

Anonymous
The Unquiet Grave

This ballad appeared in Volume II of The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, edited by Francis James Child. A dead woman expresses, from the grave, a distaste for mourning that disturbs her eternal rest.

“The wind doth blow today, my love,
And a few small drops of rain;
I never had but one true-love,
In cold grave she was lain¹.

5 I'll do as much for my true-love
As any young man may;
I'll sit and mourn all at her grave
For a twelvemonth and a day².”

The twelvemonth and a day being up,
10 The dead began to speak:
“Oh who sits weeping on my grave,
And will not let me sleep?”

“ ‘Tis I, my love, sits on your grave,
And will not let you sleep;
15 For I crave³ one kiss of your clay-cold lips⁴,
And that is all I seek.”

“You crave one kiss of my clay-cold lips;
But the call of death is strong;
If you have one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
20 Your time will not be long.

Love, where we used to walk,
The finest flower that ere was seen
Is withered to a stalk⁵.

The stalk is withered dry, my love,
25 So will our hearts decay;
So make yourself content, my love,
Till God calls you away.”

WORK ON THE TEXT

LEXIS

- 1. While reading these lines find out the words which mean the following.**
- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. moves the air | 3. burial place |
|------------------|-----------------|

- 1. she was lain.**
Giaceva.
2. For a twelvemonth and a day. Per un anno e un giorno.
3. crave. Desidero.
4. your clay-cold lips.
Le tue fredde labbra di creta.
5. Is withered to a stalk. È appassito fino allo stelo.

- 2. small amounts of liquid
- 4. decompose

2. List words and phrases referring to nature. Decide what they connote.

- They stand for magic arts.
- They connote an impending violence.
- They connote death.
- They stand for rebirth.

3. The other semantic area of the passage is that of death. Square words and phrases referring to it. What is it like? What is the relationship between nature and death?

CONTENTS

4. After reading the ballad identify:

- 1. the setting in time and place _____.
- 2. the characters involved _____.

5. Answer the following questions.

- 1. How does the ballad start?
- 2. Where is the young boy's true-love?
- 3. How long is the boy going to mourn?
- 4. What happens after one year and a day of mourning?
- 5. What does she ask?
- 6. What does the boy wish?
- 7. What does kissing the cold lips of a dead person mean?
- 8. What is the field where the couple used to walk in the past like?
- 9. What does she suggest to her lover doing?

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

6. Focus on the features of this ballad and fill in the table below.

Layout	
Rhyme scheme	
Alliteration	
Repetition	
Language used	

7. Identify the figure of speech of "The finest flower" (line 22). Then explain it.

- Personification
- Simile
- Metaphor
- Symbol

8. What is the general atmosphere of the ballad like?

- Violent
- Tragic
- Melancholic
- Magic

9. Sum up the theme of the ballad. Do not use more than three lines.

10. Describe in about 150 words the main features of Medieval Ballads.

