NOTES 22: Pre-reading for “Dejection: An Ode” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

(*Norton* 1652-55)

The Ballad and the Lyrical Ballad:

The poem referenced at the beginning of “Dejection: An Ode” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge exemplifies the ballad form before he and Wordsworth created the lyrical ballad that marked the beginning of the Romantic era. Traditional ballads told stories (sometimes focused on childhood), often using multiple speakers, which coming from an oral tradition was not so confusing. They relied on strong rhythm and rhyme, and repeated words and phrases. The third-person objective narrator was not a character in the story and did not provide reactions or comments. Ballads consisted of simple language intended for the unschooled listener. They tend to rhyme abab or abcb – lines 2 and 4 rhyme. The rhythm will be four beats in lines 1 and 3 but three beats in lines 2 and 4.

Lyrical Ballads were different in that they focused on sensation that must be felt by the poet and re-created in the reader rather than telling a story. They used common language and explored normal, daily experiences. Consider Wordsworth’s “We Are Seven.”

[www.math.grinnell.edu/~simpsone/Connections/Poetry/Forms/ballad1.html](http://www.math.grinnell.edu/~simpsone/Connections/Poetry/Forms/ballad1.html)

***I***n the reign of Alexander III of Scotland, his daughter Margaret was escorted by a large party of nobles to Norway for her marriage to King Eric; on the return journey many of them were drowned. Twenty years later, after Alexander's death, his grand-daughter Margaret, the Maid of Norway, was heiress to the Scottish throne, and on the voyage to Scotland she died.

***The poem is the story of Sir Patrick Spens, who travels during an incredibly dangerous time of year, to bring Margaret home to Scotland.***

[www.tnellen.com/cybereng/poetry/poems/the\_ballad\_of\_sir\_patrick\_spens.html](http://www.tnellen.com/cybereng/poetry/poems/the_ballad_of_sir_patrick_spens.html)

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