? What about the subject-matter?
07. Does his use of repetition add emphasis to the main idea or theme? Explain.
08. The poem contains images related to the four basic elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Complete the following chart with images from the poem that describe each element.

Earth	Air	Fire	Water
horse on the plain			

When Green Buds Hang in the Elm[1)]

(*A.E. Housman, 1859-1936*)

When green buds hang in the elm like dust
And sprinkle[2)] *the lime*[3)] *like rain,*
Forth[4)] *I wander, forth I must,*
And drink of life again.

Forth I must by hedgerow[5)] *bowers*[6)]
To look at the leaves uncurled[7)]*,*
And stand in the fields where cuckoo flowers[8)]
Are lying about the world.

Vocabulary:

1) *a common deciduous tree that grows to a great size and height*
2) *scatter*
3) *(also called the linden) a common English shade tree (not to be confused with the fruit tree)*
4) *forwards*
5) *row of bushes forming a boundary for a field, garden, etc*
6) *shady places under trees*
7) *flatten*
8) *spring-blooming wild-flowers*

Questions

01. Why is the verb 'sprinkle' (line 2) chosen over 'dapple', 'powder', or 'speckle'?
02. Why does the poet select 'cuckoo flowers' over some other variety?
03. What two meanings does 'lying' (line 8) have?
04. Why does the speaker repeat the words 'forth I must' (lines 3 & 5)? What impulses are at conflict in him?
05. What are the theme and the subject-matter of the poem?

Island

(*Langston Hughes*[*)], *1902-1967*)

Wave of sorrow,
Do not drown me now:

I see the island
Still ahead somehow.

[*)] *Langston Hughes is an Afro-American poet who was born on February 1, 1902 in Joplin, Missouri. In his writings, he is largely concerned with the depicting of Negro life in America. In constant demand as a lecturer, he traveled on speaking tours throughout the United States, to the West Indies, and to parts of Europe and Africa of which reflection is found in most of his works. He received many awards and honors for his writings, which have been translated into more than 25 languages. (Curry, ed., 1983:228 & Curry, ed., 1984:69)*

I see the island
And its sands are fair:

Wave of sorrow,
Take me there.

Questions

01. Read the note on the poet carefully. What does the word 'the island' (line 3) implicitly refer to you think?
02. Find and explain the metaphor used in the poem.
03. State the theme and subject-matter Hughes employs in the poem.

Wanna Be White

(*Charmairman Papertalk-Green*[*)])

My man took off yesterday
With a waagin[1)]
He left me and the kids
To be something in this world
Said he was sick of being
black, poor and being laughed at
Said he wanted to be white
have better clothes, a flash car
and eat fancy
He said me and the kids
would give him a bad name
because we are black too
So he left with a waagin

Vocabulary:
1) the word of the east coast of Australia for 'white female', derived from 'white gin'.

Questions

01. The poet employs a typical Aboriginal-English in her poem. What does it mean by 'my man' (line 1) and 'the kids' (lines 3 & 10)?

[*)] *Since the 19602, many Aborigines have begun to write literature in English. Such literature often expresses anger and regret at what Aborigines have suffered in the past two centuries. Charmairman Papertalk-Green is one of the female poets that the Australian Aborigines have. The title of her poem reveals that she, like most of the Aboriginal people, does not know to which society she has to cling. In fact, many Aborigines, both full—and mixed—blood, are torn between two societies—the white Australian society or the black Australian society. (O'Connor, ed., 1989:11—3 & 20—3)*

02. What does the poet mean by 'to be something in this world' (line 4) and 'eat fancy' (line 9)?

03. Why does the poet mean by lines 10—3?

04. What does the title may suggest to you?

05. Mention briefly the possible theme and subject-matter of the poem.

For Anne Gregory

(*William Butler Yeats, 1865-1939***)**

"Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
By those great honey-coloured
Ramparts[1] at your ear,
Love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

"But I can get a hair-dye
And set such colour there,
Brown, or black, or carrot,
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair."

"I heard an old religious man
But yesternight[2] declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

Vocabulary:

1) defence; protection
2) last night

Questions

01. The poem is involving two persons. Who tells the firs stanza? The second? And the third?

02. But who actually narrates the poem?

03. What does the narrator say to Anne Gregory?

04. What does Anne Gregory think of love?

05. What types of figure of speech and imagery do you observe in the first stanza? (*Quote the line/s and give your argument!*)

06. What does the phrase "*a text to prove*" connote?

07. State in your own words the theme and subject-matter.

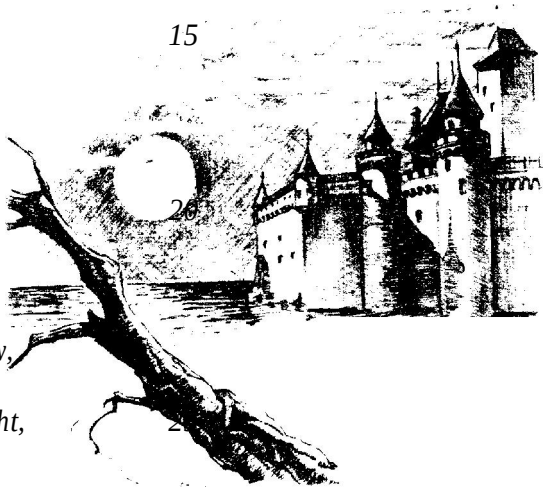
Annabel Lee

(*Edgar Allan Poe*[*)], *1809—1849*)

It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee:
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and she was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love,
I and my Annabel Lee;
With a love that the winged seraphs[1)] *of heaven*
Coveted[2)] *her and me.*

And this was the reason that long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea.
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling[3)]
My beautiful Annabel Lee:
So that her highborn[4)] *kinsmen*[5)] *came*
And bore[6)] *her away from me,*
To shut her up in a sepulcher[7)]
In this kingdom by the sea.



The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
Went envying her and me;
Yes! That was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

[*)] *Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), as Lado (1973:28) testifies, is acknowledged as one of America's greatest literary geniuses, especially in the field of short stories in which he combines "elements of horror and suspense" and poetry in which his "haunting melody and rhythm" have brought his fame, exemplified in such poems as "Annabel Lee" and "The Raven". His career was brilliant but, unfortunately, short-lived, since he died at an early age.*

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we,
Of many far wiser than we;
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever[8] my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

For the moon never beams[9], without bringing me dreams
of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling— my darling—my life and my bride,
In her sepulcher there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

Vocabulary:

1) *(biblical) cherub / (one of the highest order of) angel*
2) *desired eagerly (esp. sth that belongs to sb else); wanted*
3) *making cold*
4) *aristocratic; noble*
5) *male relatives*
6) *took*
7) *tomb; grave*
8) *sever; cut; break off*
9) *shines*

Questions

01. Who are the main characters of this poem?
02. What was the great thing that they had?
03. What happened to Annabel Lee? Why?
04. How could you tell that the poet believes in life after death?
05. What words in the poem rhyme with Annabel Lee?
06. What are the theme and subject-matter of the poem?

LESSON VII:
Paraphrase

For the sake of poetry study, it needs to understand paraphrasing and interpreting. Paraphrase is derived from the Greek, which literally means "equivalent sentence" (Wren and Martin, 1990:491). Paraphrasing poetry may mean comprehending the literal meaning of the work under discussion by knowing the words it employs through the restatement of the sense of the work in other words of the same language. Barnet (et al) (2003:131) define it as "a sort of translation in the same language" to avoid "material that may in its original form be somewhat obscure to a reader". Roberts and Jacobs (2003:473) suggest that while paraphrasing, the organization "should reflect the poem's form or development". To clarify this, they state that when dealing with short poems, the paraphrase should be organized according to line by line or stanza by stanza of the poem's form; whereas, with longer poems, it should be systematized according to their "natural divisions such as groups of related stanzas, verse paragraphs, or other possible organizational units". Furthermore, they explain that a paraphrase should "remain faithful to the poem, but avoid drawing conclusions and giving unnecessary explanations".

Interpreting poetry which involves all aspects of poetry understanding such as the poet's life and time and all kinds of literary devices is the following step of paraphrasing. Hence, it is obvious that a paraphrase forms the basis for poetry interpretation. In other words, an interpretation of poetry means making associations for meaning, and to give a path to such a project, the sound control of poetry paraphrasing is inevitable.

It is implicitly suggested that in the process of understanding poetry a dictionary will function significance as a firm ally. As the word arrangement in poetry is mostly organized in unexpected ways, the knowledge on language rules must also be exhaustively mastered. McMahan (et al) (1999:473—4) try to clarify this by providing examples taken from Hardy's and Whitman's. Through Hardy's unusual line,

And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?

a sentence reconstruction for simplification is put forward, "*And why does the best hope ever sown not bloom?*"

Again, to show how vital the role of a dictionary is, they quote Whitman's,

Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,

in which there seems to be a strange employment of the word 'blows' here. However, by consulting a proper dictionary, its meaning fits exactly in the line, 'blossom or bloom' (Delbridge, 1991:190). Thus, the line can be paraphrased as "*Passing the apple-tree which is blossoming in white and pink in the orchards*". Likewise, Barnet (et al) (2003:132) quote a line which appears in Dickinson's poem:

The sun engrossed the East . . .

They found that 'engrossed' in its commercial meaning is "to acquire most or all of a commodity; to monopolize the market," so the paraphrase they propose may go thus:

The sun took over all of the east.

Other examples are provided by Wren and Martin (1990:495—6):

1. Original line: *Mine be a cot beside a hill;*

   Their paraphrase: "*May a cot beside a hill be mine*".

2. Original line: *A barking sound the shepherd hears*

   Their paraphrase: "*The shepherd hears a barking sound.*"

3. Original line: *On Linden, when the sun was low,*
   All bloodless lay the untrodden snow
   And dark as winter was the flow
   Of Iser), rolling rapidly.* *) *the name of a river*

   Their paraphrase: "*The untrodden snow lay all [white] on Linden when the sun was low, and the flow of (the) rapidly rolling Iser was (as) dark as winter.*"

Close attention should be given to the use of punctuation albeit some poets like Emily Dickinson and Stevie Smith rarely use it in a proper way; whereas, E. E. Cummings never uses it at all. McMahan (et al) reveal that the

unusual use of syntax and punctuation in poetry is due to the poetic license given to the poets.

In order to lead the reader into more clarification, a paraphrase of Dickinson's "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" offered by Roberts and Jacobs (1986:478—9) is given here.

Because I Could Not Stop for Death
(Emily Dickinson, 1830—1886)

Because I could not for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage[1] held but just Ourselves[2]—
And Immortality.

We slowly drove—He[3] knew no haste
And I had put away[4]
My labor[5] and my leisure[6] too,
For His Civility[7]—

We passed the School[8], where Children strove[9]
At Recess[10]—in the Ring[11]—
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain[12]—
We passed the Setting Sun[13]—

Or rather—He passed Us—
The Dews[14] drew[15] quivering and chill—
For only Gossamer[16], my Gown—
My Tippet[17]—only Tulle[18]—

We paused before a House[19] that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground[20]—
The Roof[21] was scarcely visible—
The Cornice[22]—in the Ground—

Since then[23]—'tis Centuries[24]—and yet
Feels shorter[25] than the Day
I first surmised[26] the Houses' Heads
Were toward[27] Eternity—

Vocabulary:

1) *a hearse*
2) *death and I*
3) *death, holding the horses' reins and driving the carriage*
4) *put aside*
5) *work*
15) *gathered around*
16) *very thin flimsy fabric*
17) *cape, scarf*
18) *thin silk*
19) *a grave*
20) *after a burial, the earth is heaped up on the grave creating the illusion of a swelling*

6) *pastimes*
7) *courtesy*
8) *symbol of childhood*
9) *played energetically*
10) *a break/interval between classes*
11) *either (a) a circular open area in which the children played or (b) one of the common children's games in which the participants form a circle*
12) *ripened grain is a common symbol of maturity. The grain has time to 'gaze', to stare at the carriage; maturity is calmer and less energetic than childhood*
13) *a common symbol of old age*
14) *here it symbolizes 'quivering and chill'*
or growth
21) *the upper surface of a burial vault*
22) *here it suggests a kerbstone half hidden by the earth of the grave*
23) *since that experience of the journey with Death*
24) *it is a long time*
25) *the realization of eternity seems a longer experience than the realization of death*
26) *guessed/suspected*
27) *when driving a carriage, direction is established by turning the horses' heads by means of bridle and reins. Here, Death is guiding the horses toward eternity*

Based upon the original structure, they paraphrase the poem as a whole:

[1] Restating the contents of the first three stanzas focusing on the persona's journey

I was too preoccupied with life to die, so Death, out of kindness and courtesy, paused to pick me up. The three of us (Death, Immortality, and I) made our journey in a horse-drawn coach. We traveled slowly (Death was not in a hurry), and Death's courtesy led me to abandon both work and play. On journey we went by a school where children were playing, a field of ripe wheat, and the 'Setting Sun'.

[2] Dealing with the fourth and fifth stanzas, the end of the journey

At the end of the journey we stopped, and the sun went by us. The dew made me quite chilly because I was wearing a light, gauze dress and a thin scarf made of silk. Our trip ended at a building that was no more than a mound in the earth. I could scarcely see the roof, and the top edge of the building was flush with the ground.

[3] Paraphrasing the last stanza, embodying a shift in perspective—from past to present—and defining the present moment of the poem

All these events happened hundreds of years ago. Nevertheless, the intervening years seem shorter to me than that one moment when I first recognized that I was dying.

As previously been mentioned that in a paraphrase, drawing conclusions of or interpreting the poem must be avoided. In this paraphrase, for example, Roberts and Jacobs do not point out that the journey "took [the persona]

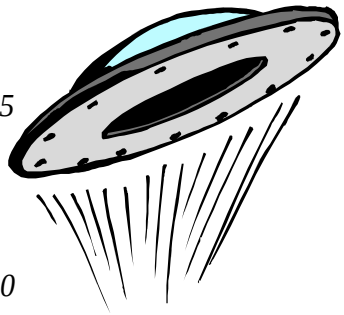
symbolically through three stages of life: youth in the children at play, maturity in the 'Gazing Grain,' and death in the 'Setting Sun'." Although they admit that "these observations may be completely valid in dealing with [this] poem".

Below is the noteworthy example selected from the assignments given to the fourth-semester students of the English language and literature study program[*)].

Walking on the Moon

(*Sakshi Oberoi*)

With all the pollution of earth, and it gloom …
I decided to have my house on the moon
Within no times, I caught the first flight …
And reached the moon much later at night.
As soon as I stepped out, after clearing the mess …
To my surprise I realized that I weigh quite less.
Unable to keep my happiness, I jumped with joy …
And to my horror, found myself hanging up like a toy.
Walking on the moon was not a piece of cake …
A slight push, and a long leap in the space I could take.
At last my excitement had to bear the penalty …
That my dream house on the moon, cannot be made a reality.



They paraphrase the poem above as the following:

Since the earth is very polluted and gloomy, I decided to build a house on the moon. Not having much time, I got on the first flight to the moon and reached it very late at night.

As soon as I stepped out after clearing the mess, I was very surprised when I realized that my weight was quite less. Unable to control my happiness, I jumped with a joy. To my horror, I found myself floating like a toy.

I soon realized that walking on the moon was not easy. With only a slight push, I could reach a long leap in the space.

At last, my excitement had to face the penalty that my dream house on the moon cannot be a reality.

[*)] I should like to extend my personal gratitude to Widya Dwilestari, Pemi Apriyanita, Setya Putri rahayu, and Suci Ratna Dewi of the 2005 class for their paraphrase that I use as an example in this section.

Exercises

01. *A rolling stone gathers no moss.*

02. *Silently, one by one, in the infinite Meadows of Heaven,*
Blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots) of the angles.*
**) small plants with blue flowers*

03. *The force that through the green fuse drives the flower*
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.

04. *The glories of our blood and state*
Are shadows, not substantial things:
There is no armour against fate;
Death lays his icy hand on kings;
Sceptre and Crown
Must tumble down.
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Buffalo Bill's

(*E.E. Cummings, 1894—1962*)

Buffalo Bill's
Defunct[1)]
who used to
ride a watersmooth-silver
stallion
and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat[2)]
Jesus
he was a handsome man
and what i want to know is
how do you like your blueeyed boy
Mister Death

Vocabulary:
1) (adj, of persons) dead
2) clay targets used in skeet shooting or in exhibitions of marksmanship

Questions

01. Paraphrase the whole poem in your own English.

02. What effect may it produce by using the word 'defunct' instead of 'dead'?

03. How is the stallion described?

04. Why is the noun 'death' given a title of Mr.?

05. Who is the blue eyed boy mentioned in the poem?

The Man He Killed

(Thomas Hardy, 1840—1928)

"Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin![1)]

"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in place.

"I shot him dead because—
Because he was my foe.
Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although
"He thought he'd 'list[2)]*, perhaps,*
Off-hand like—just as I—
Was out of work—had sold his traps[3)]*—*
No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious was is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown[4)]*."*

Vocabulary:

1) half-pint cup
2) enlist
3) possessions
4) at the time, the equivalent of $20 0r $30

Questions

01. Paraphrase the poem.
02. What is the effect produced by repeating the word 'because' in lines 09 and 10 and using the word 'although' in line 12?
03. What is the speaker attitude toward his 'foe' and toward what he has done?
04. What point, if any, does this poem make about war?

Ogichidag[1)]

(Jim Northrup, b. 1943)

I was born in war, WW Two.
Listened as the old men told stories
Of getting gassed in the trenches. WW One.
Saw my uncles come back from
Guadacanal, North Africa,
and the Battle of the Bulge.
Memorized the war stories
my cousins told of Korea.
Felt the fear in their voices.
Finally it was my turn,
my brothers too.
Joined the marines in time
for the Cuban Missile Crisis.
Heard the crack of rifles
in the rice paddies south of Da Nang.
Watched my friends die there
then tasted the bitterness of
the only war America ever lost.
My son is now a warrior.
Will I listen to his war stories
or cry into his open grave?

Vocabulary:
1) this is the Ojibway word for 'warriors'.

Questions

01. Paraphrase the poem in your own word.
02. What battles are mentioned in the poem, and over what period of time do these battles extend?
03. How does the speaker state that he learned about the battles? Why is this method of gaining knowledge important? What experience has the speaker had with war?
04. Why does the speaker finish the poem by referring to his son? In relationship to the poem's structure, why is the concluding question important?

Buffalo Bill on a favorite horse, around 1910. (Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY)