**Guide lines for the analyzes of poetry:**

1. Consider the expectation or the conjecture you can make reading the title. There is not correct or incorrect answer because you have still to read the poem, it is also important to consider the atmosphere the title may create.
2. Read the text.
3. Consider and analyze the layout (decide what its structure is like: what are its component parts and their function, how are the different component parts connected.
4. Carry out the denotative analysis: say in your own words, what the poem is about.
5. Analyze all the layers of connotation:
   1. Consider the sound devices used by the poet and explained its function (spiegare in che modo queste scelte stilistiche aggiungono significato al testo).
   2. Consider the lexical choices and the semantic fields chosen by the poet also consider verb tense’s choice and the overall effect created by that style. Remember you have to explain how the contribute to the meaning of the text.
   3. Consider the syntactical level that is the order in which the words have been arranged. Also consider punctuation, order of words, deviation (costruzione delle frasi che non seguono l’ordine sintattico della lingua).
   4. Analyze the figure of speech (metaphors and figures of all types) to se how they had meaning or contributed to the meaning of the text.

**BONNY BARBARA ALLEN**

The title focuses the reader’s attention on her proper name: the one of the girl. It also relies on alliteration of the sound “B” (“Bonny Barbara”). The reader may be curious to find out why the poet decide to write a ballad about a young girl.

Considering the layout the intelligent reader realizes that the poem is arranged to the into 8 stanzas of 4 lines each that is of 8 quatrains. From the analysis he or she can realizes that the name Barbara Allen recourses/is repeated 5 times in 8 stanzas and therefore he or she may now realize that not only is Barbara Allen the focus of the text but this is also repeated like a refrain.

In addition, the reader notices that all the line 4 rhymed and therefore expects repetition is a significant figure of the poem. It recourses features of a song.

The ballad is set in Autumn and tells about Sir John’s love for Barbara Allen, a young lady living in the countryside. He is going to die and he wants to meet the girl one last time and that is why he sends his men to ask Barbara to go and visit him. The lady is reluctant to go but she accept to see him at last. Unfortunately she tells him that his death would be better for her, she reminds him one dinner they were together, when he drunk so much and he was probably poisoned. His head he said was going round and round. It doesn’t take long for him to die and therefore he says goodbye to all his friends and asks them to be kind with Barbara. As soon as he left Barbara started to realize/to be aware that she was sad for his death. The tragic atmosphere is highlighting by dead bell of the town where Sir John use to live. The bells need to cry Sir John.

A connotative analysis of the sounds of the text/level of sounds displays the poet has resorted to frequent sound’s devices to make the text memorable and to focus on the tragic atmosphere of the story. He managed to get this effect by means of frequent use of the refrain: Barbara Allen is repeated over and over again, so that the listener or the dancer cannot forget that the protagonist of the text and the keeper of Sir John’s love is a young girl who has also the symbolic name of Barbara because it is the reason why the aristocratic man of the town is on the point of dying, Barbara is not only Barbara, she is also bonny. The informed reader indeed knows also that bonny means both beautiful and nice at looking and vigorous and strong and to tell the truth Barbara will survive even if she will eventually suffer while Sir John despites all his possibilities been he among all the thing an aristocrat.

This explains for the ballad to be tragic love story. It conforms to all the convections of the Middle Ages. Both of the social and cultural level and on the literary level. According to the social standards of the time, it was always women the ones were cruel and guilty, if they didn’t follow men’s expectations. Indeed during the Middle Ages and even later as well you can’t find no literary words, which deals with women’s tragic pain.

If you consider the semantic level of the ballad you will easily realize it is written in a very simple language so that the common people may understand it, the ballad also displays the use of dialect and the Scottish dialect to be more precise. The tragic love story is deal set in Autumn, at “Martinmas time”.

The choice of using the expression/phrase “Martinmas time” returns to the reader the idea of the importance of the religious code in society. Also it underlines how ordinary life was ruled by the cycles of nature. In order to create the settings and with the aim to introduce the characters the narrator provides the reader with just a few scathe the tear anyway enough to suggest scene and the situation.

You can understand that if you consider that “at Martinmas time” (line 1) and line 2, suffice to create the seasonal background. As for the characters the narrator adopts the same style: one of the protagonist is simply Sir John Graeme in the West Country.

The ballad starts in a way similar a fable, thus drawing immediately the attention of the reader. Indeed “It was in and about ...” reminds the convectional “once upon time”. The idea to use simple language to reach the audience is functional to create a mind picture of the story told. Consider for example the following lexical idioms: “country” (line 3), “town” (line 5), “place” (line 6 and 10), they are all together words easy to remember and very clear in the minds of the listener. There is not descriptive intent here: what matters here is the story and therefore narration and situation. What the composer is looking for is to allow the listeners of the ballad to create a very clear idea of what is going on in society and to be more precise the society of two time, and where and when there was a rigid and strict/clear cut division in social classes. If they weren’t so there wouldn’t be no need for the narrator to use 3 words to refer to a character who is only sketched. In the same way the listener comes across Barbara Allen who is not simply Barbara.