



Ballads

And Sir Patrick Spens

Ballads (p. 36)

- 13th and 14th century
 - Oral tradition
 - Communicate news
 - Tell both fiction and non-fiction
 - Express opinions
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- When commoners learned how to read and write ballads became less popular.

Improvisation

- Ballads kept changing
 - Often told by different singers
 - Own interpretation
 - One main event
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- Story starts at the climax
 - Listener has to make up the details
 - Story is rather simple
 - Mainly iambic rhythm (*jambisch*)



Characteristics

1. Simple story
2. Simple language
3. An unhappy ending (betrayal and death)
4. The supernatural and superstition
5. Repetition
6. Story jumps from one image to another without explanation
7. Four-line stanzas with an ABCB rhyming pattern
8. Mainly iambic rhythm: 4-3-4-3 (4 stressed syllables in lines 1 and 3, 3 stressed syllables in lines 2 and 4)



Sir Patrick Spens

Plot

Real historical event:

- Loss of a ship
- Returning from a wedding in Norway, 1281
- Full of nobles
- No official record of a Sir Patrick Spens



Extra information:

- Sir Patrick Spens is a Scottish nobleman
- Narrative poem – *verhalend gedicht*
- Consists of Quatrains – stanzas of four lines
- Unclear which king sent the men to sea
- Stanza 4: Sir Patrick is upset (tear blinded his eye):
 - It is winter (possibly)
 - The sea is very rough
- Bad omen: a circle rounding the new moon
 - They possibly saw a halo
 - It could have been a lunar eclipse too

End of the poem

- Sir Patrick and the other noblemen drown
- Sir Patrick is the only one who was really brave
 - Chivalry!
- When they're all dead, Sir Patrick has them at his feet



Resources

- <http://www.luminarium.org/medlit/manasseh.jpg>
- https://society6.com/product/sir-patrick-spens_stretched-canvas
- <https://www.tribpub.com/gdpr/chicagonow.com/>
- http://www.webexhibits.org/poetry/explore_famous_ballad_background.html