Ballad of Birmingham (page 618)

Active Reading SkillBuilder

Reading Narrative Poetry
A narrative poem is a poem that tells a story. Like a work of fiction, it has characters, setting, and plot. However, a narrative poem, especially a ballad, tell its story in a condensed form. When reading this ballad, use the following strategies to increase your understanding: read it aloud to hear its patterns of rhyme and rhythm, determine who is speaking, and look for abrupt time shifts. Fill in the spider map below to record your thoughts and impressions.

Follow Up: After a close reading, write down any questions you still have about events or references in the poem.
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**Literary Analysis SkillBuilder**

**Ballads**
A **ballad** is a narrative poem that was originally meant to be sung. Typically, a ballad focuses on a single incident—from the middle of a crisis directly to the resolution. Ballads usually consist of four-line stanzas, with end rhyme in the second and fourth lines; each stanza usually has a regular meter. Action is developed through dialogue, and there is often repetition of words, phrases, and lines. Folk ballad characteristics are listed on the chart below. Review the selection and record any examples of these characteristics that you find.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folk Ballad Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Focuses on single incident</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Consists of quatrains (four-line stanzas) with end rhyme</td>
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<td>3. Has regular meter</td>
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<td>4. Contains dialogue that helps develop the action</td>
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<td>5. Uses repetition</td>
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Selection Open-Book Test

A. Traditionally, ballads depict tragic events that befall ordinary people, include supernatural elements, and treat themes related to love, adventure, and bravery. Make marks in the small boxes next to elements of traditional ballads found in this ballad: Then, in the box, write notes supporting your answers. (40 points)

☐ tragic events
☐ ordinary people
☐ supernatural elements
☐ theme related to love, adventure, and bravery

Supporting Notes:

B. Write the letter of the best answer. (10 points each)

1. The image of the little girl in the fifth stanza conveys a feeling of
   a. heroism.
   b. violence.
   c. innocence.

2. When the mother hears the explosion, her first thought is for
   a. her daughter.
   b. the marchers.
   c. the cause of freedom.

C. Answer one of the following questions based on your understanding of the ballad. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (20 points)

1. What does this ballad say to you about freedom? Explain.

2. A martyr is someone who dies or suffers greatly, often unwillingly, for the sake of a principle or a cause. Do you think the little girl in this ballad is a martyr? Is her mother a martyr? Explain your answers.

D. Linking Literature to Life. Answer the following question based on your own experience and knowledge. Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper. (20 points)

Is there any principle or cause for which you would approve or promote the use of violence? Explain.