Poetry: Narrative and Lyric

“The Cremation of Sam McGee”

“Washed in Silver”

“Winter”

Poetry: Narrative Poetry

- Narrative Poetry:
  - Poetry that tells a story. Unlike a story, narrative poetry has a plot, characters, and a setting.
  - Unlike a story, a narrative poem makes use of sound devices, such as rhythm and repetition.

Poetry: Lyric Poetry

- Lyric Poetry:
  - Verse that expresses a poet’s thoughts and feelings about a single image or idea.
  - Lyric poetry is written in vivid, musical language.

Poetry: Common Figures of Speech

SIMILE
- A comparison between two unlike things using like or as.
- Example: “The old man walked as slowly as a turtle creeping uphill.”
- Example: “She sang like an angel.”

METAPHOR
- A comparison between two unlike things without using like or as.
- Example: “The horse’s coat was a sheet of velvet.”
- Example: “Life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly.”

HYPERBOLE
- Exaggeration meant to produce a particular effect.
- Example: “I tried a thousand times.”
- Example: “The guard was twelve feet tall with exercises of steel.”
Poetry: Common Figures of Speech

**PERSONIFICATION**
- Giving human characteristics to a nonhuman subject
- Example: The tree waved happily at us as we walked along the road.
- Example: “The washing machine danced across the floor.”

“The Cremation of Sam McGee”

**Historical Background**
In 1896, George Carmack, Tagish Charlie, and Skookum Jim discovered gold on the Bonanza Creek. This discovery marked the beginning of the Klondike Gold Rush.

- This is a narrative poem.
- Like a narrative written in prose, “The Cremation of Sam McGee” will follow the events of the plot diagram.
- This poem will use exaggeration, humor, and fantasy to tell the tale of two gold prospectors and the promises made, promises kept.

“The Cremation of Sam McGee”:

2a. What problem does Sam McGee have with his surroundings?
Sam McGee hates the cold temperatures of the Yukon.

2b. What do Sam’s fears reveal about his personality?
Sam has little ability to withstand the discomfort of the Yukon elements.

2c. Why doesn’t Sam go home?
He wants to find gold in the Yukon territory.
**“The Cremation of Sam McGee”: Review and Assess Questions**

3a. Who is the speaker, and what does he promise to Sam?  
Cap is the speaker. He promises to cremate him if he dies.

3b. Why is the speaker so determined to keep his promise?  
Cap believes that promises are like "debts unpaid".

**“Washed in Silver”**

- James Stephens grew up in a poor neighborhood in Dublin, Ireland.  
- He was a voracious reader and read everything he could get his hands on.  
- His writing and poetry often draw on his experiences of life in Dublin and his love for Ireland.  
- Stephens is known for capturing the magical quality of Irish legends.

**“Winter”**

- Nikki Giovanni (b. 1943) is a world-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist, and educator.  
- Over the past thirty years, her outspokenness, in her writing and lectures, has brought the eyes of the world upon her.  
- One of the most widely-read American poets, she prides herself on being "a Black American, a daughter, a mother, a professor of English."  
- Giovanni remains as determined and committed as ever to the fight for civil rights and equality.  
- The author of some 30 books for both adults and children, Nikki Giovanni is a University Distinguished Professor at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia.

**Comparing Literary Works**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“The Cremation of Sam McGee”</th>
<th>“Washed in Silver”</th>
<th>“Winter”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cap finds Sam alive, well, and warm.</td>
<td>Stephens grew up in a poor neighborhood in Dublin, Ireland.</td>
<td>Giovanni (b. 1943) is a world-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist, and educator.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What reaction does the poet, Robert Service, expect you to have to this unexpected occurrence?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service probably expects readers to be surprised and amused by the ending.</td>
<td>Stephens probably expects readers to be surprised and moved by the ending.</td>
<td>Giovanni probably expects readers to be moved and inspired by the ending.</td>
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</tbody>
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### Comparing Literary Works

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personification</td>
<td>Describes the heavens and stars as having human attributes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>The stars came out and danced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scowling</td>
<td>The heavens scowled.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>He chased clean through to the bone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>Cold like a driven nail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simile</td>
<td>The sea was reflecting the moon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personification</td>
<td>The moon drives royally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyperbole</td>
<td>Blazing in silver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphor</td>
<td>Washed in silver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simile</td>
<td>Winter and Washed in Silver both focus on nature.</td>
</tr>
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### Literary Analysis: Questions

2. The central conflict is Cap’s promise to cremate Sam even when he is tired from carrying the body and doesn’t have any fuel to start a fire with.

3. The poem is different from a story in that it is structured like a poem and it rhymes.

4. “Winter and “Washed in Silver” both focus on nature. The feelings that are expressed in each poem are similar in that they both communicate a feeling of awe about their surroundings.

5. “Washed in Silver” would be the best poem to set to music because it employs rhythm, rhyme, and meter. “Winter” is written as a free verse poem.