**How do the ballads below tell readers about the culture of the Middle Ages?**

Medieval ballads were anonymous narrative poems, intended to be sung with the accompaniment of music. Popular ballads were collected and later published by bishop Percy in the 18th century. They had a simple musical rhymed meter; being composed in short stanzas of two or four lines. They were sung by balladeers and often accompanied by dance. Generally, in every ballad, there is a refrain: a phrase or a line, which is repeated again and again after a stanza. Use of colloquial language is an indispensable feature of a ballad: they use day-to-day, common words and stock (azioni) phrases easy to be memorized because more of them were illiterative. The story is often told through dialogues or narratives. The traditional ballad had no single author; rather, it was the product of many poets. Ballads are generally are impersonal, since the story-teller does not intrude. Ballads usually have an abrupt (improvviso) and unexpected opening, they don't provide any details about the subject matter, the surroundings, atmosphere or environment. The ending of many ballads may also be abrupt and unexpected. We can classify ballads: ballads of magic, ballads about the rivalry between the English and the Scottish people, ballad of love and domestic tragedy, ballads of outlaws, with the cycle of Robin Hood. Ballads have helped to recreate the medieval values and the typical habits of the common people.

From the ballads “The Wife of Usher’s Well” and “The Unquiet Grave” we can understand the role of the woman in the Middle Ages. The women were mother, wife or nun. The woman was considered humble, shy and morally fragile.

In the “The Unquiet Grave” but also in “The Wife of Usher’s well” and in “The three ravens” another important aspect of the medieval culture comes from: resurrection. In the first ballad a lover speaks with his death girl, indeed in the second one the three sons come to life after death. Medieval people believed to the resurrection because was one of the most important concept of religion.

**How do the ballads you analyzed so far tell readers about the idea of love and death in the Middle Ages?**

Medieval ballads were anonymous narrative poems, intended to be sung with the accompaniment of music. Popular ballads were collected and later published by bishop Percy in the 18th century. They had a simple musical rhymed meter; being composed in short stanzas of two or four lines. They were sung by balladeers and often accompanied by dance. Generally, in every ballad, there is a refrain: a phrase or a line, which is repeated again and again after a stanza. Use of colloquial language is an indispensable feature of a ballad: they use day-to-day, common words and stock (azioni) phrases easy to be memorized because more of them were illiterative. The story is often told through dialogues or narratives. The traditional ballad had no single author; rather, it was the product of many poets. Ballads are generally are impersonal, since the story-teller does not intrude. Ballads usually have an abrupt (improvviso) and unexpected opening, they don't provide any details about the subject matter, the surroundings, atmosphere or environment. The ending of many ballads may also be abrupt and unexpected. We can classify ballads: ballads of magic, ballads about the rivalry between the English and the Scottish people, ballad of love and domestic tragedy, ballads of outlaws, with the cycle of Robin Hood. Ballads have helped to recreate the medieval values and the typical habits of the common people.

I think that the ballad that tells about the idea of love and death so far is “The unquiet grave” for love between a woman and a men, while, for love between a mother and her sons “The Wife of Usher’s Well”.

The ballad “The Wife of Usher’s Well” deals a tragic story: the death of three sons and the suffering of their mother. The characters are sketched, they are not studied psychologically because common people could not understand very complex characterizations.

In poems the conception of love is spiritual: woman is considered an angel, and who has a noble hearth can strives on spiritual safety. Even if, in the real life, the woman must be only a wife, a mother or a nun. She was considered humble, shy and morally fragile.

Regarding the conception of death, death is well of fear. Soul of the dead person can suffer a punition or he or she can be awarded for eternity. Death was the prelude of divine judgment.