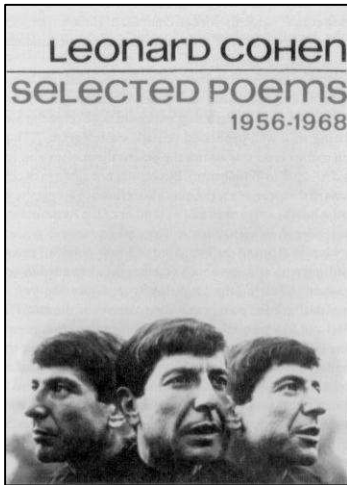


Literacy Development

Introduction to Poetry



Poems can be many things. They can rhyme and they can be clever. They can be about a moment, an epic event, a whisper, or a sweet insight.

I Wonder How Many People in This City

**I wonder how many people in this city
live in furnished rooms.**

**Late at night when i look out at the buildings
I swear I see a face in every window
looking back at me**

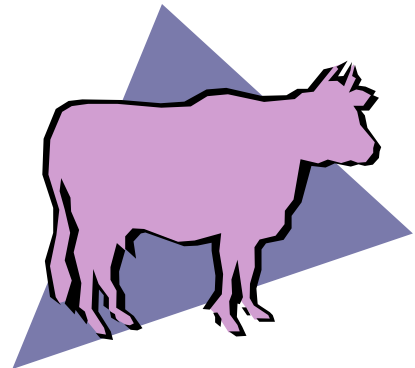
**and when I turn away
I wonder how many go back to their desks
and write this down.**

Leonard Cohen

Do you know this poem?

***I never saw a purple cow
I never hope to see one
But I can tell you anyhow
I'd rather see than be one***

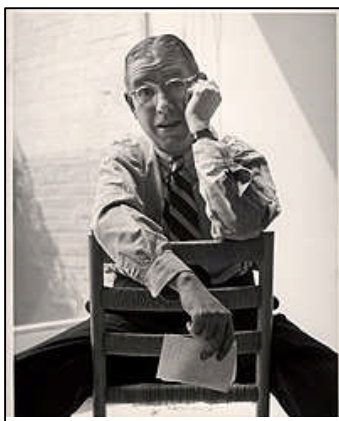
Gelett Burgess



They can also be very short

***Candy is dandy,
but liquor is quicker***

Ogden Nash



Ogden Nash, Poet

***I wish the rent
Were heaven-sent***

Langston Hughes

As is true of short stories, poems can often tell about events, ideas, and feelings in a few words, allowing the reader to fill in the rest with what he or she already knows. This allows us to get the meaning of a poem by using our own background knowledge to fill in the blanks.

What do we know about the situation of the narrator in the poems by Leonard Cohen, Gelett Burgess, Ogden Nash and Langston Hughes?



“Sing, O goddess, the anger of Achilles son of Peleus, that brought countless ills upon the Achaeans. Many a brave soul did it send hurrying down to Hades, and many a hero did it yield a prey to dogs and vultures, for so were the counsels of Jove fulfilled from the day on which the son of Atreus, king of men, and great Achilles, first fell out with one another.”

From The Iliad, by Homer (800 B.C.)

Epic Poems

Other poems are very long and may tell entire histories. The very long ones are called “epic poems” and include stories such as the Iliad and the Odyssey. Traditionally poems have been read aloud and shared from generation to generation. They were originally meant to be read aloud so that people could enjoy the rhythm and intonation in the language and the intonation of the speaker’s voice.

Story Poems

The Eleventh Hour is a popular mystery story for children that is written in the form of a poem. The poem has a structure that is similar to other more complicated poems. The poem also uses very vivid language to bring the story alive and allow the listener to see the events in the “mind’s eye.”¹

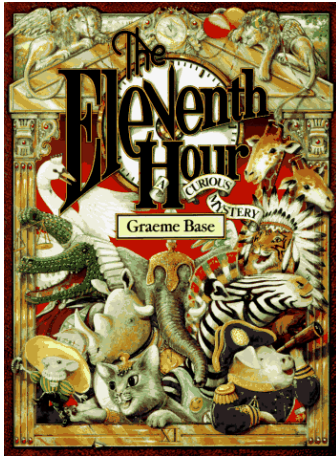
Poetry for Everyone

Poetry is a form of writing that is, in one way or another, used by nearly all peoples. It has ancient roots but remains a very modern form of communication. Like painting and music, it is an art form that can make a connection to inner thoughts and feelings. The link between poetry and song lyrics has always been close. In today’s Hip-Hop and Rap, the distinction is nearly eliminated.

Things That Make Hearts Break

pretty smiles
deceiving laughs
and people who dream with their eyes open
lonely children
unanswered cries
and souls who have given up hoping
The other thing that breaks hearts
R fairy tales that never come true
and selfish people who lie 2 me
selfish people just like u
Tupac Shakur

¹ Imagining events unfold and seeing something in the mind’s eye is one of the secrets to being a good reader.



Poetry

The Story Poem

Listen to the first few stanzas of “The Eleventh Hour²” by Graeme Base and pay attention to the way the writer describes the scenes and depicts what is happening. What images come to mind as you listen to the poem? These stanzas are part of a much longer poem.

*When Horace turned Eleven, he decided there should be
Some kind of celebration. “For my friends” he said “and me”
For though I’ve been the age of eight and nine and six and seven,
This is the very first time that I’ve ever been Eleven.*

*With that he set to work and wrote the name of every Guest,
And then eleven sorts of food that Elephants like best.
He the Invitations next (and sent them off that day),
And finally eleven games for everyone to play.*

*Now Horace was a clever lad; he planned the day with care,
Ensuring that his party would be quite a Grand Affair.
But only in the Kitchen was his genius unfurled,
For Elephants are verily the best cooks in the world.*

*He started off with cheesecake full of strawberries and cream,
Then moved on through the pastries to a Chocolate Supreme.
And though it may be said, perhaps, that Horace made a mess,
The Feast that he created, was Fantastic, nothing less.*

²This is a story written for younger children, but it nicely illustrates the concepts of rhythm and melody that are common to many poems.

Poetry

The List Poem

Some poems don't rhyme, but they may still have a rhythm, sometimes achieved through repetition of a word or certain word groups. They can be powerful in their use of language and imagery.

Creating poetry can help you be a better writer because it allows you to experiment with language. Poems are not as constrained in their sentence structure as essays for example – they can often be a series of images or descriptions. No need to write in full sentences or worry about fragments.

Let's write a list poem together.

Brainstorming

In some ways we are lucky to be living in a country like Canada in the 21st Century. In other ways, it's difficult to deal with all the challenges that life in a Western urban society throws at you.

- What are some good things about living in Canada at this time?
- What are not so great things?

Now go to the next page and put them together as a list poem, called "Eight Great Things About Living in Canada and Two Not So Great"³

³ You can change the number of great and not so great things or change the topic to 8 Great Things About Being a Teenager ...

Poetry

8 Great Things About Canada

(And 2 Not so Great)

Name _____ Date _____

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

1.

2.



If you get stuck

- Brainstorm in your group to come up with ideas
- Ask adults that you know what they think are great or not so great things
- Select examples that are vivid and interesting

Poetry

Who I Am

The formula poem: Some poems are free flow; others follow a certain internal structure. Can you tell what the structure is in the poems below? They are all written by students like you.

Eric

Athletic, intelligent, laughable
Brother of Melissa and Robert
Who loves Mom, Dad, soccer
Who feels good about life
Who needs a car, job, money
Who gives gifts, love, friendship
Who fears dying, being lonely, poverty
Who'd like to see Australia
Who dreams of being rich
A student of Mrs. Koz

Eric

Eric
Dennisville, NJ – USA

Dominique

Smart, tall, athletic
Sister of CJ
Who loves Jay Gordon, money, Adidas
Who feels spectacular about summer
Who needs friends, clothing, parents
Who gives respect, help, presents
Who fears spiders, bears, tigers
Who'd like to see Limp Bizkit
Who dreams of singing
A student of Mrs. Koz

Dom

Dominique
Dennisville, NJ – USA

Poetry

10 Tips for Interpreting Poems

Many students hate the idea of having to interpret poems. They feel they don't understand poems and have a hard time "getting" what the poem is all about.

Many adults also think they have to understand a poem fully before they can respond in any way. They are intimidated by the complexity of a poem and have difficulty articulating their response.

Fear not, however. The more poems you read, the easier it will be to get their meaning and say something about them.

Here are 10 tips for making understanding poetry a bit easier.

1. Don't worry about getting a poem on the outset. Just listen to the sound and the rhythm as your teacher reads a poem. If you read it yourself, read the poem aloud a couple of times so that the rhythm becomes comfortable.
2. Poems want to be discovered through several readings. Give them a chance. Choral reading (reading a poem aloud along with others in the class) can really help you get into the rhythm of a poem.
3. Don't try to tackle the whole poem at once. Take a few lines at a time⁴ and think about the words and the meaning behind them. What images, thoughts and feelings are in these words? When Langston Hughes writes

"I wish the rent
Were heaven sent"

There is a great deal of sadness or frustration behind these words. Other poems may be longer but they often contain a great deal of feeling and experience in a single line or in a stanza.

⁴ Lines that go together are called "stanzas."

4. Reread the lines a couple of times to get a feel for them. Is there anything in the words or in the feeling that strikes you as interesting or unusual? Find a way to enjoy the poem. Don't struggle too hard
5. Remember that you don't have to get the whole poem or even any of it to like it. For some poems, you can just let the rhythm and the images flow across your mind and enjoy them on that level (you'll see what we mean a bit later).
6. Different people respond to different kinds of poems in different ways. Some will make us laugh, some will make us cry and some will leave us cold. Some poems will just confuse you. That's all ok.
7. Memorize a few lines that you like or even a whole poem. Memorizing poetry is a marvelous way of getting better at language.
8. If you want or need to get into a poem that uses complex language, try to get a hold of the vocabulary. Underline words you don't understand. Ask others what they mean or look them up.
9. Much of poetry deals in images⁵. Think about the pictures that form in your mind as you listen to the different parts of the poem.
10. Write your response to a poem down either just for yourself or to share with someone through your journal.

⁵ You'll learn more about similes and metaphors later.

Poetry

Jabberwocky⁶

Lewis Carroll



Tw'as brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought --
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

And, has thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!
He chortled in his joy.

Tw'as brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

⁶ From *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, 1872



Reading
Volume II
Issue 18
Pages 8-9

Poetry

Poetry Using Everyday English

Still not sure about how to approach a poem? Here's a chance to try it out on a poem that uses everyday language.

1. Read the poem "Jeanie by David Budbill" in your TV 411 hand-out (pp 8-9) and discuss it in your class, using the activities in the hand-book as your guide.
2. Watch the poet Jimmy Santiago Baca work with a group of learners to help them make meaning from the poem.
3. Discuss what he does and how he does it. Did the people in the video discover meaning in the poem that you did not think of? What connections did these students make between the feelings expressed in the poem and their own lives⁷.
4. Try your hand at writing a poem about your own life. Decide on a mood (happy, sad; frustrated; angry) and select some words you want to include. Write your poem in your journal. It is up to you if you want to share what you wrote with the other students. If you do want to share it later on with others, put a copy in your portfolio.

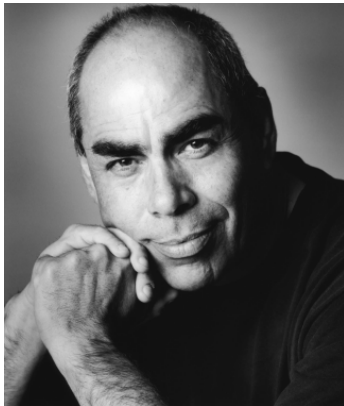
⁷ We know that smart readers connect their own experience to what they are reading. Making these connections helps them understand and remember what they read.

Poetry

Why Write Poetry?

Writers often choose poetry as a way to express ideas and feelings. Poetry allows them to be creative and play with language in different ways.

Some writers have used poetry as a way to escape reality and imagine another world. Others have used language to tell a story or bring a character to life. Here the story of one writer for you to get to know and discuss.



Jimmy Santiago Baca, Poet

Biography: Jimmy Santiago Baca

Jimmy Santiago Baca was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1952. Abandoned by his parents at the age of two, he lived with one of his grandparents for several years before being placed in an orphanage. He wound up living on the streets, and at the age of twenty-one he was convicted on charges of drug possession and incarcerated. He served six years in prison, four of them in isolation. During this time, Baca taught himself to read and write, and he began to compose poetry. A fellow inmate convinced him to submit some of his poems to Mother Jones magazine, then edited by the Denise Levertov. Levertov printed Baca's poems and began corresponding with him, eventually finding a publisher for his first book.

Immigrants in Our Own Land, Baca's first major collection, was highly praised. In 1987, his semi-autobiographical novel in verse, *Martin and Meditations on the South Valley*, received the American Book Award for poetry, bringing Baca international acclaim. A self-styled "poet of the people," Baca conducts writing workshops with children and adults at countless elementary, junior high and high schools, colleges, universities, reservations, barrio community centers, white ghettos, housing projects, correctional facilities and prisons from coast to coast.

Poetry

6 Questions About Jimmy Baca



Name _____ Date _____

Write six questions that can be answered by reading the short biography of Jimmy Santiago Baca.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.



Poetry

In His Own Voice

Let's use additional resources to find out more about Jimmy Baca and why he writes poetry.

Resources

Reading

Volume II
Issue 19
Pages 8-9

Video

Episode 19
"Coming into
Language"

1. Read "Through Language I Was Free" written by Jimmy Santiago Baca (TV 411; Issue 19; pages 8-9). Complete the exercises and discuss them with your class.
2. Watch and listen to Jimmy Baca talk about his experience of learning to read and write. (TV 411, Episode 19) Review the quotes on the following page before watching the video.

Poetry

Watch, Listen, Think



One of the key skills for success in school, life and work, is the ability to listen well and make sense of what you hear. As you listen to Jimmy Santiago Baca's story, think about the statements he makes. Sometimes the answer lies in what Jimmy says, sometimes you need to think about them and infer the information.

You can write down notes as you listen or you can try to remember the answers and write them down later. Then watch the video segment a second time to double check and clarify what Jimmy Baca says. Discuss the answers with your group. **Read the quotes below before you watch the video so you know what to listen for.**

Baca *"Most of the education I got came from listening to stories."*

What examples does he give?

Baca *"Most of the education I got came from listening to stories."*

What examples does he give?

Baca (As a kid.....), *"I had a love of life, not a love of books."*

What does he mean by that?

Baca *"I didn't feel I belonged in school... I felt displaced... My life in the classroom was anxiety ridden and torturous."*

Why did he feel that way?

Baca (Knowledge was) *"like a bank account - theirs was full; mine was empty."* *"You have to have people pay attention to you, because it is the only way of validating your existence"*

What happened when people ignored Jimmy Baca as a kid? What happened when he learned to read?

Jimmy Baca compares physical work with mental work, such as reading.

What example does he give?



Poetry

Your Biography Poem About Baca

Name _____ Date _____

Reread the biography of Jimmy Baca and then write a biography poem about him.

1. Baca

2. Abandoned...

3. Was placed in...

4. Living...

5. Convicted...

6. Served...

7. Learned...

8. Achieved international...

9. Self-styled...

10. Jimmy Santiago Baca



Remember

- Keep your wording relatively short and punchy. This is a poem, not an essay.
- Work with a friend and split the task.
- Read the lines aloud to yourself to get the rhythm right.

Poetry

Interpret Poem

Your teacher will select a poem for you to read. Use everything you have learned so far to enjoy, discuss, and interpret the poem.

Remember:



“Poets utter great and
wise things which they
do not themselves
understand.”

Plato (427-347 B.C.), Greek Philosopher

Poetry

The People's Poet



"For there's no foe like fear,
and there's no friend like cheer,
And sunshine will flash at our call;
So crown Love as King,
and let us all sing -
"It's a mighty good world after all."

Robert Service

On September 16, 1958, an obituary in the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph said: "A GREAT POET died last week in Lancieux, France at the age of 84. He was not a poet's poet. Fancy-Dan dilettantes will dispute the description "great."

He was a people's poet. To the people he was great. They understood him, and knew that any verse carrying the by-line of Robert W. Service would be a lilting thing, clear and power-packed, beating out a story with a dramatic intensity that made the nerves tingle."

Robert Service once said, "The only society I like is that which is rough and tough – and the tougher the better. That's where you get down to bedrock and meet human people."

Service was born in England where he wrote his first poem on his sixth birthday. Years later he became famous for such poems as "The Shooting of Dan McGrew," "The Cremation of Sam McGee," "The Harpy," and "The Spell of the Yukon."

As a child, Service avidly read adventure novels, dreamed of going to sea, but instead, to his family's relief, took a job at the local bank. At work his greatest adventures were limited to reading the poems of Browning, Tennyson, Thackeray and Keats when no one was looking. However, he soon discovered the music Halls of Glasgow: a raucous environment where Service developed an ear for the vernacular and an appreciation for life outside of the mainstream. He began to see vice as more interesting than virtue, and desired for himself a career on the stage. He started reciting poetry and appearing in local plays. However, instead of an acting career, he attended the University of Glasgow and studied English Language and Literature.

After an instructor wrote on the bottom of one of his papers, "This is a perverse and obscene bit of work..." Service challenged him to a fight. The challenge was not accepted. Disenchanted with university life, Service left school, returned to work at the bank, and quickly managed to triple his salary.

The Sceptic

My Father Christmas passed away
When I was barely seven.
At twenty-one, alack-a-day,
I lost my hope in heaven.

Yet not in either lies the curse;
The hell of it's because
I don't know which loss hurt the worse-
My God or Santa Claus

Robert Service

He stashed away money and planned his next adventure. In 1895, at age 21, Robert announced to his family he planned to leave for Western Canada and become a cowboy. Shortly afterward, with a copy of Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Amateur Emigrant" in his bag, he set sail, steerage class, for Montreal.

A Drifter's Life

From the port on the Saint Lawrence River he took a train across Canada until he reached Vancouver Island. Having missed cowboy country, Service went to work on a farm. This was shortly followed by a series of other jobs including being "a cow juice jerker," Service's term for a dairy farm hand. After a stint as a storekeeper, at age 23, he went down to Seattle and San Francisco where he mostly drifted, working when he had to, practicing the banjo and six string guitar when he didn't.

After a while he returned to Victoria and got a job at the Canadian Bank of Commerce. He shortly transferred to Kamloops and then was assigned to Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory in 1904. There, he got to know the editor of the local newspaper, the Whitehorse Star. Having heard him reciting poetry, the editor suggested he write something of his own that reflected life in the Yukon.

Robert started looking around, chewing on what he might write. After returning one evening from a long walk, Service heard a loud noise coming from one of the bars. He thought to himself, "A bunch of the boys are whooping it up!" This line begins his poem, "The Shooting of Dan McGrew."

Later, he heard a tale about a prospector who had cremated his partner. Soon after, while working in the bank, he spotted the name of a customer: Sam McGee, and he began writing, "The Cremation of Sam McGee."

These and other poems about the Yukon Territory started a remarkable career that yielded 45 verse collections and over 1,000 poems. He not only talked the talk of the men who worked the Yukon territory, he walked the walk of history. In 1912, after finishing Rhymes of a Rolling Stone, he worked as a war correspondent in the Balkan War. A pacifist, he later served as an ambulance driver on the front in World War I and became a war correspondent for the Canadian government. These experiences too became the source for powerful poems.



Robert Service

The Shooting of Dan McGrew

A bunch of the boys were whooping it up in the Malamute saloon;
The kid that handles the music-box was hitting a jag-time tune;
Back of the bar, in a solo game, sat Dangerous Dan McGrew,
And watching his luck was his light-o'-love, the lady that's known as Lou.
When out of the night, which was fifty below, and into the din and glare,
There stumbled a miner fresh from the creeks, dog-dirty, and loaded for bear.
He looked like a man with a foot in the grave and scarcely the strength of a louse,
Yet he tilted a poke of dust on the bar, and he called for drinks for the house.
There was none could place the stranger's face, though we searched ourselves for a clue;
But we drank his health, and the last to drink was Dangerous Dan McGrew.

There's men that somehow just grip your eyes, and hold them hard like a spell;
And such was he, and he looked to me like a man who had lived in hell;
With a face most hair, and the dreary stare of a dog whose day is done,
As he watered the green stuff in his glass, and the drops fell one by one.
Then I got to figgering who he was, and wondering what he'd do,
And I turned my head--and there watching him was the lady that's known as Lou.

His eyes went rubbering round the room, and he seemed in a kind of daze,
Till at last that old piano fell in the way of his wandering gaze.
The rag-time kid was having a drink; there was no one else on the stool,
So the stranger stumbles across the room, and flops down there like a fool.
In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway,
Then he clutched the keys with his talon hands--my God! but that man could play.

Were you ever out in the Great Alone, when the moon was awful clear,
And the icy mountains hemmed you in with a silence you most could hear;
With only the howl of a timber wolf, and you camped there in the cold,
A half-dead thing in a stark, dead world, clean mad for the muck called gold;
While high overhead, green, yellow, and red, the North Lights swept in bars?--
Then you've a hunch what the music meant...hunger and might and the stars.

And hunger not of the belly kind, that's banished with bacon and beans,
But the gnawing hunger of lonely men for a home and all that it means;
For a fireside far from the cares that are, four walls and a roof above;
But oh! so cramful of cosy joy, and crowded with a woman's love--
A woman dearer than all the world, and true as Heaven is true--
(God! how ghastly she looks through her rouge,--the lady that's known as Lou.)

Then on a sudden the music changed, so soft that you scarce could hear;
But you felt that your life had been looted clean of all that it once held dear;
That someone had stolen the woman you loved; that her love was a devil's lie;
That your guts were gone, and the best for you was to crawl away and die.
'Twas the crowning cry of a heart's despair, and it thrilled you through and through--
"I guess I'll make it a spread misere," said Dangerous Dan McGrew.

The music almost dies away...then it burst like a pent-up flood;
And it seemed to say, "Repay, repay," and my eyes were blind with blood.
The thought came back of an ancient wrong, and it stung like a frozen lash,
And the lust awoke to kill, to kill...then the music stopped with a crash,
And the stranger turned, and his eyes they burned in a most peculiar way;

In a buckskin shirt that was glazed with dirt he sat, and I saw him sway;
Then his lips went in in a kind of grin, and he spoke, and his voice was calm,
And "Boys," says he, "you don't know me, and none of you care a damn;
But I want to state, and my words are straight, and I'll bet my poke they're true,
That one of you is a hound of hell...and that one is Dan McGrew."

Then I ducked my head and the lights went out, and two guns blazed in the dark;
And a woman screamed, and the lights went up, and two men lay stiff and stark.
Pitched on his head, and pumped full of lead, was Dangerous Dan McGrew,
While the man from the creeks lay clutched to the breast of the lady that's known as Lou.

These are the simple facts of the case, and I guess I ought to know.
They say that the stranger was crazed with "hooch," and I'm not denying it's so.
I'm not so wise as the lawyer guys, but strictly between us two--
The woman that kissed him and--pinched his poke--was the lady known as Lou.



Robert Service

The Cremation of Sam McGee

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee,
Where the cotton blooms and blows.
Why he left his home in the South to roam
'Round the Pole, God only knows.
He was always cold, but the land of gold
Seemed to hold him like a spell;
Though he'd often say in his homely way
That he'd "sooner live in hell".

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way
Over the Dawson trail.
Talk of your cold! through the parka's fold
It stabbed like a driven nail.
If our eyes we'd close, then the lashes froze
Till sometimes we couldn't see;
It wasn't much fun, but the only one
To whimper was Sam McGee.

And that very night, as we lay packed tight
In our robes beneath the snow,
And the dogs were fed, and the stars o'erhead
Were dancing heel and toe,
He turned to me, and "Cap," says he,
"I'll cash in this trip, I guess;
And if I do, I'm asking that you
Won't refuse my last request."

Well, he seemed so low that I couldn't say no;
Then he says with a sort of moan:
"It's the cursed cold, and it's got right hold
Till I'm chilled clean through to the bone.

Yet 'tain't being dead -- it's my awful dread
Of the icy grave that pains;
So I want you to swear that, foul or fair,
You'll cremate my last remains."

A pal's last need is a thing to heed,
So I swore I would not fail;
And we started on at the streak of dawn;
But God! he looked ghastly pale.
He crouched on the sleigh, and he raved all day
Of his home in Tennessee;
And before nightfall a corpse was all
That was left of Sam McGee.

There wasn't a breath in that land of death,
And I hurried, horror-driven,
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get rid,
Because of a promise given;
It was lashed to the sleigh, and it seemed to say:
"You may tax your brawn and brains,
But you promised true, and it's up to you
To cremate those last remains."

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid,
And the trail has its own stern code.
In the days to come, though my lips were dumb,
In my heart how I cursed that load.
In the long, long night, by the lone firelight,
While the huskies, round in a ring,
Howled out their woes to the homeless snows --
O God! how I loathed the thing.

And every day that quiet clay
Seemed to heavy and heavier grow;
And on I went, though the dogs were spent
And the grub was getting low;
The trail was bad, and I felt half mad,
But I swore I would not give in;
And I'd often sing to the hateful thing,
And it hearkened with a grin.

Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge,
And a derelict there lay;
It was jammed in the ice, but I saw in a trice
It was called the "Alice May".
And I looked at it, and I thought a bit,
And I looked at my frozen chum;

Then "Here," said I, with a sudden cry,
"Is my cre-ma-tor-eum."

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor,
And I lit the boiler fire;
Some coal I found that was lying around,
And I heaped the fuel higher;
The flames just soared, and the furnace roared --
Such a blaze you seldom see;
And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal,
And I stuffed in Sam McGee.

Then I made a hike, for I didn't like
To hear him sizzle so;
And the heavens scowled, and the huskies howled,
And the wind began to blow.
It was icy cold, but the hot sweat rolled
Down my cheeks, and I don't know why;
And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak
Went streaking down the sky.

I do not know how long in the snow
I wrestled with grisly fear;
But the stars came out and they danced about
Ere again I ventured near;
I was sick with dread, but I bravely said:
"I'll just take a peep inside.
I guess he's cooked, and it's time I looked"; . . .
Then the door I opened wide.

And there sat Sam, looking cool and calm,
In the heart of the furnace roar;
And he wore a smile you could see a mile,
And he said: "Please close that door.
It's fine in here, but I greatly fear
You'll let in the cold and storm --
Since I left Plumtree, down in Tennessee,
It's the first time I've been warm."

There are strange things done in the midnight sun
By the men who toil for gold;
The Arctic trails have their secret tales
That would make your blood run cold;
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,
But the queerest they ever did see
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge
I cremated Sam McGee.