CAPITOLO

5

Knights, Ladies and Ballads

'O where ha you been, Lord Randal, my son? / And where ha you been, my handsome young man?' — "Lord Randal" (Child 12A)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe the ideal of chivalry, the Crusades and courtly love, and tell how the Arthurian legend grew in the 12th century.
2. I can explain what a romance is and summarise and comment on *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.
3. I can recognise the features of the popular ballad and analyse "Lord Randal" and "Sir Patrick Spens".
4. I can use *whom*, *whose*, preposition + *which / whom*, *most of which* and reduced relative clauses.
5. I can tell a story with suspense and write a short story with a twist.
6. I can compare English and Italian versions of Arthurian and ballad stories, from Dante to Modena.

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English 3 · Parte II · The Medieval World · versione 1.0
Capitolo 5: Knights, Ladies and Ballads · pagine 147–176 del volume completo · estratto per lo studio

A knight in shining armour rides out to save a lady; a ballad singer tells a sad story in a few short verses. These pictures are still everywhere, in films, songs and fantasy novels, and most of them come from the Middle Ages. This chapter looks at where they were born: in the courts of France and England, where an ideal of knighthood called *chivalry* grew up together with a new way of writing about love, and in the voices of ordinary people, who sang ballads long before anyone wrote them down.

You read two famous ballads, “Lord Randal” and “Sir Patrick Spens”, and the moment when a giant green knight rides into King Arthur’s hall in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, one of the masterpieces of medieval English. In the Language section you complete your study of **relative clauses** at B2 level; in Skills you learn to keep a listener hooked and to write a short story with a twist. Finally you follow King Arthur to Italy: to Dante’s Francesca and to the doorway of a cathedral in Modena.

5.1 History and Society: Chivalry, Crusades and Courtly Love

Chapter 4 followed England from the Norman Conquest to Magna Carta. In the same centuries a new culture spread through the noble courts of western Europe, from France to England and Italy. Its heroes were knights, its subjects were adventure and love, and its stories were told in the languages people spoke, not only in Latin. Figura 5.1 shows the main dates.

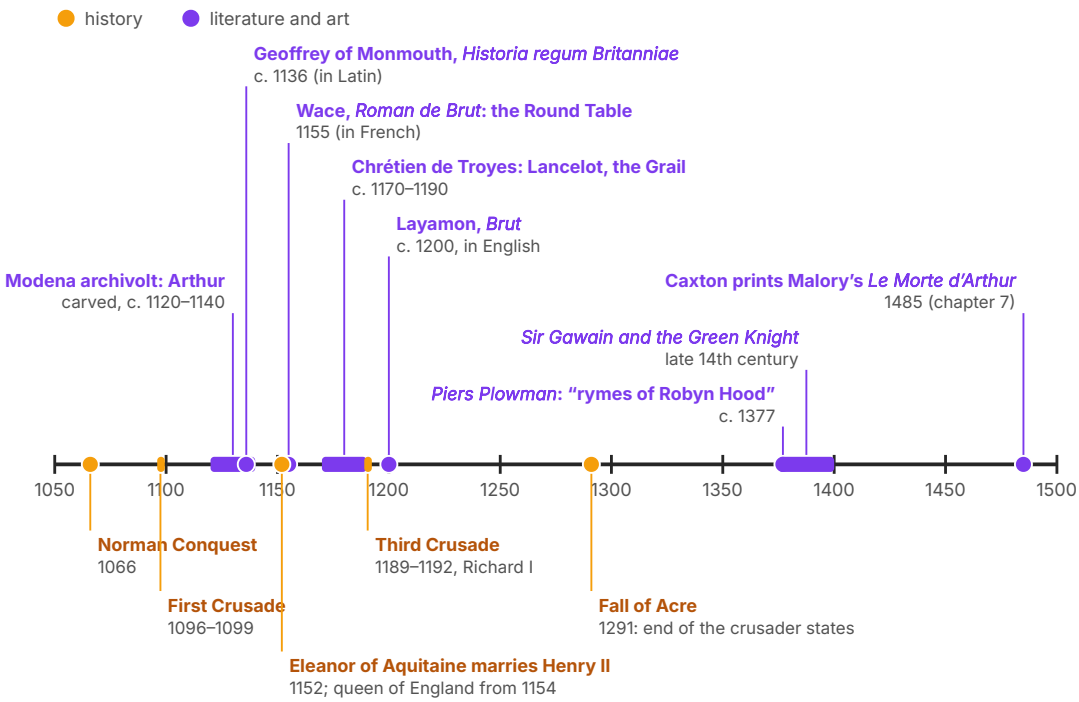


Figura 5.1 Chivalry, the crusades and Arthurian literature, 1050–1500 (proportional time axis, ticks every 50 years). Amber: history; violet: literature and art. Bars show periods; "c." dates are approximate.

5.1.1 From warriors to an ideal

In the 11th century a **knight** was simply a soldier who fought on horseback. Horses, armour and weapons were very expensive, so knights depended on a lord who gave them land or support in exchange for military service (the feudal relationship of chapter 4). A young man of good family trained for years, first as a page and then as a squire, until he was made a knight in a ceremony: his lord struck him lightly on the neck or shoulder with the hand or the flat of a sword, the dubbing.

Slowly the Church, the poets and the knights themselves turned this profession into an ideal of behaviour, called **chivalry** (Italian *cavalleria*; both words come from the French and Latin words for "horse", *cheval* and *caballus*). A perfect knight was expected to show **prowess** (courage and skill in battle), **loyalty** to his lord, **generosity** (in French *largesse*), **courtesy** (good manners, especially towards women), and Christian faith; he was supposed to protect the Church, the weak and the poor. It is important to remember that chivalry was an ideal, not a description: real knights could be violent and greedy, and the poets who praised chivalry often criticised the knights of their own day.

5.1.2 The Crusades

The ideal of the Christian knight was strengthened by the **Crusades**, the military expeditions that western Christians organised to conquer and then defend Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The **First Crusade** (1096–1099) ended with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. Others followed for almost two centuries. The **Third Crusade** (1189–1192) was led by the kings of France and England and by the emperor Frederick Barbarossa, who drowned on the way; the English king, **Richard I** "the Lionheart" (reigned 1189–1199), spent only a few months of his reign in England. In 1291 the fall of Acre ended the crusader states in the Holy Land. For the literature of this chapter, the Crusades matter in two ways: they gave knights a religious purpose, and they brought Europeans into contact with the culture of the eastern Mediterranean.

5.1.3 Courtly love

At the end of the 11th century, in the south of France, poets began to write songs about love in Occitan, the *langue d'oc*. They were called **troubadours** (Italian *trovatori*), and the earliest whose songs survive is a great lord, **William IX**, duke of Aquitaine (1071–1126). The troubadours called the love they sang *fin'amor*, "refined love". The lover serves his lady as a knight serves his lord: she is above him, often married to someone else, and difficult to reach; he suffers, waits and keeps the secret; and love makes him a better, more courteous man. Modern scholars call this code **courtly love**.

> **DA RICORDARE**
>
> ***Courtly love* is a modern label.** The troubadours spoke of *fin'amor*. The expression *amour courtois*, "courtly love", was introduced by the French scholar Gaston Paris in 1883. Use it as a convenient name for a set of ideas, not as a medieval term.

William IX's granddaughter, **Eleanor of Aquitaine** (c. 1122–1204), carried this culture north. She was first queen of France; in 1152, after her first marriage was annulled, she married Henry of Anjou, who became King Henry II of England in 1154. Two of her sons, Richard I and John, were kings of England. Poets were welcome at her court and at the court of her daughter Marie, countess of Champagne. Later stories that Eleanor and her ladies judged lovers' quarrels in "courts of love" are probably more literature than history.

5.1.4 The matter of Britain: King Arthur

The most popular stories of chivalry were about **King Arthur**. A war leader called Arthur, who fought the Anglo-Saxons, appears in a few early Welsh and Latin texts; whether he really existed is still discussed. The legend as we know it was built in the 12th century. Around 1136 **Geoffrey of Monmouth** made Arthur a great king of Britain in his Latin *Historia regum Britan-*

niae (chapter 4). In 1155 the Norman poet **Wace** retold Geoffrey's history in French verse, the *Roman de Brut*, and added the **Round Table**, at which Arthur's knights sat so that none of them could claim the best place. Around 1200 an English priest, **Layamon**, wrote a *Brut* in English: the first Arthurian story in the English language.

The great French poet **Chrétien de Troyes**, active between about 1170 and 1190, gave the legend its most famous characters and themes: the love of the knight **Lancelot** for Arthur's queen, Guinevere, and, in his unfinished *Perceval*, the **Grail**, a mysterious dish carried in a procession. Later writers turned the Grail into the cup of the Last Supper and the object of a holy quest. Together, these stories about Arthur and his knights are called the **Arthurian legend** or, in a phrase used by medieval French poets, the "matter of Britain". In English it reached its most complete form with Thomas Malory, whose *Le Morte d'Arthur* Caxton printed in 1485 (chapter 7).

5.2 Literature: Romance and Ballad

5.2.1 What is a romance?

The typical story of chivalry is the **romance** (Italian *romanzo cavalleresco*): a tale, in verse or in prose, of knights, love, adventures and marvels. The name comes from Old French *romanz*, which first meant the "Roman" language spoken by ordinary people (French) as opposed to Latin; then it came to mean a story written in that language. At the centre of most romances there is a **quest** (Italian *ricerca, impresa*): the hero leaves the court, travels through forests and wild lands, meets giants, enchantresses and strange castles, and comes back changed. The real adventure is often inside the hero: a test of his courage, his faith or his honesty.

In chapter 3 you studied the epic. The two genres share a hero and his deeds, but they are not the same (Figura 5.2). The epic hero fights for his people, and the poem ends with battles and death; the romance hero is an individual who proves his own worth, the setting is a court full of ladies and good manners, love and magic matter as much as war, and the story often ends well.

	Epic	Romance	Ballad
Form	long poem; in Old English, alliterative verse	verse or prose; in English often alliterative or rhymed	short song in quatrains, with refrain and repetition
Hero	a warrior-king who fights for his people	a knight who proves himself as an individual	ordinary people as well as lords and ladies
Story	battles, monsters, the hero's death	a quest: adventures, marvels, love, temptation	one dramatic episode, often a tragic one
Values	courage, loyalty, glory	chivalry, courtesy, courtly love	love, jealousy, revenge, fate
World	the hall and the battlefield	the court and the forest, full of magic	the home, the road, the sea
Example	*Beowulf* (chapter 3)	*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*	"Lord Randal", "Sir Patrick Spens"

Typical features only: many texts mix them (Gawain fights a giant, a ballad can tell of knights).

Figura 5.2 Epic, romance and ballad: typical features of the three kinds of narrative poetry in this volume.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «*Romance* = romanzo rosa.» → ✓ Nel Medioevo un *romance* è un **romanzo cavalleresco** (in versi o in prosa). Per il romanzo moderno l'inglese dice *novel*; per il romanzo d'amore, *romantic novel* o *love story*.

✗ «La *ballad* inglese è come la ballata italiana.» → ✓ La **ballata** italiana di Cavalcanti o Dante è una forma lirica d'autore, con ripresa e stanze; la *ballad* inglese è un **racconto in versi**, anonimo e cantato, in quartine. In italiano si dice *ballata popolare*.

5.2.2 The alliterative revival and *Sir Gawain*

After 1066 French was the language of the court, and the old English alliterative line of *Beowulf* (chapter 3) disappeared from the written record for a long time. In the 14th century, especially in the north and west of England, poets began to use it again for long, ambitious poems. This return is called the **alliterative revival**. Its two greatest works are William Langland's *Piers Plowman* (chapter 7) and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight was written in the late 14th century by a poet whose name we do not know, usually called the **Gawain poet**. The poem survives in **one manuscript only**, now in the British Library, **Cotton Nero A.x**, together with three religious poems probably by the same author, *Pearl*, *Patience* and *Cleanness*. Its language is the dialect of the north-west Mid-

lands, quite different from Chaucer's London English (chapter 6). The poem has 2530 lines in 101 stanzas and is divided into four parts called **fitts**. Each stanza has a varying number of long alliterative lines, followed by a **bob and wheel**: a very short line of two syllables (the "bob") and four short rhyming lines (the "wheel"), rhyming *ababa*. The long lines tell the story; the bob and wheel close each stanza like a quick comment.

The plot (Figura 5.3) begins at Camelot during the New Year feast. A gigantic knight, green from head to foot, rides into the hall and proposes a "game": anyone may strike him with his axe, if he accepts a return blow in a year and a day. Gawain, Arthur's nephew, accepts and cuts off his head; the Green Knight picks it up, and the head reminds Gawain of his promise. A year later Gawain sets out to find the Green Chapel. On Christmas Eve he reaches the castle of a lord, Bertilak, who proposes another game: for three days Bertilak will go hunting, and in the evening the two men will exchange whatever they have won. While the lord hunts, his beautiful wife visits Gawain in his bedroom and tries to seduce him. Gawain resists politely, accepts only kisses and gives them to the lord in the evening. But on the third day he accepts a green girdle (a belt) that, the lady says, will keep him alive, and he keeps it secret.

At the Green Chapel the Green Knight swings his axe three times: twice he stops, and the third time he only cuts Gawain's neck slightly. Then he reveals that he is Bertilak: the cut is the price of the girdle. Gawain was almost perfect, but he loved his life too much. Ashamed, Gawain goes back to Camelot wearing the girdle as a sign of his fault, and the knights of the Round Table decide to wear a green belt too, in his honour.

The poem is full of symbols. On his shield Gawain carries a **pentangle**, a five-pointed star drawn with one continuous line. The poet explains it in a long passage; in Jessie L. Weston's prose version (1898) "it is a figure with five points and each line overlaps the other, and nowhere hath it beginning or end, so that in English it is called 'the endless knot.'" It stands for Gawain's virtues, five times five, all linked together, as a knight's perfection should be. The girdle is the opposite sign: a small, human failure. Can anyone be as perfect as an ideal asks?



Three days at the castle: the hunts and the temptations run in parallel

	Bertilak hunts…	…the lady visits Gawain	the exchange
Day 1	deer	one kiss	deer ↔ 1 kiss
Day 2	a wild boar	two kisses	boar ↔ 2 kisses
Day 3	a fox	three kisses and the **green girdle**	fox skin ↔ 3 kisses; **he keeps the girdle**

Figura 5.3 The quest structure of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: a journey from Camelot and back, with the three days at Bertilak's castle at its centre. Inside each day, the hunt outside and the temptation inside the castle run in parallel.

5.2.3 The popular ballad

While knights listened to romances, ordinary people sang **ballads** (Italian *ballate popolari*): short, anonymous narrative songs that passed from singer to singer by memory. Because each singer changed the words a little, a ballad usually exists in many **versions**. Most ballads tell one dramatic episode — a murder, a shipwreck, a betrayed love, an encounter with the supernatural — and they tell it in a recognisable way:

- they are written in the **ballad stanza**, a quatrain in which lines of four and three stresses alternate, usually rhyming *abcb* (Figura 5.4);
- they often have a **refrain** (Italian *ritornello*), a line or group of lines repeated in every stanza, where listeners could join in;
- they use **incremental repetition**: a line or a stanza is repeated with a small change each time, and the change moves the story forward;
- they begin abruptly, in the middle of the action, and tell much of the story through dialogue, without "he said" or "she replied";
- they describe very little and use fixed phrases (*blood-red wine, milk-white steed*), and they leave the most important events to the listener's imagination.

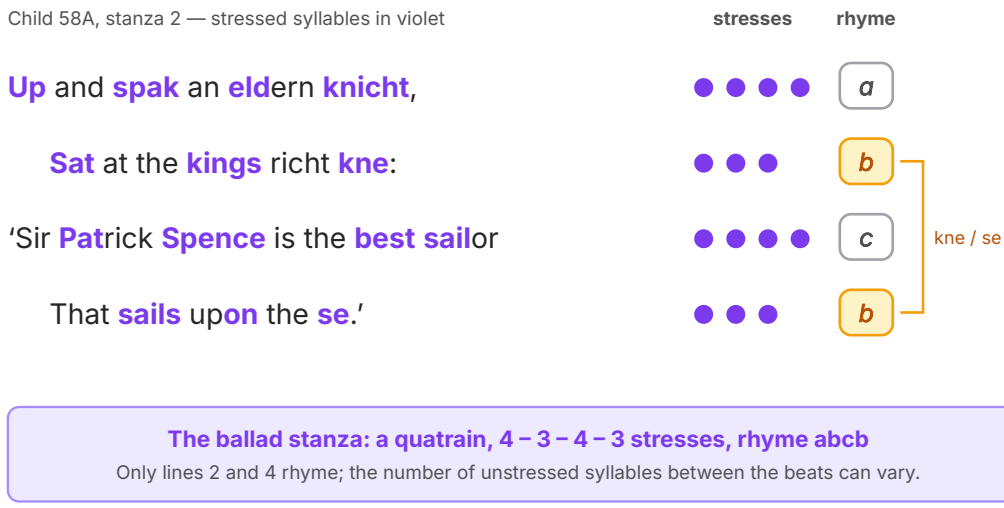


Figura 5.4 The ballad stanza: stanza 2 of "Sir Patrick Spens" (Child 58A). Violet dots: stresses per line. Our reading of the stresses; when the ballad is sung, the tune decides where the beats fall.

We rarely know when a ballad was composed. Some may be very old, but most were written down only in the 18th and 19th centuries. Robin Hood, the outlaw of Sherwood Forest, is a good example: around 1377 Langland's *Piers Plowman* already mentions "rymes of Robyn Hood", which shows that songs about him were popular, but the oldest Robin Hood ballads that survive were written down in the 15th century. From the 16th century ballads were also printed on single cheap sheets, called broadsides, and sold in the streets.

Then came the collectors. In 1765 Bishop Thomas Percy published his *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*; in 1802–03 the young Walter Scott published the *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*; and between 1882 and 1898 the American scholar **Francis James Child** published *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, with 305 ballads and all the versions he could find, labelled A, B, C... Scholars still refer to ballads by their Child number: "Lord Randal" is Child 12, "Sir Patrick Spens" Child 58.

IN SINTESI

The popular ballad at a glance. *Who*: anonymous, oral, many versions · *What*: one dramatic episode, often tragic or supernatural · *How*: ballad stanza (4–3–4–3 stresses, *abcb*), refrain, incremental repetition, dialogue, abrupt opening, little description · *When*: composition dates mostly unknown; collected by Percy (1765), Scott (1802–03) and Child (1882–1898).

5.3 Texts: Two Ballads and a Green Knight

The ballads are printed as in Child's edition, with curly quotation marks; glosses explain the Scots words. The *Gawain* passage has a translation by the editors.

5.3.1 T1 · Anonymous, "Lord Randal" (Child 12A)

Context. Child's version A comes from a small manuscript volume lent to him from Edinburgh: four pieces written about 1710, and this ballad added by a later hand. A mother questions her son, who has come home from the greenwood. Stanzas 1–6 of ten.

Tabella 5.1 T1 — "Lord Randal", Child 12A, stanzas 1–6 (F. J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. 1; spelling as printed). Stanza numbers on the right.

'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.'	1
'An wha 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.'	2
'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.'	3
'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.'	4
'And 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.'	5
'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.'	6

Glosses. *ha*: have · *greenwood*: forest · *mak my bed soon*: make my bed quickly · *wearied wi*: tired from · *fain wad lie down*: would gladly lie down · *wha*: who · *gat your leavins*: got your leftovers · *becam*: became · *stretched their legs out*: stretched out their legs, in the last moment of life.

In the four stanzas that follow, the mother asks what her son will leave to his mother, his sister and his brother (cows, gold and silver, houses and lands). The last question is what he leaves to his true-love; the answer closes the ballad: "I leave her hell and fire".

Analysis

Form. "Lord Randal" is built entirely on **dialogue**: two voices, no narrator. Every stanza repeats the same frame — the mother's question in two lines, the son's answer, and the refrain "mother, mak my bed soon, / For I'm wearied wi hunting" — and changes only a few words. This is incremental repetition at its purest: *where… who… what… who got… what became*, and the story advances one small step at a time.

Meaning. Nobody says "she poisoned him" until stanza 6. The listener understands before the mother speaks: the eels, the hounds that "stretched their legs out an died". Then the refrain changes, from "wearied wi hunting" to "sick at the heart": the young man is no longer pretending. The sentence "mak my bed soon" becomes his deathbed. The final curse is the only comment: we never learn why she did it.

1. Who are the two speakers? Which lines belong to each?
2. Find the words that change from stanza to stanza. What does each change add to the story?
3. At what point did you understand what had happened? Which detail told you?
4. How does the refrain change in stanza 6, and why?
5. What important information does the ballad never give us? Why do you think it is missing?

5.3.2 T2 · Anonymous, "Sir Patrick Spens" (Child 58A)

Context. Child's version A is the one Thomas Percy printed in his *Reliques* (1765), "given from two MS. copies, transmitted from Scotland". A Scottish king needs a sailor for a winter voyage. No historical record names Sir Patrick, and attempts to link the ballad to a real voyage of the 13th century remain guesses. Stanzas 1–5 of eleven.

Tabella 5.2 T2 — "Sir Patrick Spens", Child 58A, stanzas 1–5 (F. J. Child, *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, vol. 2, from Percy's *Reliques*, 1765; spelling as printed). Stanza numbers on the right.

The king sits in Dumferling toune, Drinking the blude-reid wine: 'O whar will I get guid sailor, To sail this schip of mine?'	1
Up and spak an eldern knicht, Sat at the kings richt kne: 'Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor That sails upon the se.'	2
The king has written a braid letter, And signd it wi his hand, And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence, Was walking on the sand.	3
The first line that Sir Patrick red, A loud lauch lauched he; The next line that Sir Patrick red, The teir blinded his ee.	4
'O wha is this has don this deid, This ill deid don to me, To send me out this time o' the yeir, To sail upon the se!	5

Glosses. *Dumferling toune*: the town of Dunfermline, a royal residence in Fife · *blude-reid*: blood-red · *whar*: where · *guid*: good · *schip*: ship · *spak*: spoke · *eldern knicht*: elderly knight · *Sat at the kings richt kne*: who sat at the king's right knee (the relative pronoun is left out) · *braid letter*: a long, formal letter · *red*: read · *lauch*: laugh · *teir*: tear · *ee*: eye · *wha*: who · *deid*: deed · *yeir*: year · *se*: sea.

Analysis

Form. Here is the ballad stanza in its classic form: four lines of 4–3–4–3 stresses, rhyming *abcb* (*toune / wine / sailor / mine*). The ballad jumps from scene to scene without links, like a film cut: the king at his wine, the old knight's advice, the letter, Sir Patrick reading it on the beach. Stanza 4 uses repetition with a small change ("The first line… / The next line…") to show a sudden change of feeling: first a laugh, perhaps because the order seems absurd, then tears.

Meaning. The contrast is social and moral: the king sits and drinks, the sailor must obey and risk his life. In the following stanzas Sir Patrick sails all the same, a sailor warns that he has seen "the new moone, / Wi the auld moone in hir arme" — a sign of storm — and the ballad never describes the shipwreck. It only shows the Scottish lords' hats floating on the water and the ladies waiting for ever: "O lang, lang may their ladies sit, / Wi thair fans into their hand". What is left out is as important as what is told.

1. Who are the characters in stanzas 1–3? What do we learn about each of them?
2. Mark the stresses and the rhymes in stanza 3. Is it a regular ballad stanza?
3. Why does Sir Patrick laugh and then cry? Give two possible readings.
4. Find an example of incremental repetition and explain its effect.
5. The poem never tells us why the king wants to send a ship in winter. Does this make the ballad weaker or stronger? Why?

5.3.3 T3 · The Gawain poet, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, fitt I, ll. 136–150

Context. It is New Year at Camelot. The first course of the feast has just been served when a stranger rides into the hall. The passage is the second half of a stanza: ten long lines, then the bob and wheel.

Tabella 5.3 T3 — *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ll. 136–150 (Middle English original and translation by the editors). Text of R. Morris's edition (2nd ed., 1869); spelling normalised: *ȝ* printed as *gh*, *&* as *and*.

Middle English	Modern English (translation by the editors)	
Þer hales in at þe halle dor an aghlich mayster,	There rushes in at the hall door a terrifying lord,	
On þe most on þe molde on mesure hyghe;	one of the tallest men on earth in height;	
Fro þe swyre to þe swange so sware and so þik,	from the neck to the waist so square and so thick,	
And his lyndes and his lymes so longe and so grete,	and his loins and his limbs so long and so great,	
Half etayn in erde I hope þat he were.	that I think he was half a giant on earth.	140
Bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene,	But a man I must say he was, at any rate,	
And þat þe myriest in his muckel þat myght ride;	and the finest, for his size, that could ride a horse;	
For of bak and of brest al were his bodi sturne,	for in back and in chest his body was massive,	
Bot his wombe and his wast were worthily smale,	but his belly and his waist were elegantly slim,	
And alle his fetures folghande, in forme þat he hade,	and all his features matched the shape he had,	145
ful clene;	very fine;	
For wonder of his hwe men hade,	for people were amazed at his colour,	
Set in his semblaunt sene;	plain to see in his appearance;	
He ferde as freke were fade,	he behaved like a fierce warrior,	
And ouer-al enker grene.	and was bright green all over.	150

Glosses. *hales*: rushes · *aghlich*: terrifying · *molde*: earth · *swyre*: neck · *swange*: waist, middle · *sware*: square · *lyndes*: loins, hips · *etayn*: giant · *erde*: earth · *hope*: think, believe · *algate*: at any rate · *mynn*: declare · *muckel*: size · *sturne*: massive, formidable · *wombe*: belly · *clene*: fine, perfect · *hwe*: hue, colour · *semblaunt*: appearance · *ferde*: behaved · *freke*: man, warrior · *fade*: a word whose meaning is uncertain ("bold"? "hostile"? "from fairyland"?) · *enker*: bright, vivid.

Analysis

Form. The long lines are alliterative, like the Old English line you met in chapter 3: ***m**ost / **m**olde / **m**esure* (l. 137), ***sw**yre / **sw**ange / **sw**are* (l. 138), ***l**yndes / **l**ymes / **l**onge* (l. 139), ***w**ombe / **w**ast / **w**orthily* (l. 144). Then the bob, "ful clene", and the wheel change the rhythm completely: short lines, end rhyme, and a final surprise.

Technique. The poet delays the key information. For ten lines we hear about the stranger's size and shape, as the court sees him; the narrator even hesitates ("I think he was half a giant… but a man I must say he was"). Only the last word of the stanza, *grene*, reveals what makes him unique. Green is the colour of nature, but also, in many medieval stories, of the fairy world.

1. How does the poet describe the knight's body? Find two words about size and two about elegance.
2. Find the alliterating sounds in lines 143 and 145.
3. Why does the narrator say *I hope* and *I must*? What effect does the narrator's voice create?
4. What is surprising about the last line of the wheel?
5. Compare the stranger's arrival with Grendel's arrival at Heorot (chapter 3). What is similar, and what is different?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Reading a bob and wheel (ll. 146–150).

1. Count the lines: one very short line (the bob) + four short lines (the wheel). The long alliterative lines stop at line 145.
2. Mark the rhymes at the end of each line: *clene* (a) · *hade* (b) · *sene* (a) · *fade* (b) · *grene* (a). The scheme is *ababa*: the bob rhymes with lines 2 and 4 of the wheel.
3. Mark the stresses: the bob has one, *ful CLENE*; each line of the wheel has three, *for WONder of his HWE men HADE, SET in his SEMblaunt SENE*.
4. Conclusion for your notes: "The bob and wheel slows down and closes the stanza with rhyme, after the alliterative lines; here it saves the most important detail, the green colour, for the end."

LEARNING TO LEARN

Annotating a poem with a colour code. Photocopy or copy the poem and read it at least twice before you mark anything. Then use four colours, always the same ones, so that your notes become a habit: **blue** for form (stanza, metre, rhyme letters in the margin), **green** for sound (alliteration, repetition, refrain), **orange** for images and key words, **red** for theme (one or two words in the margin: *betrayal, fate, pride*). Write questions with a pencil: a question is also a note. Finally, write one sentence under the poem that sums up what you found. The same code works for Italian poems and Latin texts: try it on the next sonnet you study in Italian.

5.4 Language: Relative Clauses (B2)

You already know **defining** relative clauses (*English 1*, Unit 14), which tell us which person or thing we mean, and **non-defining** ones (*English 2*, Unit 9), which add extra information between commas. At B2 you need four more tools: *whom*, prepositions before the relative pronoun, quantifiers such as *most of which*, and the short forms called reduced relative clauses.

5.4.1 Whom, whose and prepositions

Whom is the object form of *who*. It is formal: in everyday English we use *who* or *that*, or, in defining clauses, we leave the pronoun out. After a preposition, however, only *whom* (people) and *which* (things) are possible. Tabella 5.4 compares the formal and the informal style.

Tabella 5.4 Relative clauses: formal and informal style

Structure	Formal (writing, essays)	Informal (speech, emails)
whom (object)	*The lady* **whom** *Gawain met was Bertilak's wife.*	*The lady (***who** / **that***) Gawain met was…*
preposition + *whom*	*The knight* **to whom** *she gave the girdle kept it secret.*	*The knight (***who***) she gave the girdle* **to** *kept it secret.*
preposition + *which*	*the castle* **in which** *Gawain spent Christmas*	*the castle (***that***) Gawain spent Christmas* **in**
whose (people and things)	*a poet* **whose** *name we do not know; a ballad* **whose** *author is unknown*	the same
which (a whole clause, recall)	*Gawain hid the girdle,* **which** *was a mistake.*	the same

Prepositions of place and time are often replaced by *where* and *when*: *the hall* ***in which*** *they were feasting* = *the hall* ***where*** *they were feasting*; *the year* ***in which*** *Child died* = *the year* ***when*** *Child died*.

With phrasal verbs the preposition stays with the verb: *the problem* ***which*** *the scholars are looking* ***into*** (✗*into which the scholars are looking*).

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

***Whom*, *whose* e la preposizione davanti al relativo.** *Whom* è la forma complemento di *who*, formale; dopo una preposizione si usano solo *whom* (persone) e *which* (cose): *to whom* = a cui, al quale; *in which* = in cui, nel quale. Mai *that* dopo una preposizione.

Confronto con l'italiano. L'italiano mette sempre la preposizione davanti al relativo (*il cavaliere a cui diede la cintura*). L'inglese formale fa lo stesso (*the knight to whom she gave…*); l'inglese parlato sposta la preposizione in fondo e spesso omette il pronome (*the knight she gave it to*), una costruzione impossibile in italiano. *Whose* corrisponde a *il cui, la cui* e vale anche per le cose: *una ballata il cui autore è sconosciuto = a ballad whose author is unknown*.

5.4.2 Quantifiers with *of which* and *of whom*

In a non-defining clause we can put a quantifier or a number before *of which* (things) or *of whom* (people): *all of, most of, many of, some of, none of, both of, neither of, one of, two of, half of, the first of…*

- *Child published 305 ballads,* ***many of which*** *exist in several versions.*
- *Arthur's knights,* ***none of whom*** *wanted to accept the challenge, looked at the floor.*
- *The manuscript contains four poems,* ***three of which*** *are religious.*
- *Gawain met two ladies at the castle,* ***one of whom*** *was Morgan le Fay.*

The clause is non-defining, so it takes a comma, and *them* cannot replace *which*: with *them* you need a new sentence or *and*.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Quantificatore + *of which / of whom*. Corrisponde all'italiano *molti dei quali, la maggior parte dei quali, nessuno dei quali, due dei quali*: *trecentocinque ballate, molte delle quali… = 305 ballads, many of which…* Si usa nelle relative non restrittive, con la virgola. Per le persone *of whom* (mai *of who*), per le cose *of which*.

5.4.3 Reduced relative clauses

In writing, and especially in descriptions, a relative clause is often shortened: the pronoun and the auxiliary disappear and only a participle or an infinitive remains. This is a **reduced relative clause** (Figura 5.5). There are three types:

- **-ing participle**, with an active meaning, for an action in progress or a permanent situation: *the knight* ***wearing*** *green* (= who was wearing), *people* ***living*** *in the Scottish Borders* (= who live).

- **past participle**, with a passive meaning: *a poem **written** in Middle English* (= which was written), *the ballads **collected** by Child* (= which were collected).
- ***to*-infinitive**, after *the first, the second, the last, the only, the next* and superlatives: *Gawain was **the first knight to accept** the challenge* (= who accepted), *Layamon was **the first poet to tell** Arthur's story in English*.

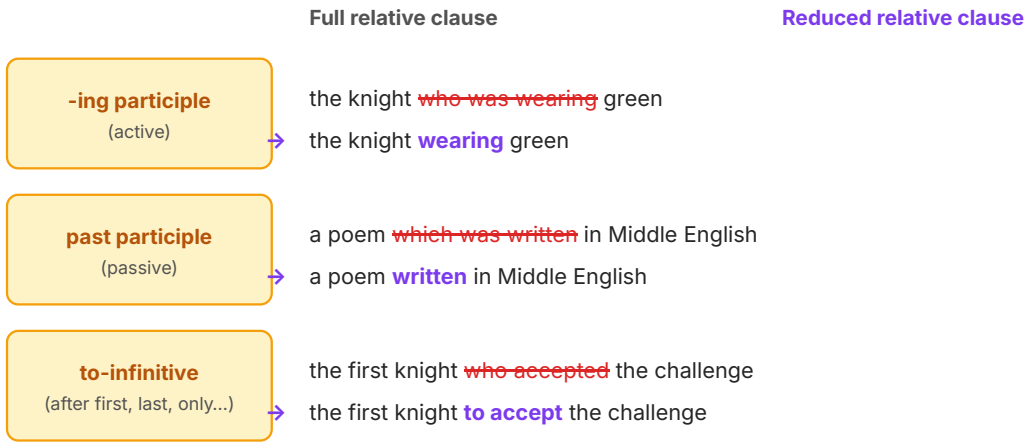


Figura 5.5 From full to reduced relative clauses: the relative pronoun and the auxiliary disappear (red), and a participle or a *to*-infinitive (violet) does the work.

Two limits: an *-ing* clause is not normally used for a single, completed action in the past (*the man **who stole** my bike*, not ✗ *the man stealing my bike* yesterday), and the subject of the reduced clause must be the noun before it.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Le relative ridotte. L'inglese accorcia la relativa con un participio o un infinito, come spesso fa l'italiano scritto: *a poem written in Middle English = un poema scritto in inglese medio* (participio passato); *the first knight to accept = il primo cavaliere ad accettare* (infinito con *a*). Il participio in *-ing* si traduce invece quasi sempre con una relativa: *the knight wearing green = il cavaliere che indossava il verde*.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *The knight to who she gave the girdle…* → ✓ *The knight* ***to whom*** *she gave the girdle…* · ✗ *the castle in that he stayed* → ✓ *the castle* ***in which*** *he stayed / the castle (that) he stayed* ***in***

✗ *Child collected 305 ballads, most of them are tragic.* → ✓ *…,* ***most of which*** *are tragic.* (oppure due frasi: *…305 ballads. Most of them are tragic.*)

✗ *a poem writing in Middle English* → ✓ *a poem* ***written*** *in Middle English* (significato passivo: participio passato) · ✗ *the first knight accepting the challenge* → ✓ *the first knight* ***to accept*** *the challenge*

5.5 Skills: Telling a Story

5.5.1 Vocabulary: feelings and relationships in stories

Tabella 5.5 collects words for the strong feelings of romances and ballads.

Tabella 5.5 Feelings and relationships in stories

Word	Meaning	Example
devotion (n.) → *devoted (to)*	great love and loyalty to a person or a cause	*The knight's devotion to his lady was total.*
jealousy (n.) → *jealous (of)*	the fear that someone you love prefers another person	*He was jealous of his brother.*
envy (n.) → *envious (of)*	the wish to have what someone else has	*They looked at his armour with envy.*
honour (n., v.) → *honourable*	respect, good name; acting according to your values	*Gawain fought to defend Arthur's honour.*
shame (n.) → *ashamed (of)*, *shameful*	the bad feeling after you have done something wrong	*He was ashamed of his fear.*
temptation (n.) → *tempt*, *tempting*	the wish to do something you know you should not do	*Gawain resisted the temptation three times.*
courtesy (n.) → *courteous*	polite, kind and respectful behaviour	*He refused with perfect courtesy.*
pride (n.) → *proud (of)*	satisfaction in yourself; too high an opinion of yourself	*His pride was hurt.*

Watch the difference: you are *jealous* when you are afraid of losing someone; you feel *envy* when you want what another person has. And *ashamed* describes a person (*I'm ashamed*), *shameful* an action (*a shameful lie*).

Collocations with *keep*, *lose* and *save*

Stories of honour are full of these fixed expressions:

- **keep your word** (do what you promised; chapter 3 has *keep a promise*) · **keep a secret** · **keep calm**
- **lose face** (lose other people's respect, look foolish in public) · **lose your temper** (become angry) · **lose heart** (stop hoping)
- **save face** (avoid losing other people's respect) · **save someone's life** · **save time**

Gawain kept his word: he went to the Green Chapel. But by hiding the girdle he tried to save his life, and in the end he lost face before his host.

5.5.2 Reading: A Ballad for the Link

Before you read. Can a news story become a song? Think of a song you know that tells a true story. What does a songwriter leave out?

For the Literature Trail, Prof.ssa Rossi and Mrs Hill gave both classes the same task: take a news story and turn it into a ballad. Giulia and Sam worked together on a story that Aoife had sent them from Galway. This is their blog post. (testo della redazione)

The Link Blog · Literature Trail · Post 7: A Ballad for the Link

Giulia, Turin. The news story, published in a Galway paper, was only six lines long. An old fisherman whose boat was called the *Nora*, like his granddaughter, went out alone although a storm had been forecast. In the evening his radio went silent. His granddaughter, who had been watching the lights of the boat from the harbour wall, ran to the lifeboat station. The crew searched all night and found him at dawn, holding on to his overturned boat, cold but alive. That was all. Our job was to turn it into a ballad, and at first it seemed impossible: no knights, no ladies, no poison.

Sam, Bristol. Then we read "Sir Patrick Spens" again and realised that it is exactly the same kind of story: a boat, a storm, a warning that nobody listens to, people waiting on the shore. So we stole its tricks. We cut almost everything (a ballad doesn't care about wind speeds), started in the middle of the action, let the characters speak with no "he said", and used incremental repetition for the search, because a search is repetition: you look, and look again.

Giulia. The hardest part was the rhythm. Every line had to have four beats or three, and only lines two and four rhyme. We read every stanza aloud on a video call, clapping the beats. For the last stanza we borrowed the question from "Lord Randal", but the answer is the opposite.

The wind blew hard on Galway Bay,
The night came down like stone;
Old Tom put out to set his pots,
And he put out alone.

'O stay at home, O stay, Grandda,

The storm is on its way.'
'I've fished this bay for fifty years,
I'll fish it one more day.'

At ten o'clock the lights went out,
At twelve the radio;
And Nora ran to the lifeboat house
Through wind and spray and snow.

They searched the waves, they searched the rocks,
They searched till break of day,
And there was Tom, still holding on,
Two miles out in the bay.

'What will you give your Nora, Grandda,
For bringing you back home?'
'My boat, my nets, my lobster pots —
And I'll never fish alone.'

Sam. Aoife says her grandad would never promise that. Fair enough: ballads don't have to be true. They have to be sung.

Language in context. In Giulia's first paragraph find a clause with *whose*, a non-defining relative clause and a reduced relative clause with a past participle. In Sam's first paragraph find a relative clause that ends with a preposition: is it formal or informal?

5.5.3 Speaking: keeping a listener hooked

A good storyteller, like a ballad singer, makes the listener want to know what happens next. You did this in chapter 1 with an anecdote; now the focus is **suspense**: delay the important information, slow down at the key moment, and involve the listener (Tabella 5.6).

Tabella 5.6 Useful language — storytelling and suspense

Function	Phrases
Hooking the listener	*You'll never guess what happened… · Picture this: … · So there I was, …*
Building suspense	*And then, out of nowhere, … · Just as I was about to…, … · That's when I noticed… · For a moment nobody moved.*
Delaying	*But wait — it gets worse. · Now, this is the strange part. · I'll tell you why in a minute.*
Reacting (listener)	*You're joking! · Then what? · I bet you were terrified! · Don't tell me…!*
Ending with a twist	*And that's when it all made sense. · To this day, nobody knows… · The funny thing is, …*

1. **Pair work: from prompts to story.** Student A chooses three words from this list and tells a story (about two minutes) that contains them: *a key, a storm, a message, a stranger, a horse, a mistake*. Use at least two phrases for suspense. Student B reacts and guesses the ending before A tells it. Then swap.
2. **Retell a medieval story.** In groups of three, retell the plot of *Gawain* or of "Sir Patrick Spens" from the point of view of one character (the lady, Bertilak, the old knight, one of the waiting ladies). Stop at the most exciting moment and let the group guess what comes next.

5.5.4 Writing: a short story

In a B2 task you often have to write a **short story** that begins or ends with a given line, in about 180–220 words. The reader must want to read on: create suspense, use direct speech for the important moments, the narrative tenses for time (chapter 1), and finish with a twist, a surprising but logical ending. Sam wrote this story for the Link blog from the first line Mrs Hill gave the class.

Tabella 5.7 Model text — a short story (213 words)

The Midnight Calls
It was the third time that week that the phone had rung at midnight. Mia, who had been living alone in her grandmother's cottage by the sea since September, sat up in bed and listened. Ring. Ring. Ring.
The first two times she had answered, and nobody had spoken. She had heard only a strange, rushing sound, like wind or waves. "A wrong number," her friend Jess had said. But Mia knew the story that everyone in the village told: thirty years earlier her grandfather had gone out in his boat on a winter night and had never come back.
She went downstairs in the dark. Her hand was shaking as she picked up the phone. Again, the sound of the sea, louder this time. Then, just as she was about to put the phone down, a voice spoke through the noise.
"Mia? Mia, can you hear me?"
She held her breath. "Who is this?"
"It's Dad! I'm on the night ferry from France, and I've been trying to call you all week. The signal keeps disappearing in the middle of the sea. I've got some news: I'm coming home for good."
Mia laughed so loudly that the cat ran upstairs. The sea, it seemed, had finally decided to send someone back.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Analysing the model.

- **Opening:** the given first line, then at once a character, a place and a mystery (*Ring. Ring. Ring.* — short sentences for tension).
- **Background:** the past perfect and past perfect continuous take us back (*had been living, had answered, had gone out*) and add the ballad-like legend of the lost grandfather: the reader now fears a ghost.
- **Climax:** slow, physical details (*in the dark, her hand was shaking*) and a suspense phrase (*just as she was about to…*).
- **Direct speech** for the key moment only, short and natural.
- **Twist:** the voice is real, and the sea sound has a logical explanation (a ferry). The last sentence links the twist to the legend.
- **Title** that does not give away the ending; relative clauses add information quickly (*Mia, who had been living alone…*).

Checklist. ✓ the given line used exactly, at the start or at the end · ✓ a clear setting and one main character · ✓ suspense before the climax · ✓ some direct speech, correctly punctuated · ✓ all four narrative tenses · ✓ a twist that surprises but makes sense · ✓ 180–220 words · ✓ a title.

Task. Write a short story (180–220 words) for the Literature Trail blog. Choose: a) it begins with *Nobody in the village believed the old map until the night of the storm.* b) it ends with *…and that*

was the last time anyone saw the green bicycle. Research: before you write, look for images of the *Gawain* manuscript (Cotton Nero A.x) on the British Library website, and check on the page who wrote the description and when; one detail of a picture can inspire a story.

5.6 Connections: Arthur in Italy

The stories of the Round Table did not stay in Britain and France. In Italy they were read, sung and carved in stone, and they reached the greatest Italian poet.

5.6.1 Dante and the book of Lancelot

In *Inferno* V, among the souls punished for love, Dante meets Francesca da Rimini and Paolo Malatesta. Francesca tells him how their love began: they were reading together, for pleasure, the French romance of Lancelot.

Tabella 5.8 Dante, *Inferno* V, 127–138 (text of the Petrocchi edition, from it.wikisource) and a translation by the editors

Italiano	English (translation by the editors)	
Noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto	One day, for pleasure, we were reading	
di Lancialotto come amor lo strinse;	of Lancelot, how love held him tight;	
soli eravamo e sanza alcun sospetto.	we were alone and suspected nothing.	
Per più fïate li occhi ci sospinse	Many times that reading made our eyes meet	130
quella lettura, e scolorocci il viso;	and took the colour from our faces;	
ma solo un punto fu quel che ci vinse.	but one moment alone defeated us.	
Quando leggemmo il disïato riso	When we read how the longed-for smile	
esser basciato da cotanto amante,	was kissed by such a lover,	
questi, che mai da me non fia diviso,	this man, who will never be parted from me,	135
la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.	kissed my mouth, trembling all over.	
Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:	A Gallehault was the book, and the man who wrote it:	
quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.	that day we read no further in it.	

In the French prose romance of Lancelot, Gallehault (*Galeotto*) is the knight who brings Lancelot and Queen Guinevere together for their first kiss. For Francesca, the book played the same part: it was the go-between. This is why *galeotto* in Italian can still mean a person or thing that brings two lovers together. Dante shows the danger of courtly love: a story of chivalry can lead real readers to imitate it.

5.6.2 Gawain in Modena

On the north side of Modena Cathedral, above the Porta della Pescheria, an **archivolt** (the curved band of stone over the door) shows knights on horseback attacking a castle in which a lady is held, probably to free her. Inscriptions name them: *Artus de Bretania* (Arthur), *Isdernus*, *Galvagin* — probably Gawain — and others. The carving is usually dated between about 1120 and 1140, although scholars disagree. If it is that early, Arthur and Gawain were known in northern Italy as early as Geoffrey of Monmouth's book, or even before: the stories must have travelled orally, perhaps with pilgrims, merchants and knights on their way to Rome and the Holy Land.

In the 14th and 15th centuries Italian audiences also heard knightly stories in town squares, in the *cantari*: narrative poems in *ottava rima* recited or sung by professional performers, many of them about Tristan, Lancelot and the knights of the Round Table.

5.6.3 Lord Randal in Italy

Ballads travel too. Child himself noticed that the story of "Lord Randal" exists in Italian, as «L'avvelenato»: a mother asks her son where he has been; he has eaten an eel at his sweetheart's house, and in his will he leaves her the gallows. Child quotes a medley printed in Verona in 1629 that already contains its first lines: «Dov' andastu iersera, / Figliuol mio ricco, savio e gentile?» ("Where did you go last night, my rich, wise and noble son?"). It is much older than any English text of the ballad that Child knew, and Italian singers in Lombardy and Venice still knew it in the 19th century.

COLLEGAMENTI

Music: the ballad as a song. A ballad was not read but sung, usually by one voice without instruments or with a simple accompaniment, and the same tune was repeated for every stanza: this is why the stanza is so regular. The refrain was the moment when the audience could join in. The regular form of the ballad stanza, eight and six syllables, is what English hymn books call **common metre** (8.6.8.6); "Amazing Grace", written by John Newton and first published in 1779, is in common metre, and any text in common metre can be sung to its tune. Try it with a stanza of "Sir Patrick Spens": where do you have to add or squeeze a syllable?

APPROFONDIMENTO

Ballads after the Middle Ages. The ballad never died. The collectors inspired the Romantic poets: in 1798 Wordsworth and Coleridge called their collection *Lyrical Ballads* (next year's book). In the 20th century folk singers brought the old ballads back. A version of "The Elfin Knight" (Child 2) became the well-known song "Scarborough Fair", and Bob Dylan built his "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" (1963) on the question-and-answer pattern of "Lord Randal": a parent asks a son where he has been, and each answer is more terrible than the one before.

1. Compare the role of the book in Dante's Francesca and the role of the green girdle in *Gawain*: in both stories an object leads a character into a fault. What is different?
2. Do you know any Italian folk songs or *canzoni* that tell a story, like a ballad? What do they have in common with "Lord Randal"?

SINTESI

- **Chivalry** turned the mounted warrior into an ideal: prowess, loyalty, generosity, courtesy and faith — an ideal, not a description of real knights.
- The **Crusades** (First Crusade 1096–1099, Third Crusade 1189–1192 with Richard I; fall of Acre 1291) gave knighthood a religious purpose.
- The **troubadours** of southern France (William IX, 1071–1126) sang *fin'amor*; "courtly love" is a modern label (Gaston Paris, 1883). Eleanor of Aquitaine carried this culture to the English court.
- The **Arthurian legend**: Geoffrey of Monmouth (c. 1136), Wace and the Round Table (1155), Chrétien de Troyes (Lancelot, the Grail, c. 1170–1190), Layamon (c. 1200, the first Arthurian story in English).
- The **romance** tells of a knight's quest, love and marvels; unlike the epic, it tests an individual hero and often ends well.
- *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (late 14th century, anonymous, one manuscript, Cotton Nero A.x; 2530 lines, four fitts) belongs to the **alliterative revival**; each stanza ends with a **bob and wheel** (*ababa*).
- Gawain's test: the beheading game, the three hunts and three temptations, the green girdle; the **pentangle** stands for perfection, the girdle for a human fault.
- The **popular ballad** is oral and anonymous: ballad stanza (4–3–4–3, *abcb*), refrain, incremental repetition, dialogue, abrupt openings; collected by Percy (1765), Scott (1802–03) and Child (1882–1898, 305 ballads).
- "Lord Randal" tells a poisoning through questions and answers; "Sir Patrick Spens" tells a shipwreck by showing what comes before and after it.
- Relative clauses, B2: *whom*; preposition + *whom / which* (formal) or the preposition at the end (informal); *whose* for people and things; *most of which, none of whom*.
- Reduced relative clauses: *the knight wearing green, a poem written in Middle English, the first knight to accept*.
- Arthur in Italy: Francesca's «Galeotto fu 'l libro» (*Inferno* V), the Modena archivolt with Artus and Galvagin, the *cantari*; "Lord Randal" as the Italian «L'avvelenato».

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● Who first described the Round Table, in a French verse history of Britain?
   - **A.** Geoffrey of Monmouth
   - **B.** Wace
   - **C.** Chrétien de Troyes
   - **D.** Layamon

2. ● In which manuscript does *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* survive?
   - **A.** the Exeter Book
   - **B.** the Winchester manuscript
   - **C.** Percy's folio
   - **D.** Cotton Nero A.x

3. ● Which of these is typical of a romance rather than of an epic?
   - **A.** a quest in which an individual knight proves himself
   - **B.** a hero who dies fighting for his people
   - **C.** alliterative verse in Old English
   - **D.** a story sung by anonymous singers in quatrains

4. ● True or false? Correct the false statements. a The troubadours wrote in Latin. b "Courtly love" is the name the troubadours themselves used. c Eleanor of Aquitaine became queen of England in 1154. d Layamon wrote the first Arthurian story in English. e *Sir Gawain* is written in the same dialect as Chaucer's poetry. f Most ballads were written down only in the 18th and 19th centuries.

5. ●● Match each author or collector with his work and its date. Authors: 1 Geoffrey of Monmouth · 2 Wace · 3 Chrétien de Troyes · 4 Thomas Percy · 5 Walter Scott · 6 F. J. Child. Works: a *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* · b *Historia regum Britanniae* · c *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* · d *Perceval* · e *Roman de Brut* · f *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. Dates: 1155 · c. 1136 · 1765 · 1802–03 · c. 1170–1190 · 1882–1898.

6. ●● Explain these terms in your own words, with an example from the chapter: a quest · b fitt · c bob and wheel · d incremental repetition · e refrain · f pentangle.

7. ●●● Short answer (40–60 words). Why is it difficult to say how old a ballad is? Use the examples of Robin Hood and "Lord Randal".

Text Analysis

8. ● In “Lord Randal”, how do we first understand that the young man has been poisoned?
   - **A.** The narrator tells us in the first stanza.
   - **B.** His true-love confesses.
   - **C.** The hawks and hounds that ate his leftovers died.
   - **D.** The mother finds the eels.

9. ● T1. Answer the questions. a Where has Lord Randal been, and whom did he meet? b What did he eat? c How does the refrain change in stanza 6? d What does he leave to his true-love at the end of the ballad?

10. ●● T2. Find in stanzas 1–5 of “Sir Patrick Spens”: a an abrupt opening · b a line of dialogue with no “he said” · c an example of incremental repetition · d a fixed phrase for a colour · e a sudden change of scene.

11. ●● Scansion. Copy stanza 3 of “Sir Patrick Spens”. Write the stressed syllables in CAPITALS and the rhyme letters at the end of each line. Is it a regular ballad stanza?

12. ●● Paraphrase stanza 5 of “Sir Patrick Spens” into modern standard English. Then say in one sentence how Sir Patrick feels.

13. ●● T3. a Find the words that alliterate in lines 143 and 145. b Write the rhyme scheme of lines 146–150. c Which word in the passage is the most important, and where does the poet place it?

14. ●●● Compare T1 and T2 (80–100 words). Both ballads tell a death without describing it. How does each one do it?

15. ●●● Write a PEE-style paragraph (about 80 words): Is the Green Knight a man or a monster? Use one short quotation from T3.

Language

16. ● The lady _____ Gawain refused three times was Bertilak’s wife.
   - **A.** whose
   - **B.** whom
   - **C.** which
   - **D.** of whom

17. ● Child published 305 ballads, many _____ exist in more than one version.
   - **A.** of them
   - **B.** which
   - **C.** of whom
   - **D.** of which

18. ●● Layamon was the first poet _____ King Arthur's story in English.

A. to tell
B. telling
C. told
D. who telling

19. ● Complete with *whom, whose, which* or a preposition + *whom / which*. a The poet _____ name we do not know wrote four poems. b The castle _____ Gawain spent Christmas belonged to Bertilak. c Arthur, _____ Gawain was the nephew, accepted his offer. d Gawain kept the girdle secret, _____ was against the rules of the game. e The knights, all _____ wore green belts, honoured Gawain. f The man _____ the king sent the letter was Sir Patrick.

20. ●● Rewrite in an informal style, with the preposition at the end and no relative pronoun where possible. a The knight to whom she gave the girdle hid it. b This is the book about which I told you. c The lady with whom he danced was the host's wife. d The song to which we listened is very old.

21. ●● Join the sentences with a quantifier + *of which / of whom*. a The manuscript contains four poems. Three of them are religious. b Arthur had many knights. None of them wanted to fight the Green Knight. c We read two ballads. Both of them end tragically. d The class wrote twenty ballads. The best of them will go on the blog.

22. ●● Reduce the relative clauses. a The knight who was riding a green horse entered the hall. b The ballads which were collected by Percy were very popular. c Gawain was the only knight who stood up. d People who live near the sea know many songs about storms. e Is this the last ballad which was printed by Child? f The girdle that was given to Gawain was green.

23. ●● Error correction. Each sentence has one mistake. a The knight to who she spoke was Gawain. b Sir Patrick, that was the best sailor, obeyed the king. c Gawain, whose was very brave, accepted. d The romance, most of it is in verse, is long. e A poem writing in the 14th century survives in one manuscript. f The castle in that he stayed was far away.

24. ●●● Translate into English. a Il cavaliere a cui la dama diede la cintura non disse niente. b Child raccolse molte ballate, la maggior parte delle quali parla di amore e di morte. c Gawain fu il primo cavaliere ad accettare la sfida.

Vocabulary

25. ● Complete with the correct form of the word in brackets. a The lady tried to _____ Gawain, but he resisted the _____ . (tempt) b He was deeply _____ of his fear. (shame) c Every knight had to be _____ to ladies. (courtesy) d Lord Randal's true-love was perhaps _____ of another woman. (jealousy) e The king was _____ of his best sailor. (pride)

26. ●● *Keep, lose* or *save*? a Don't _____ your temper: it's only a game. b Gawain _____ his word and went to the Green Chapel. c After his mistake, the captain tried to _____ face by blaming the weather. d The lifeboat crew _____ the fisherman's life. e Can you _____ a secret? f After the second failure the team began to _____ heart.

27. ●● *Jealous* or *envious*? *Ashamed* or *shameful*? a She's _____ of her friend's new bike. b He gets _____ when his girlfriend talks to other boys. c Lying to your host is _____ . d I'm _____ of what I said yesterday.

Writing and Speaking

28. ●● Write a short story (180–220 words) for the Literature Trail blog that begins with: *The stranger at the door was dressed entirely in green.* Follow the model and the checklist in the Writing section.

29. ●● Write your own ballad (four stanzas) about a news story or an event in your town. Use the ballad stanza, a refrain or incremental repetition, and dialogue.

30. ●●● Speaking. Tell your partner the story of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* in about two minutes, as if it had happened to someone you know. Keep the listener hooked with phrases from the Useful language table in the Speaking section and stop before the twist; your partner guesses the ending.

Towards B2

31. ●● Multiple-choice cloze. Choose the correct answer (A, B, C or D) for each gap.
Robin Hood is (1) _____ most famous outlaw in English stories. Songs about him were already popular in the 14th century, (2) _____ the oldest ballads that survive were written down later. The legend tells of a man (3) _____ in Sherwood Forest with his companions, all of (4) _____ were outlaws like him. Robin is (5) _____ to have robbed the rich to help the poor, but historians have never (6) _____ to identify a real person behind him.
1 A a B the C one D some · 2 A because B so C although D unless · 3 A lived B living C lives D to living · 4 A who B whom C them D which · 5 A told B said C spoken D talked · 6 A managed B could C succeeded D able

32. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap.
Francis James Child, (1) _____ collection of ballads is still used today, was a professor at Harvard. He spent many years looking for every version he could find, (2) _____ of which he printed. He was not the first (3) _____ collect ballads: Percy and Scott had done it before him. The ballads (4) _____ he published are numbered from 1 to 305, and the scholars (5) _____ whom he corresponded sent him songs from Scotland, England and America.

33. ●● Word formation. Use the word in capitals to form a word that fits the gap. a The Green Knight's _____ in the hall surprised everyone. (APPEAR) b Gawain showed great _____ towards his host. (COURTEOUS) c The lady's visits were a real _____ . (TEMPT) d The ballad's _____ is unknown: nobody knows who wrote it. (AUTHOR) e The knights admired the king's _____ : he gave them gold and land. (GENEROUS)

34. ●●● Key-word transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in brackets. Use two to five words. a The poet who wrote *Gawain* is unknown. (WHOSE) — The poet _____ unknown wrote *Gawain*. b Gawain accepted the challenge before all the other knights. (FIRST) — Gawain was _____ the challenge. c Percy published many ballads; most of them came from Scotland. (WHICH) — Percy published many ballads, _____ from Scotland. d The knight was wearing green. He entered the hall. (WEARING) — The knight _____ the hall.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. A: the introduction to the Middle English period, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and the section on ballads.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapter on medieval literature, for romance and the alliterative revival.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries "romance", "ballad" and "courtly love".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on relative clauses and on participle clauses after nouns.
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on relative clauses and reduced relative clauses.

Glossario del capitolo

Alliterative revival
rinascita allitterativa — the return of the alliterative line in 14th-century English poetry (*Sir Gawain*, *Piers Plowman*).

Arthurian legend
leggenda arturiana, ciclo bretone — the stories of King Arthur, his court and the knights of the Round Table ("the matter of Britain").

Ballad
ballata popolare — a short, anonymous narrative song of oral tradition, usually in quatrains, with dialogue and repetition.

Ballad stanza
strofa della ballata — a quatrain with lines of four and three stresses alternating, usually rhyming *abcb*.

Bob and wheel
bob and wheel — in *Sir Gawain*, a two-syllable line (bob) and four short lines (wheel) rhyming *ababa* that close each stanza.

Chivalry
cavalleria, ideale cavalleresco — the ideal of the medieval knight: courage, loyalty, generosity, courtesy and faith.

Courtly love
amor cortese — the refined love sung by the troubadours, in which the lover serves a superior lady; a modern term (Gaston Paris, 1883).

Fitt
parte, canto — one of the sections of a long medieval poem; *Sir Gawain* has four.

Grail
Graal — the mysterious vessel of Arthurian romance, later identified with the cup of the Last Supper and the object of a holy quest.

Incremental repetition
ripetizione incrementale — repetition of a line or stanza with a small change each time, which moves the story forward.

Lose face
perdere la faccia — lose other people's respect; opposite: *save face*.

Pentangle
pentacolo, stella a cinque punte — a five-pointed star drawn with one continuous line: on Gawain's shield, the "endless knot" of his virtues.

Quest
ricerca, impresa — the journey of a romance hero in search of something, which is also a test.

Reduced relative clause
relativa ridotta (implicita) — a relative clause without pronoun and auxiliary: *a poem written in Middle English, the first to accept*.

Refrain
ritornello — a line or group of lines repeated at regular intervals in a song or poem.

Romance
romanzo cavalleresco — a medieval tale, in verse or prose, of knights, quests, love and marvels.

Round Table
Tavola Rotonda — King Arthur's table, at which no knight had the first place; first described by Wace (1155).

Temptation
tentazione — the wish to do something you know you should not do.

Troubadour
trovatore — a poet-musician of southern France (11th–13th centuries) who sang *fin'amor* in Occitan.

Soluzioni

1. B (Wace, *Roman de Brut*, 1155).

2. D (Cotton Nero A.x, in the British Library, the only copy).

3. A.

4. a F — they wrote in Occitan (*langue d'oc*). b F — they spoke of *fin'amor*; *amour courtois* is Gaston Paris's term (1883). c T. d T (Layamon's *Brut*, c. 1200). e F — it is in the dialect of the north-west Midlands; Chaucer wrote in London English. f T.

5. 1 b, c. 1136 · 2 e, 1155 · 3 d, c. 1170–1190 · 4 a, 1765 · 5 f, 1802–03 · 6 c, 1882–1898.

6. Model answers: a the journey of a romance hero in search of something, which is also a test (Gawain looks for the Green Chapel). b one of the parts into which a long poem is divided (*Gawain* has four). c a very short line followed by four short rhyming lines (*ababa*) at the end of each stanza of *Gawain*. d repetition with a small change that moves the story on ("And wha met ye there… / And what did she give you…"). e a line or lines repeated in every stanza ("mother, mak my bed soon…"). f a five-pointed star drawn with one line, the "endless knot" on Gawain's shield, a symbol of his perfect, linked virtues.

7. Traccia: ballads were oral, anonymous and changed by every singer, and most were written down only in the 18th–19th centuries. Robin Hood songs existed by c. 1377 (*Piers Plowman*), but the surviving ballads were written down later; Child's oldest English text of "Lord Randal" cannot be traced back more than about a century before his edition, yet an Italian version was printed in 1629. A written date is not the date of composition.

8. C.

9. a In the greenwood; he met his true-love. b Eels fried in a pan. c "wearied wi hunting" becomes "sick at the heart" (and "I fain wad lie down"): he admits that he is dying. d "hell and fire" — a curse.

10. a "The king sits in Dumferling toune" — the story starts with no introduction. b e.g. "O whar will I get guid sailor, / To sail this schip of mine?" c stanza 4, "The first line that Sir Patrick red… / The next line that Sir Patrick red". d "blude-reid wine". e from the king's hall (stanza 3, the letter) to Sir Patrick "walking on the sand".

11. One possible reading: the KING has WRITten a BRAID LETter (4) a · and SIGND it WI his HAND (3) b · and SENT it TO sir PATrick SPENCE (4) c · was WALKing ON the SAND (3) b. Yes: 4–3–4–3 stresses and *abcb* (*hand / sand*). Other readings of the weak stresses (*wi, to, on*) are possible; the count of four and three beats stays.

12. "Oh, who is it that has done this deed, this evil deed, to me, sending me out at this time of the year to sail on the sea!" He feels betrayed and afraid: somebody has given him a dangerous, perhaps deadly order in winter.

13. a l. 143: *bak / brest / bodi* (b); l. 145: *fetures / folghande / forme* (f). b *ababa*: clene, hade, sene, fade, grene. c *grene*, the very last word of the stanza, at the end of the wheel: the poet keeps the surprise for the end.

14. Traccia: "Lord Randal" never narrates: the death is revealed through the mother's questions and the son's answers, step by step (eels, dead hounds, the changed refrain), and ends with a will and a curse. "Sir Patrick Spens" jumps from the order to the reactions and later to the floating hats and the waiting ladies: the shipwreck itself is left out. Both use omission, dialogue and repetition; the listener completes the story, which makes it more powerful.

15. Model: The Green Knight is presented as something between a man and a monster. The narrator first thinks he is "Half etayn in erde" (l. 140), half a giant, but then corrects himself: "Bot mon most I algate mynn hym to bene" (l. 141). His body is huge

but elegant, and only at the end do we discover that he is entirely green. This hesitation creates suspense and suggests that he comes from another world, without making him a beast.

16. B (whom: object of *refused*; *who* or *that* are also possible informally).

17. D.

18. A.

19. a whose · b in which (or where) · c of whom · d which · e of whom · f to whom.

20. a The knight she gave the girdle to hid it. b This is the book I told you about. c The lady he danced with was the host's wife. d The song we listened to is very old.

21. a The manuscript contains four poems, three of which are religious. b Arthur had many knights, none of whom wanted to fight the Green Knight. c We read two ballads, both of which end tragically. d The class wrote twenty ballads, the best of which will go on the blog.

22. a The knight riding a green horse… b The ballads collected by Percy… c Gawain was the only knight to stand up. d People living near the sea… e Is this the last ballad printed by Child? (also: the last ballad to be printed) f The girdle given to Gawain…

23. a to whom · b Sir Patrick, who was… (no *that* in non-defining clauses) · c Gawain, who was very brave… · d The romance, most of which is in verse,… · e A poem written in… · f The castle in which he stayed (or: the castle he stayed in).

24. a The knight to whom the lady gave the girdle said nothing (informal: The knight the lady gave the girdle to said nothing). b Child collected many ballads, most of which are about love and death. c Gawain was the first knight to accept the challenge.

25. a tempt, temptation · b ashamed · c courteous · d jealous · e proud.

26. a lose · b kept · c save · d saved · e keep · f lose.

27. a envious (she wants what her friend has; *jealous* is also common in informal English) · b jealous · c shameful · d ashamed.

28. Marking guide: given line used exactly; clear setting and character; suspense; direct speech correctly punctuated; four narrative tenses; at least two relative clauses; a logical twist; 180–220 words; title.

29. Marking guide: four quatrains with lines of about 4 and 3 beats; rhyme in lines 2 and 4; at least one refrain or incremental repetition; direct speech without "he said"; an abrupt opening; the story told through selected moments.

30. Model opening: "You'll never guess what happened at Arthur's New Year party. So there they were, eating, when out of nowhere a giant rode into the hall — and he was green. Not a bit green: completely green! … Now, this is the strange part: a year later Gawain had to go and find him… And just as the axe was coming down… Go on, guess!" (Delays, suspense phrases, a stop before the revelation that the Green Knight is Bertilak.)

31. 1 B · 2 C · 3 B · 4 B · 5 B · 6 A.

32. 1 whose · 2 all (or *most, many*) · 3 to · 4 (that / which) — *that* or *which* · 5 with.

33. a appearance · b courtesy · c temptation · d authorship · e generosity.

34. a whose name is · b the first knight to accept (or: the first to accept) · c most of which came · d wearing green entered.