SONG OF THE SKY LOOM

O our Mother the Earth, O our Father the Sky,
Your children are we, and with tired backs
We bring you the gifts you love.
Then weave for us a garment of brightness;
May the warp be the white light of morning,
May the weft be the red light of evening,
May the fringes be the falling rain,
May the border be the standing rainbow.
Thus weave for us a garment of brightness,
That we may walk fittingly where birds sing,
That we may walk fittingly where grass is green,
O our Mother the Earth, O our Father the Sky.

1. This poem is really a prayer. To whom is the prayer addressed?
2. What do the Tewa Indians ask for in their prayer?
3. The North American Indians chanted their poems, often with dancing and instrumental accompaniment. The poems usually were performed for a specific purpose, as a routine part of tribal ritual.
   What aspects of this poem make it especially suitable for oral presentation?
4. In a poem, the speaker is the voice that “talks” to the reader. Speaker and poet are not necessarily synonymous, although a poet may choose to speak in his or her own voice. A poet may also create a separate voice, or persona; for example, an adult poet might a poem as if it were spoken by a child. Who is the speaker in this poem? What makes this speaker appropriate for a selection of oral literature?
5. Language that communicates ideas beyond the ordinary meanings of words is called figurative language. The general term figurative language includes specific figures of speech, one of which is personification, the attribution of human qualities to an animal, object, or idea. How is the first line of the poem an example of personification? What effect is created by this figure of speech?
6. A metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two unlike things that have something in common. An extended metaphor compares them in several ways, making the comparison more detailed and complete.
   An extended metaphor lies at the heart of this poem. What does the poem compare to “a garment of brightness”? Identify the various aspects of the comparison.
7. Notice that this poem begins and ends with the same line. This line is a refrain, a line or lines repeated with some regularity throughout the poem. What is the effect of this refrain? Other example of refrain occurs in this poem?
   Another kind of repetition is repetend, the reiteration of a word or phrase in part or all of a poem. Find examples of this literary technique in the poem. Why are the repetitions of words, phrases, and lines effective in a chant?
8. The theme is the main idea in a work of literature. It is the writer’s perception about life or humanity shared with the reader. Themes are seldom stated directly and may reveal themselves only through careful reading and thought.
   The themes in this poem concern the world view of the Tewa Indians. What is their attitude toward nature? How do they perceive the deity?
SUN, MY RELATIVE

Sun, my relative
Be good coming out
Do something good for us
Make me work
So I can do anything I wish in the garden.
I hoe, I plant corn, I irrigate.

You, Sun be good going down at sunset.
We lay down to sleep
I want to feel good
While I sleep you come up.
Go on your course many times
Make good things for us men.

1. What does the speaker ask of the sun? How does the speaker perceive the sun?
2. What activities does the speaker engage in? What kind of life does the speaker want?
3. What relationship between human beings and nature apparently existed in the Havasupai culture? What lines in this poem serve as clues?

Questions for THE WAR GOD’S HORSE SONG
1. Find lines that illustrate each of the following qualities in the horse: swiftness, beauty, supernatural powers.
2. What do you think is meant by the line, “I am wealthy from my horse”?
3. What do you think the speaker means by the last line of the poem?
4. On what occasion do you think this poem was sung?
5. A simile is a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison, usually with the words like or as, between two basically unlike things that have something in common. Note how the similes in this poem compare parts of the horse to things in nature.

Why do you think the three similes in lines 4-6 are clustered together?
How might the horse’s body resemble an “eagle-feathered arrow? Its tail, a “trailing black cloud”?
Restate lines 12-13 in the form of a simile.
THE WAR GOD’S HORSE SONG

I am the Turquoise Woman’s son
On top of Belted Mountain beautiful horses
  slim like a weasel

My horse has a hoof like striped agate
  His fetlock is like fine eagle plume
  His legs are like quick lightning.

My horse’s body is like an eagle-feathered arrow
My horse has a tail like a trailing black cloud
  I put flexible goods on my horse’s back

The Holy Wind blows through his mane
  His mane is made of rainbows

My horse’s ears are made of round corn
My horse’s eyes are made of stars
My horse’s head is made of mixed waters
  (from the holy waters)
  (he never knows thirst)
My horse’s teeth are made of white shell
The long rainbow is in his mouth for with it I guide him

When my horse neighs
Different-colored horses follow
  When my horse neighs
Different-colored sheep follow

I am wealthy from my horse

  Before me peaceful
  Behind me peaceful
  Under me peaceful
  Over me peaceful
  Around me peaceful
Peaceful voice when he neighs
I am everlasting and peaceful
I stand for my horse