

a2



Geordie

Anonymous

This is one of the most popular English ballads. Like most ballads, it is anonymous and its date of composition is unknown: it may be dated to the late Middle Ages. It is still well known today and often sung in both traditional and modernized versions. To ensure rhyme, *Geordie* must be read out or sung with a stress on the final syllable.

1 Before reading check whether you remember:

- what a ballad is,
- what its typical features are.

If you need any help, go back to, pp. 27 and 29.



SPEAKING

- As I came over London Bridge,
One **misty*** morning early,
I **overheard** a fair* pretty maid*
Lamenting for her Geordie.
- 5 "Come **bridle*** me* my milk-white horse,
Come **bridle** me my pony
That* I may ride to London's court,
To **plead*** for the life of Geordie."
And when she entered in the hall,
- 10 There was* lords and ladies plenty*
Down on her bended knees she did fall,*
To plead for the life of Geordie.
"Oh, Geordie stole no cow nor calf,
Nor **sheep** he never **stole** any,
- 15 But he stole sixteen of the king's wild deer,*
And sold them in Bohemy.
"Oh, two brave* children I've had by him,
And the third lies in my bosom;*
I'd freely* part with them* every one,
- 20 If you would spare* me the life of Geordie."
The judge looked over his left shoulder,¹
And said "I'm sorry for thee,*
My pretty fair maid, you have come too late,
For he's condemned already."
- 25 Let Geordie hang* in golden chain
Such chain as never was any,
Because he came* of the royal blood,
And courted a virtuous lady.
"I wish I was down in yonder* grove,*
- 30 Where times* I have been many,
With my broad* sword and my pistol too,
I'd fight for the life of Geordie."
- foggy
beautiful / girl
(metti le briglie) / i.e. for me
i.e. so that
(intercedere)
were / many
i.e. fell
(corvi)
handsome
i.e. I'm pregnant
gladly / (rinunciare a loro)
(salvare)
you
be hanged (impiccato)
i.e. was
(loggii) / wood (boschetto)
i.e. many times
big, large



▲ A hunting scene from a 14th century book.

1. The judge...
shoulder: the act of looking over one's left shoulder was taken to be a bad omen, a sign of ill luck.

KEY POINTS

- anonymous ballad
- it was set to music (many modern versions)
- the young man is going to be hanged for stealing the king's deer
- his girl goes to Court to plead for his life
- she is ready to die for him