

Medieval Ballads



Definition

Narrative songs handed down orally

Ballad comes from a French word meaning
“dance song”



Features

- Simple and direct - stresses a single incident
- Begins in the midst of the incident
- Little or no background information
- Tells a story developed through dialogue or dialogue and narration
- Tells of ordinary people's dramatic events or legendary heroes
- Performed for an audience

Types

Folk Ballad - oldest type; composed by a local bard to remember important event

About the Most important story

Tone is tragic

Ends in death by accident, murder, suicide, or the return of the dead

Use of repetition - adds to melody, provides emphasis, heightens emotional effect

Some well known traditional folk ballads include *Lord Randall*, *The Three Ravens*, and others

Types

Minstrel Ballad

- Used themes of folk ballads and added setting atmosphere and characters' feelings
- Longer than folk ballad
- Less direct than folk ballad
- More literary than folk ballad
- A well known minstrel ballad is “Sir Patrick Spens/Spence.”

Content

- Quarrels among family members or lovers or friends
- Death
- War
- Fear of the unknown
- Lives of people
- Adventures of outlaws
- Tragic love

Subjects

- Quarrels among family members or lovers or friends
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Themes

- Love
- Courage
- Death
- Revenge
- Envy
- Rebellion
- Betrayal
- Remorse
- Loyalty
- Patriotism

Sound level

- Four-line stanzas
- Rhyme in lines 2 and 4
- Repetition of words, phrases, and lines
- Refrains
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