**Ballads**

A popular narrative verse or song passed down orally.

**Characteristics**

**1**. Ballads, no matter which category they fall in, mostly rely on simple and easy-to-understand language or [dialect](http://literarydevices.net/dialect/) from its origin.

**2**. Stories about hardships, tragedies, [love,](http://literarydevices.net/love/) and romance are standard ingredients of ballads.

**3**. Another conspicuous element of any ballad is the recurrence of certain lines at regular intervals. (Repetition).

**4**. Ballads can also be in interrogative form with appropriate answers to every question they ask.

**5.** In the English tradition, it usually follows a form of rhymed (abcb) [quatrains](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/learning/glossary-term.html?term=Quatrain) alternating four-stress and three-stress lines.

**6.** Ballads seldom offer a direct message about a certain event, character or situation. It is left to the audience to deduce the moral of the story from the whole narration.

**Types:**

1**. Folk (or traditional) ballads** are anonymous and recount tragic, comic, or heroic stories with emphasis on a central dramatic event; examples include [“Barbara Allen”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=180616) and [“John Henry.”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=171628)

2. Beginning in the Renaissance, poets have adapted the conventions of the folk ballad for their own original compositions. Examples of this “**literary” ballad** form include John Keats’s [“La Belle Dame sans Merci,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=173740) Thomas Hardy’s [“During Wind and Rain,”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=184087) and Edgar Allan Poe’s [“Annabel Lee.”](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/archive/poem.html?id=174151)