

The Ballad Tradition of the British Isles

Men and Women



Get Up and Bar the Door
IT fell about the Martinmas time,
And a gay time it was then,
When our goodwife got puddings to make,
And she's boild them in the pan.

The wind sae cauld blew south and north,
And blew into the floor;
Quoth our goodman to our goodwife,
'Gae out and bar the door.'

hand is in my hussyfskap,
Goodman, as ye may see;
An it shoud nae be barrd this hundred year,
It's no be barrd for me.'

y made a paction tween them twa,
They made it firm and sure,
That the first word whaeer shoud speak,
Shoud rise and bar the door.

Then by there came two gentlemen,
At twelve o clock at night,
And they could neither see house nor hall,
Nor coal nor candle-light.

'Now whether is this a rich man's house,
Or whether is it a poor?'
But neer a word wad ane o them speak,
For barring of the door.

And first they ate the white puddings,
And then they ate the black;
Tho muckle thought the goodwife to hersel,
Yet neer a word she spake.

Then said the one unto the other,
'Here, man, tak ye my knife;
Do ye tak aff the auld man's beard,
And I'll kiss the goodwife.'

'But there's nae water in the house,
And what shall we do than?'
'What ails ye at the pudding-broo,
That boils into the pan?'

O up then started our goodman,
An angry man was he:
'Will ye kiss my wife before my een,
And scad me wi pudding-bree?'

Then up and started our goodwife,

Gied three skips on the floor:
'Goodman, you've spoken the foremost word,
Get up and bar the door.'



Understanding

Task: Read through the ballad again.

Now cover up the text.

In your own words, write down the story as you understand it.

Task: Go back to the text.

Note down words and phrases you don't understand or are unfamiliar or unusual. Look up these words and phrases for their definitions and modern day translation.

[illegible]

Listen

Task: Listen to this version of the ballad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T35aaF2W0I>



Comment on this rendition of the ballad. Think about, for example, the voices, the pacing, the accents

Sung to Musical arrangement - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TtlohKJ750>



Sung to Musical arrangement - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbacJ_ngjeE



These are two very different versions of the ballad.
Which one did you prefer and why?

Comment on the voices

Comment on the arrangement

Language and Poetic Features

Task: Let's make some simple observations.

How many lines per stanza? _____

Look at the stanzas below and annotate the rhyme scheme (the first rhyme being a, the second b, etc.

IT fell about the Martinmas time,
And a gay time it was then,
When our goodwife got puddings to make,
And she's boild them in the pan.

The wind sae cauld blew south and north,
And blew into the floor;
Quoth our goodman to our goodwife,
'Gae out and bar the door.'

'IT fell about the Martinmas time,
And a gay time it was then,'

Look up Martinmas.

What atmosphere is established here? _____

What other evidence substantiates this? Quote and comment _____

The husband and wife make a pact with each other. What is this _____

The ballad uses humour to warn against the dangers of extreme stubbornness. Quote and comment on 2 examples of this.

'Get Up and Bar the door goes by a abcb rhyme scheme, where the second and fourth line rhyme in every stanza. Get Up and Bar the Door follows the element of ballads which states that the first and third lines of each stanza have four stresses, and the second and fourth line have three stresses.'

Find 2 examples of dialect used to convey the husband and wife's annoyance towards each other. What do the words mean and what are the connotations and effect of the word choice? _____

What does the husband say when he speaks first? _____

What is the wife's attitude at the end of the ballad? _____

Newfoundland version

Get up and Bar the Door Or JOAN AND JOHN BLOUNT

There was an old couple lived under a hill
Joan and John Blount they were called, oh
They brewed great ale all for to sell
They brewed it wonderful well, oh

John Blount and his wife drank some of his ale
Till they could drink no more, oh
They both went to bed with a drop in their head
And forgot to bar the door, oh

A bargain, a bargain this old couple made
A bargain firm and sure, oh
The very first one that should speak the first word
Should go down to bar the door oh

Along came travelers, travelers three
Traveling in the night oh
No house nor shelter could they find
No fire nor candle light oh

And straight to John Blount's house they went
And boldly opened the door oh
But not one word did the old couple say
For fear one should bar the door oh

They ate of his victuals, they drank of his drink
Till they could drink no more oh
But not one word did the old couple say
For fear one should bar the door oh

Then straight upstairs these travelers went
And took the old woman out of her bed
And kissed her on the floor oh
But not one word did the old couple say
For fear one should bar the door oh

"You've eat of my victuals, you drank of my drink
You've kissed my wife on the floor oh"
"John Blount" she said, "You've spoke the first word
Go down and bar the door oh"

"If you don't like what they did unto me
They kissed me on the floor oh
Take this to be as a warning see
Every night you bar the door oh"

In what ways is this version different?

Note at least 4 points (think about the story, the language, details changed)



Lord Randal

Have a Listen to This version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L2l6aRh9LOQ>

- 12A.1 'O WHERE ha you been, Lord Randal, my son?
And where ha you been, my handsome young man?'
'I ha been at the greenwood; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.2 'An what met ye there, Lord Randal, my son?
An wha met you there, my handsome young man?'
'O I met wi my true-love; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm wearied wi huntin, an fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.3 'And what did she give you, Lord Randal, my son?
And what did she give you, my handsome young man?'
'Eels fried in a pan; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.4 'And wha gat your leavins, Lord Randal, my son?
And wha gat your leavins, my handsom young man?'
'My hawks and my hounds; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.5 d what becam of them, Lord Randal, my son?
And what becam of them, my handsome young man?'
'They stretched their legs out an died; mother, mak my bed
soon,
For I'm wearied wi huntin, and fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.6 'O I fear you are poisoned, Lord Randal, my son!
I fear you are poisoned, my handsome young man!'
'O yes, I am poisoned; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.7 'What d'ye leave to your mother, Lord Randal, my son?
What d'ye leave to your mother, my handsome young man?'
'Four and twenty milk kye; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.8 'What d'ye leave to your sister, Lord Randal, my son?
What d'ye leave to your sister, my handsome young man?'
'My gold and my silver; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, an I fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.9 'What d'ye leave to your brother, Lord Randal, my son?
What d'ye leave to your brother, my handsome young man?'
'My houses and my lands; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.'
- 12A.10 'What d'ye leave to your true-love, Lord Randal, my son?
What d'ye leave to your true-love, my handsome young man?'
'I leave her hell and fire; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.'

323

A-walking through a pleasant shade,
As she had been a queen,
For her sake I did vow a vow,
I ne'er should wed but she,
Should this fair lady cruel prove,
I'll lay me down and dee.'

"Now hand your tongue, young Hazelgreen,
And let your folly be:
If ye be sick for that ladye,
She's thrice as sick for thee:
She's thrice as sick for thee, my son,
I've heard her sae compleen;
And a' she wants to heal her woe,
Is Jock o' Hazelgreen."

He's taen her in his arms twa,
Led her through bouir and ha';
"Cheer up your heart, my dearest May,
Ye're lady ower them a'.
The morn shall be our bridal day,
This nicht's our bridal e'en.
Ye'se never mair hae cause to mourn,
Frae Jock o' Hazelgreen."

LORD RANDAL.

"Oh, where have you been, Lord Randal, my son?
Oh, where have you been, my handsome young man?"
"I hae been to the wild wood; mother, mak my bed
soon;
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wad lie down."

"Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randal, my son?
Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?"

Understanding and Analysis

Task: Read these two very different examinations of the Ballad:

Text 1: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/11555374.pdf>

Text 2: <https://www.shmoop.com/study-guides/poetry/lord-randall/summary/stanza-1>

Task: Quote 3 points from the each text that you think are interesting and/or important. Explain why you think this.

Example: According to the best experts on the ballad, Lord Randal was 'the most popular purely traditional song'4 in many European countries and also in America. Proof of this is the huge number of versions and variants.' This is very revealing about the ballad as it states it was not just popular but 'the most popular' ballad. It's an interesting area of further research: why? Also, the possibility of finding and comparing as many of the versions as possible is very interesting; it gives us an opportunity to explore the similarities and differences in culture.

Text 1:

Text 2:

Structure

Quote and comment on the repeated structure of each stanza. What does this structure and the repetition of it do, in your opinion?

Symbolism

After looking it up, note the definition of the literary technique, symbolism, and give an example from literature you know:

What do you think these references symbolise, and WHY do you think this, based on the context of the ballad):

The wild wood: _____

The eels: _____

The character of the mother

What evidence do we see of a strength of character in the mother?

The Character of Lord Randal

What kind of character is he? What are his feelings and motivations? Why do you reach this conclusion?

The Message

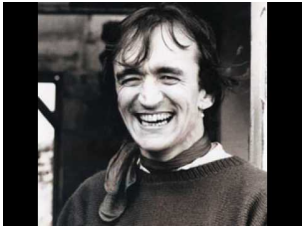
Think about the plot of the story:

A mother asks her son about where he has been. He has been with a lady who fed him a dinner of eels, and he tells her he is feeling unwell. His dogs die horribly, and he tells his mother he is dying. That is the plot; what is the message that this plot seeks to convey?

Think about how he responds:

What does he tell his mother? What he does not tell her? What message does this suggest?

As sung by Martin Carthy:



Task: Listen to this version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGa-lfz5Vbw>

Lord Randal (Martin Carthy)

Where have ye been all the day, my own dear darling boy?
Where have ye been all the day, my own dear comfort and joy?
I have been to my stepmother, make my bed mummy do
Make my bed mummy do
What did she give you for your supper, my own dear darling boy?
What did she give you for your supper, my own dear comfort and joy?
I got fish and I got broth, make my bed mummy do
Make my bed mummy do
Where did she get the fish that she give you, my own dear darling boy?
Where did she get the fish that she give you, my own dear comfort and joy?
Hedges sought and ditches caught, make my bed mummy do
Make my bed mummy do
What did you do with your fishbones, my own dear darling boy?
What did you do with your fishbones, my own dear comfort and joy?
I gave them to my greyhound, make my bed mummy do
Make my bed mummy do
Tell me what did your greyhound do, my own dear darling boy?
Tell me what did your greyhound do, my own dear comfort and joy?
There he swelled and there he died, make my bed mummy do
Make my bed mummy do
I fear that she does you deadly wrong, my own dear darling boy?
I fear that she does you deadly wrong, my own dear comfort and joy?
She took me in but she did me slay, make my bed mummy do
Make my bed mummy do
What will you leave to your mother, my own dear darling boy?
What will you leave to your mother, my own dear comfort and joy?
I'll leave you me house and land, make my bed mummy do
Make my bed mummy do
What will you leave your stepmother, my own dear darling boy?
What will you leave your stepmother, my own dear comfort and joy?
Bind her with rope and there let her hang with the halter that hangs on the tree
For poisoning of me

'Martin Carthy sang Lord Randall on his 1972 album, *Shearwater*; this recording was also included on his anthology *Carthy Chronicles*. He recorded a different version in 1979 for his album *Because It's There* which was reissued in 1993 on *The Collection*. Martin Carthy commented in the first album's sleeve notes:

Lord Randall and John Blunt must be among the more widespread story-ideas in the folk consciousness, the stories remaining more or less the same and varying according to locale and-or the individual imagination of whoever sings them. [...] I have to thank Phil and Sid of Edinburgh for the original idea which led me recasting the tune sung to Lord Randall, known as My Wee Croodlin' Doo.

Steve Winick commented in the sleeve notes of *The Collection*:

Lord Randall is one of the most widely-known ballads in the English-speaking world, and indeed the plot is common to much of western Europe. This version, which Martin learned “virtually by accident”, comes originally from Sonny Ryan and is a rather compressed one in which the unfortunate boy knows his fate from the beginning, rendering unnecessary the song's usual progress through various clues to a dark revelation. It is a superb example of Martin's passionate unaccompanied singing of the old ballads.’

<https://mainlynorfolk.info/martin.carthy/songs/lordrandall.html>

Task: Compare these two versions (think about the story, the language etc)

[illegible]



Bob Dylan and Lord Randal

Task: Listen to this and look at the lyrics below:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5al0HmR4to>

Analysis

Task: Now look at the lyrics more closely

“A Hard Rain’s A-Gonna Fall”

Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, where have you been, my darling young one?
I’ve stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains
I’ve walked and I’ve crawled on six crooked highways
I’ve stepped in the middle of seven sad forests
I’ve been out in front of a dozen dead oceans
I’ve been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a
graveyard
And it’s a hard, and it’s a hard, it’s a hard, and it’s a
hard
And it’s a hard rain’s a-gonna fall

Oh, what did you see, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, what did you see, my darling young one?
I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it
I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it
I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin’
I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin’
I saw a white ladder all covered with water
I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all
broken
I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young
children
And it’s a hard, and it’s a hard, it’s a hard, it’s a hard
And it’s a hard rain’s a-gonna fall

And what did you hear, my blue-eyed son?
And what did you hear, my darling young one?
I heard the sound of a thunder, it roared out a warnin’
Heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole
world
Heard one hundred drummers whose hands were a-
blazin’
Heard ten thousand whisperin’ and nobody listenin’
Heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin’

Verse 1 - Underline and comment on the structure (dialogue, who speaks, etc):

Choose 2 of the examples the son mentions and comment on what you think their symbolic meaning is:

Verse 2 - Identify and comment on evidence of:
Age and youth

Life and death

Foolishness

Verse 3 - Comment on the contrast:
‘Thunder...whisperin’

‘Wave / drown... blazin’

‘one person starve, I heard many people laughin’

Note and comment on the connotations of the word choice:
‘Roared’

‘One hundred drummers’

‘a poet who died in the gutter’

‘a clown who cried in the alley’

Heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter
Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

Oh, who did you meet, my blue-eyed son?
Who did you meet, my darling young one?
I met a young child beside a dead pony
I met a white man who walked a black dog
I met a young woman whose body was burning
I met a young girl, she gave me a rainbow
I met one man who was wounded in love
I met another man who was wounded with hatred
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

Oh, what'll you do now, my blue-eyed son?
Oh, what'll you do now, my darling young one?
I'm a-goin' back out 'fore the rain starts a-fallin'
I'll walk to the depths of the deepest black forest
Where the people are many and their hands are all empty
Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters
Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison
Where the executioner's face is always well hidden
Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten
Where black is the color, where none is the number
And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it
And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it
Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'
But I'll know my song well before I start singin'
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall

Verse 4 -Pick two examples that stand out to you as particularly poignant. Quote and comment on why you found this so:

Verse 5

The phrase, 'apocalyptic' comes to mind. What do you think this final verse says and what is the intention behind such a conclusion?

'In Keys to the Rain: The Definitive Bob Dylan Encyclopedia, Oliver Trager describes Dylan's "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" as "[a]s stark a piece of apocalyptic visionary prophesy as anything ever committed" to any media. It was unlike anything else Dylan had written up that time.'
<http://www.chimesfreedom.com/2014/12/16/a-hard-rain-lord-randall-and-the-start-of-a-revolution/>

What is the 'Hard Rain' the song speaks of?

Justify this with earlier textual reference and comment.

Fun (or not so fun?) for Dogs.

Task: Look at the 'Does the Dog die?' Website: <https://www.doesthedogdie.com>
Create an entry for Lord Randal Ballad, using their template.

Task: Re-write the story of the ballad (in prose form ... or ballad verse if you really want to), where the dogs survive. Please, for all that is good!



Twa Sisters

Task: read the 2 versions of the ballad below:

Version 10.A

THERE were two sisters, they went playing,
Refrain: With a hie downe downe a downe-a
To see their father's ships come sayling in.

With a hy downe downe a downe-a
And when they came unto the sea-brym,
The elder did push the younger in.
'O sister, O sister, take me by the gowne,
And drawe me up upon the dry ground.'
'O sister, O sister, that may not bee,
Till salt and oatmeale grow both of a tree.'
Somtymes she sanke, somtymes she swam,
Until she came unto the mill-dam.
The miller runne hastily downe the cliffe,
And up he betook her withouten her life.
What did he doe with her brest-bone?
He made him a violl to play thereupon.
What did he doe with her fingers so small?
He made him peggs to his violl withall.
What did he doe with her nose-ridge?
Unto his violl he made him a bridge.
What did he doe with her veynes so blew?
He made him strings to his violl thereto.
What did he doe with her eyes so bright?
Upon his violl he played at first sight.
What did he doe with her tongue so rough?
Unto the violl it spake enough.
What did he doe with her two shinnes?
Unto the violl they danc'd Moll Symes.
Then bespake the treble string,
'O yonder is my father the king.'
Then bespake the second string,
'O yonder sitts my mother the queen.'
And then bespake the strings all three,
'O yonder is my sister that drowned mee.'
'Now pay the miller for his payne,
And let him bee gone in the divel's name.'



Version 10.B

THERE was twa sisters in a bowr,
Refrain: Edinburgh, Edinburgh
There was twa sisters in a bowr,
Refrain: Stirling for ay
There was twa sisters in a bowr,
There came a knight to be their wooer.

Bonny Saint Johnston stands upon Tay
He courted the eldest wi glove an ring,
But he lovd the youngest above a' thing.
He courted the eldest wi brotch an knife,
But lovd the youngest as his life.
The eldest she was vexed sair,
An much envi'd her sister fair.
Into her bowr she could not rest,
Wi grief an spite she almos brast.
Upon a morning fair an clear,
She cried upon her sister dear:
'O sister, come to yon sea stran,
An see our father's ships come to lan.'
She's taen her by the milk-white han,
An led her down to yon sea stran.
The younges[t] stood upon a stane,
The eldest came an threw her in.
She tooke her by the middle sma,
An dashd her bonny back to the jaw.
'O sister, sister, tak my han,
An lse mack you heir to a' my lan.
'O sister, sister, tak my middle,
An yes get my goud and my gouden girdle.
'O sister, sister, save my life,
An I swear lse never be nae man's wife.'
'Foul fa the han that I should tacke,
It twin'd me an my wardles make.
'Your cherry cheeks an yallow hair
Gars me gae maiden for evermair.'
Sometimes she sank, an sometimes she swam,
Till she came down yon bonny mill-dam.
O out it came the miller's son,
An saw the fair maid swimmin in.
'O father, father, draw your dam,
Here's either a mermaid or a swan.'
The miller quickly drew the dam,
An there he found a drownd woman.
You coudna see her yallow hair
For gold and pearle that were so rare.
You coudna see her middle sma
For gouden girdle that was sae braw.
You coudna see her fingers white,
For gouden rings that was sae gryte.
An by there came a harper fine,



That harped to the king at dine.
When he did look that lady upon,
He sighd and made a heavy moan.
He's taen three locks o her yallow hair,
An wi them strung his harp sae fair.
The first tune he did play and sing,
Was, 'Farewell to my father the king.'
The nextin tune that he playd syne,
Was, 'Farewell to my mother the queen.'
The lasten tune that he playd then,
Was, 'Wae to my sister, fair Ellen.'

Task:

Summarise the story in both versions of the ballad.

10.A

10.B

Task: Read the background information on the ballad.
<https://www.folkmusic.net/htmlfiles/inart686.htm>

Understanding - Answer all questions in your own words.

‘Introduction’ section

Summarise the points the author makes about the what the ballad is about and its origins.

‘Background’ section

Look at lines 1-9 in this section, ‘the ballad tells of ... sister of the murder.’ Summarise the story of the ballad as the author tells it. _____

What is different about the Scandinavian version? _____

Look at the lines, ‘The earliest printing of the ballad... North America.’ What two points does the author make about the ballad’s publication? _____

Look at the lines, ‘The ballad appears to have died out... known in America.’ Describe the journey the ballad took throughout the years. _____

What details changed? _____

Summarise the 4 points made in the bullet points. _____

‘Refrains’ section

What point does Annie Gilchrist make about the refrain, ‘Bow down, Bow down’?

What is ‘the old custom of divination’? _____

What did the leaning of the stems mean? _____

What 2 points does Gilchrist make about the refrain, ‘Binnorie, Binnorie’ and ‘Edinburgh, Edinburgh’? _____

Comment of the significance of the refrain, ‘Hey my bonnie Nannie’? _____

‘Tunes’ section

Note 3 points the author makes about the tune in the opening paragraph of this section?

What is the 'play-party' tradition? _____

Who collected and published the version that is presented? _____

Overall

Summarise 3 main ideas explored in the text. _____



Newspaper/online article

Task: Create your own version of the story -

Take the elements you like (the plot, characters, conflict).

Change elements you want to change.

Add new elements.

Set in in a more modern UK (a time with newspapers or internet)

Where in the UK will you set it?

What elements can you add that are specific to the time and place you are now setting it?

Imagine yourself as an old fashioned investigatory journalist (one with some originality and integrity).

Imagine interviewing the central people from the story.

Note down the interview:

Name of Interviewee 1: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Name of Interviewee 2: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____



Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Q: _____

Interviewee 1 answer: _____

Journalist's Notes

What happened?

Where and When did it happen?

Who were the people involved (background on them)

Putting all this together, what is the theme running through the story?

Find the answers to these questions:
What is 'The Lead' in a newspaper article?

What is a Newspaper Headline?

What is a Newspaper Caption?

What is a Newspaper Quote?

What sort of photo should you use in a Newspaper article?

Success Criteria:

Title Banner (name of newspaper, date)

Catchy headline

A main story of at least 200 words

Photo and caption for main story

Excellent grammar and spelling

Other features (adverts, weather, sports...)

A theme that runs through the article

Layout

Headline

photo

quote

caption