

The king has written a braid letter,
 And signed it wi' his hand,
 And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
 Was walking on the sand.

The first line that Sir Patrick red,
 A loud lauch lauchèd he;
 The next line that Sir Patrick red,
 The teir blinded his ee.

"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!"

"Mak haste, mak haste, my mirry men all,
 Our guid schip sails the morne."
 "O say na sae,° my master deir,
 For I feir a deadlie storme."

"Late late yestreen I saw the new moone,
 Wi' the auld moone in hir arme,
 And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
 That we will cum to harme."

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith°
 To weet° their cork-heild schoone,°
 Bot lang owre° a' the play wer playd,
 Their hats they swam aboone.°

O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
 Wi' their fans into their hand,
 Or ere° they se Sir Patrick Spence
 Cum sailing to the land.

O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
 Wi' their gold kems° in their hair,
 Waiting for their ain° deir lords,
 For they'll se thame na mair.

Haf owre,° haf owre to Aberdour,
 It's fiftie fadom deip,
 And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
 Wi' the Scots lords at his feit.

SIR PATRICK SPENCE. 9 *braid*: Broad, but broad in what sense? Among guesses are *plain-spoken*, *official*, and *on wide paper*.

Questions

1. That the king drinks "blude-reid wine" (line 2)—what meaning do you find in that detail? What does it hint, or foreshadow?
2. What do you make of this king and his motives for sending Spence and the Scots lords into an impending storm? Is he a fool, is he cruel and inconsiderate, is he deliberately trying to drown Sir Patrick and his crew, or is it impossible for us to know? Let your answer depend on the poem alone, not on anything you read into it.
3. Comment on this ballad's methods of storytelling. Is the story told too briefly for us to care what happens to Spence and his men, or are there any means by which the poet makes us feel compassion for them? Do you resent the lack of a detailed account of the shipwreck?
4. Lines 25–28—the new moon with the old moon in her arm—have been much admired as poetry. What does this stanza contribute to the story as well?

Robert Frost (1874–1963)

"Out, Out—" 1916

The buzz-saw snarled and rattled in the yard
 And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,
 Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.
 And from there those that lifted eyes could count
 Five mountain ranges one behind the other
 Under the sunset far into Vermont.
 And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,
 As it ran light, or had to bear a load.
 And nothing happened: day was all but done.
 Call it a day, I wish they might have said
 To please the boy by giving him the half hour
 That a boy counts so much when saved from work.
 His sister stood beside them in her apron
 To tell them "Supper." At the word, the saw,
 As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,
 Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap—
 He must have given the hand. However it was,
 Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!
 The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,
 As he swung toward them holding up the hand
 Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
 The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—
 Since he was old enough to know, big boy
 Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—
 He saw all spoiled. "Don't let him cut my hand off—"