Guided Practice

Model and Apply

- Remind students that **hyperbole,** or gross exaggeration, is a characteristic of some ballads. Poets may use hyperbole to add humor or to emphasize an important point.
- Have students read the first stanza of the poem. Point out that it is unlikely that a man who is nearly dead would be clothed for his funeral and sitting in a barroom. Explain that this is an example of hyperbole.
- Tell students that in this case, the poet's use of hyperbole does not add humor to the poem because the poem has a serious tone. Explain that the poet describes a highly unlikely situation in order for the young cowboy to make an important point about life.
- **Think-Pair-Share** Have students work in pairs to discuss how the poem might be different if the young cowboy had already died and readers learned about his life from another source. Ask students to share their ideas in a class discussion. (See p. T28.)



The Dying Cowboy

traditional American ballad

As I rode out by Tom Sherman's barroom,
As I rode out so early one day,
'Twas there I espied a handsome young cowboy,
All dressed in white linen, all clothed for the grave.

"I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy,"
These words he did say as I boldly stepped by.
"Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story,
For I'm shot in the breast and I know I must die. Ⓐ

"Then beat your drum slowly and play your fife lowly,
And play the dead march as you carry me along,
And take me to the graveyard and throw the sod o'er me,
For I'm a young cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

"'Twas once in the saddle I used to go dashing,
'Twas once in the saddle I used to go gay,
But I first took to drinking and then to card playing,
Got shot in the body and I'm dying today. Ⓑ

"Let sixteen gamblers come handle my coffin,
Let sixteen young cowboys come sing me a song,

The Bronco Buster (1910) by Frederic Remington.

Ⓐ **Read and Discuss** What have we learned so far?

Ⓑ **Reading Focus** **Using Form to Find Meaning** What is the main idea of this stanza? What information does it offer readers?

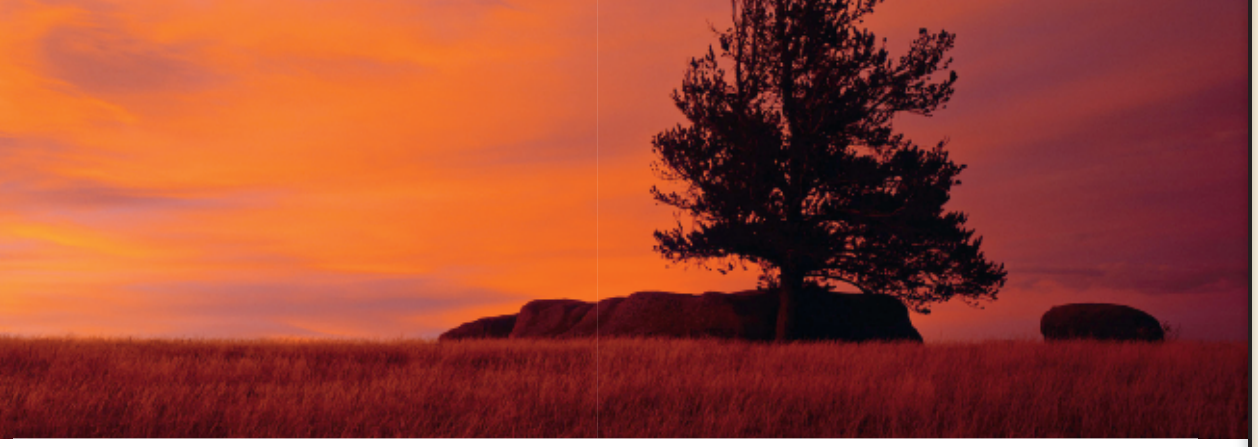
Differentiating Instruction

Auditory/Musical Learners

Tell students that the ballad is a musical form as well as a poetic one. You may wish to have students listen to Johnny Cash's recording of "The Streets of Laredo" or another ballad. Have students work in small groups to find examples of musical ballads. Have students play or describe their ballads for the class and discuss how each ballad presents an archetype or expresses a view about life.

Verbal Learners

Divide the class into seven groups. Remind students that each stanza of the poem contains an important idea. Have each group read its assigned stanza and discuss the main idea. After groups have finished, have a representative from each group present the main idea of the stanza to the class.



Take me to the green valley and lay the sod o'er me,
For I'm a poor cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

"Go bring me back a cup of cool water
To cool my parched lips," this cowboy then said.
Before I returned, his soul had departed
And gone to his Maker—the cowboy lay dead.

We swung our ropes slowly and rattled our spurs lowly,
And gave a wild whoop as we carried him on,
For we all loved our comrade, so brave, young and handsome,
We all loved our comrade, although he'd done wrong. C

C **Literary Perspectives** **Analyzing Archetypes** What might the cowboy represent? What elements of his character are common in other stories?

Vocabulary **comrade** (KAHM rad) *n.*: companion; friend; associate.

Literary Perspectives

The following perspective will help you analyze the archetypes in this ballad.

Analyzing Archetypes Patterns that appear in literature across cultures and are repeated through the ages are called **archetypes.** An archetype can be a character, plot, image, or setting. For example, there are stories about heroes on quests in both ancient myths and in modern movies. In this ballad, concentrate on the character of the dying cowboy. How is he like other characters you know? Notice the question above that guides you in using this perspective.

Think About/Talk About

Comprehension

A Read and Discuss

Possible response: *We have learned that the young cowboy is dressed in white linen, ready for the grave, has been shot in the breast, and knows he will die. We have also learned that the narrator is a cowboy.*

B Reading Focus

Possible response: *The main idea of this stanza is that the dying cowboy's choice to live recklessly has led to his untimely death. The stanza provides details to support this main idea.*

Analysis

C Literary Perspectives

Possible response: *The cowboy might represent the lone hero with a tragic flaw. His death provides a moral lesson to others.*

Literary Perspectives

Use the Literary Perspectives to differentiate the literature for a variety of students.

For All Students

Tell students that most poems, stories, and other forms of literature contain conflict. Often, this conflict is brought about because of a flaw possessed by the main character. Have students read the selection and identify the flaw of the main character that creates a problem for him.

Advanced Learners

Acceleration Have each student write a ballad about a cowboy or any other archetype. Remind students that archetypes can involve settings, plots, or character. Students may wish to set their ballad to music, or add visuals and images to a recited ballad.

Review

Independent Practice

Reading Focus

Answers:

1. *Sam McGee is cremated. The cowboy is buried by other cowboys.*
2. *Sam McGee, dying of the cold, asks his friend to cremate him. Sam comes back to life in the fire. A cowboy's last requests for his own funeral and burial are granted.*

Vocabulary Check

3. *c* **4.** *d* **5.** *a* **6.** *b*

Literary Focus

Possible Responses:

7. *"[The cold] stabbed like a driven nail"; "chilled clean through to the bone"*
8. *He thinks that Sam whines too much about the cold weather.*
9. *He uses hyperbole to add humor.*
10. *The cowboy has spent a lot of time drinking and gambling.*
11. *The cowboy dies with regrets, as many characters do. A modern version could be a businessperson who is killed as a result of dishonest business deals.*
12. *Examples: "'it's my awful dread of the icy grave that pains;" "I didn't like to hear him sizzle so."*
13. *It tells a sad story and has rhythm and a refrain ("For I'm a . . . cowboy and I know I've done wrong").*

Writing Focus

Alternative Prompt for Writers Gaining Proficiency Students may struggle to make connections between imagery and ballads. Have them list images that come to mind when they read the texts.

What Do You Think Now?

Tell students to review the main events of each poem that they listed in their Reading Focus charts. Then, have students think about what each of the characters that died would have to say about life.

Applying Your Skills

The Cremation of Sam McGee / The Dying Cowboy

Respond and Think Critically

Reading Focus

Read with a Purpose

1. What last request does each speaker fulfill?

Reading Skills: Using Form to Find Meaning

2. Complete the charts you began while reading. Then, add a row to each chart and write a short summary of each ballad.

Poem: The Cremation of Sam McGee

Stanza Number	Main Idea or Events
1	
2	
My Summary:	

Vocabulary Check

Match each Vocabulary word with its synonym.

3. loathed	**a.** tired
4. tax	**b.** friend
5. spent	**c.** hated
6. comrade	**d.** burden

Literary Focus

Literary Analysis

7. **Identify** List two or three details from "The Cremation of Sam McGee" that help you picture the frozen landscape or feel the cold.
8. **Infer** Based on the language he uses to describe Sam McGee and his actions, what does the speaker think of Sam?
9. **Analyze** How does Service's writing style make a dire event—death—come across as light and odd instead of sad and dreary?
10. **Analyze** What details about his life help us understand what has happened to cause the dying cowboy's death?
11. **Literary Perspectives** In what ways is the dying cowboy timeless? How might the archetype of the lone cowboy be represented in a modern story?

Literary Skills: Ballad and Hyperbole

12. **Analyze** How does the use of hyperbole contribute to the humor of "The Cremation of Sam McGee"? Use examples in your response.
13. **Analyze** "The Dying Cowboy" is a ballad, typical of the ballads sung by cowboys to help time pass more quickly. What characteristics of ballads does this poem have?

Writing Focus

Think as a Reader/Writer

Use It in Your Writing How does the use of imagery bring the ballads to life? What feelings do the images evoke? Explain, and give examples.

What Do You Think Now? What ideas about life are these poems expressing?

SKILLS FOCUS p. 724

Literary Skills
- Analyze ballads.
- Analyze hyperbole.

Reading Skills
- Use a poem's form to find its meaning.

Writing Skills
- Identify and analyze literary elements.