**Poems to Practice Analyzing Figurative Language**

**Overview**: We will discuss these in class, along with some in the chapter on figurative language in *IP.* While you’re reading these, annotate them so you can find the figures of speech. You might also annotate them in other ways, just for practice—rhyme, rhythm, symbolism, etc.

More specifically, in these three poems look for **metaphors** (direct and implied), **similes**, and **personification**.

Look also for more subtle uses of language that have **both literal and figurative meanings** that might both be in play, especially in the solstice poem. You might need to look some words up for that one to get their double meaning. For example, a “weeping birch” refers to a particular kind of birch tree with branches that droop down like a weeping willow.

This is also a good poem to consider how **patterns of images**, along with figurative language, can lead to a particular interpretation. In this solstice poem, for instance, a winter holiday celebrated widely in the ancient pagan world and widely revived in our own times is described in terms that bring the specifically Christian solstice celebration (Christmas) to mind, as well.

**Toward The Winter Solstice** By[Timothy Steele](http://www.poemhunter.com/timothy-steele/poems/) 2006

Although the roof is just a story high,  
It dizzies me a little to look down.  
I lariat-twirl the rope of Christmas lights  
And cast it to the weeping birch's crown;  
A dowel into which I've screwed a hook  
Enables me to reach, lift, drape, and twine  
The cord among the boughs so that the bulbs  
Will accent the tree's elegant design.  
  
Friends, passing home from work or shopping, pause  
And call up commendations or critiques.  
I make adjustments. Though a potpourri  
Of Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Jews, and Sikhs,  
We all are conscious of the time of year;  
We all enjoy its colorful displays  
And keep some festival that mitigates  
The dwindling warmth and compass of the days.  
  
Some say that L.A. doesn't suit the Yule,  
But UPS vans now like magi make  
Their present-laden rounds, while fallen leaves  
Are gaily resurrected in their wake;  
The desert lifts a full moon from the east  
And issues a dry Santa Ana breeze,  
And valets at chic restaurants will soon  
Be tending flocks of cars and SUV's.  
  
And as the neighborhoods sink into dusk  
The fan palms scattered all across town stand  
More calmly prominent, and this place seems  
A vast oasis in the Holy Land.  
This house might be a caravansary,  
The tree a kind of cordial fountainhead  
Of welcome, looped and decked with necklaces  
And ceintures of green, yellow, blue, and red.  
  
Some wonder if the star of Bethlehem  
Occurred when Jupiter and Saturn crossed;  
It's comforting to look up from this roof  
And feel that, while all changes, nothing's lost,  
To recollect that in antiquity  
The winter solstice fell in Capricorn  
And that, in the Orion Nebula,  
From swirling gas, new stars are being born.

**After great pain, a formal feeling comes –**

The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –

The stiff Heart questions ‘was it He, that bore,’

And ‘Yesterday, or Centuries before’?

The Feet, mechanical, go round –

A Wooden way

Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –

Regardless grown,

A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

This is the Hour of Lead –

Remembered, if outlived,

As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –

First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

By Emily Dickinson

-------

**“Hope” is the thing with feathers -**

That perches in the soul -

And sings the tune without the words -

And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -

And sore must be the storm -

That could abash the little Bird

That kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chillest land -

And on the strangest Sea -

Yet - never - in Extremity,

It asked a crumb - of me.

By Emily Dickinson