

- This ballad is sung in different versions in several countries. The basic story of the song varies little, but Randall is variously known as Donald, Randolph, Ramsay, Ransome, and Durango. Sometimes his last meal consists of fish, sometimes snakes. The dialect of this version is Scottish. This ballad, like many others, is sung entirely as a conversation.

Lord Randall

"O where hae ye been, Lord Randall, my son?
O where hae ye been, my handsome young man?"
"I hae been to the wild wood; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain^o wald lie down."

- 5 "Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randall, my son?
Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?"
"I din'd wi' my true-love; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

- 10 "What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randall, my son?
What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?"
"I gat eels boil'd in broo;^o mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

- 15 "What became of your bloodhounds, Lord Randall, my son?
What became of your bloodhounds, my handsome young man?"
"O they swell'd and they died; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down."

- 20 "O I fear ye are poison'd, Lord Randall, my son!
O I fear ye are poison'd, my handsome young man!"
"O yes! I am poison'd; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm sick at the heart, and I fain wald lie down."

4. **fain**: gladly.

11. **broo**: broth.



A knight and his lady feeding a falcon, from a German manuscript (detail) (c. 14th century).
Cod. Pal. Germ., 848, Codex Manesse, fol. 249v.
Universitätsbibliothek, Heidelberg.

“Edward, Edward” is an international ballad, one found across northern Europe and brought to England and Scotland by travelers and sailors. Sir Thomas Percy, who compiled many of the popular ballads in the 1760s, found the same character in a Swedish ballad and also noted that another version of this ballad appeared with the title “Son Davie, Son Davie.” Another collector changed the hero’s name to Edward.

Edward, Edward

“Why does your brand sae drop wi’ blude,[°]
Edward, Edward?

Why does your brand sae drop wi’ blude,
And why sae sad gang ye,[°] O?” —

5 “O I hae kill’d my hawk sae gude,[°]
Mither, mither;

O I hae kill’d my hawk sae gude,
And I had nae mair[°] but he, O.”

“Your hawk’s blude was never sae red,
10 Edward, Edward;

Your hawk’s blude was never sae red,
My dear son, I tell thee, O.” —

“O I hae kill’d my red-roan steed,
Mither, mither;

15 O I hae kill’d my red-roan steed,
That erst[°] was sae fair and free, O.”

“Your steed was auld,[°] and ye hae got mair,
Edward, Edward;

Your steed was auld, and ye hae got mair;
20 Some other dule ye dree,[°] O.” —

“O I hae kill’d my father dear,
Mither, mither;

O I hae kill’d my father dear,
Alas, and wae is me, O!”

25 “And whatten penance will ye dree[°] for that,
Edward, Edward?

Whatten penance will ye dree for that?
My dear son, now tell me, O.” —

“I’ll set my feet in yonder boat,
30 Mither, mither;

I’ll set my feet in yonder boat,
And I’ll fare over the sea, O.”

“And what will ye do wi’ your tow’rs and your ha’,[°]
Edward, Edward?

35 And what will ye do wi’ your tow’rs and your ha’,
That were sae fair to see, O?” —

1. **brand . . . blude:** sword so drip
with blood.

4. **gang ye:** go you.

5. **gude:** good.

8. **nae mair:** no more.

16. **erst:** before.

17. **auld:** old.

20. **dule ye dree:** grief you suffer.

25. **whatten . . . dree:** what punishment for sin will you suffer.

33. **ha’:** hall; that is, ancestral home.

MAKING MEANINGS

Lord Randall
Edward, Edward
Get Up and Bar the Door

First Thoughts

1. The appeal of the ballads lies partly in what they don't tell you. What questions does each of these songs leave unanswered for you?

Shaping Interpretations

2. What is the emotional effect of the **refrain's** variation in the fifth stanza of "Lord Randall"?
3. Like many ballads, "Lord Randall" and "Edward, Edward" build up suspense with **incremental repetition**: the repetition of lines with a new element introduced each time to advance the story until a climax is reached. At what point in each ballad does the story reach a climax?
4. What could be the implications of Edward's last response to his mother in the final stanza of "Edward, Edward"?
5. How is the possibility of violence combined with ironic humor in "Get Up and Bar the Door"?

Extending the Texts

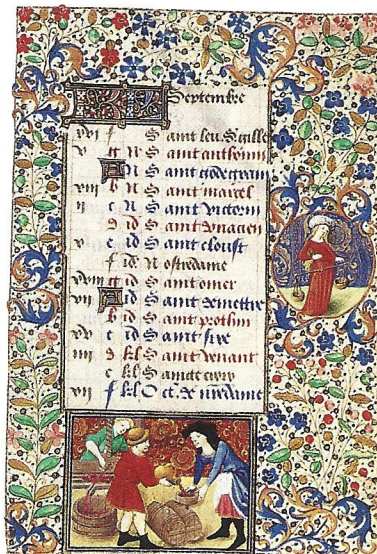
6. What popular songs or folk ballads do you know that focus on subjects like the ones in these three famous medieval ballads?

Refer to your Quickwrite entry (page 90) for possible ideas.



September, calendar page from the Salting Manuscript, *Hours of Margaret de Foix* (c. 1470–1480).

Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



7. People often criticize the media today for glorifying violence. Do you think these ballads, including "Frankie and Johnny" (see *Connections* on page 95), glorify violence by singing about it? Why or why not? Is the issue the same? Discuss your responses.

ELEMENTS OF LITERATURE

Ballads: Popular Poetry

Ballads come from an oral tradition, so there are no strict rules dictating their form. However, a number of characteristics have come to be associated with ballads, and every ballad reflects at least some of them: **supernatural events; sensational, sordid, or tragic subject matter; a refrain; and the omission of details**. The ballad singers also used some of the following conventions:

- **incremental repetition**, to build up suspense. A phrase or sentence is repeated with a new element added each time, until the climax is reached.
- **a question-and-answer format**, in which the facts of a story are gleaned little by little from the answers. Again, this device builds up suspense.
- **conventional phrases**, understood by listeners to have meaning beyond their literal ones. "Make my bed soon" in "Lord Randall" is an example. Whenever a character in a ballad asks someone to make his bed, or to make her bed narrow, it means that the speaker is preparing for death.
- **a strong, simple beat**, with verse forms that are relatively uncomplicated. Ballads were sung for a general, rather than an elitist, audience. Only later, in the era of so-called literary ballads (more sophisticated poems that artfully evoked the atmosphere of the originals), did the rhyme scheme (abcb) and meter (a quatrain in which lines of four stresses alternate with lines of three stresses) of the ballad stanza become standard.

Giving an oral performance. With a small group, select a ballad and prepare it for performance. Have an audience **evaluate** your first performance according to **criteria** you all agree on (such as clarity of story, emotional appeal, and so on). Use your audience's evaluations to perfect your final performance.