



## Geordie

Anonymous

*This popular ballad originated in Scotland but its date of composition is unknown. It deals with a poacher, a hunter who kills animals without permission; eventually he is caught and hanged. It is still widely known today and often sung in traditional as well as modernised versions.*

- As I walked out over London Bridge  
One misty morning early  
I overheard<sup>1</sup> a fair pretty maid,  
Was lamenting for her Geordie.
- 5    'Ah my Geordie will be hanged<sup>2</sup> in a golden chain  
'tis not the chain of many,  
He was born from King's royal breed<sup>3</sup>  
And lost to a virtuous lady.'
- 10   Go bridle me my milk-white steed<sup>4</sup>,  
Go bridle me my pony,  
I will ride to London's Court  
To plead<sup>5</sup> for the life of Geordie.
- 15   'Ah my Geordie never stole nor cow nor calf<sup>6</sup>  
He never hurted<sup>7</sup> any,  
Stole sixteen of the King's royal deer  
And he sold them in Bohenny<sup>8</sup>.
- 20   'Two pretty babes have I born,  
The third lies in my body;  
I'd freely part<sup>9</sup> with them everyone  
If you'd spare<sup>10</sup> the life of Geordie.'
- The judge looked over his left shoulder,  
He said, 'Fair maid I'm sorry'  
He said 'Fair maid you must be gone  
For I cannot pardon Geordie.'
- 25   Ah my Geordie will be hanged in a golden chain,  
'tis not the chain of many  
Stole sixteen of the King's royal deer  
And he sold them in Bohenny.

1 overheard. Sentii per caso.

2 will be hanged. Sarà impiccato.

3 royal breed. Stirpe reale.

4 Go ... steed. Mettete le redini  
al mio cavallo bianco.

5 plead. Implorare.

6 calf. Vitello.

7 hurted. Hurt.

8 Bohenny. Qui: *Bohemians*, zingare.

9 I'd ... part. Mi separerei volentieri.

10 you'd spare. Salvaste.

**READING COMPETENCE****1 READ** the ballad and do the following activities.

1 Who is the 'Geordie' of the title?

- A A rebel.
- B A murderer.
- C A deer poacher.

2 Identify the characters of this ballad.

3 The weather in London is

- A misty.
- B cloudy.
- C sunny.

4 Underline words and phrases describing the atmosphere of the first stanza.

5 Circle the phrase referred to Geordie's social class.

6 What is the meaning of the verb 'To plead' (line 12)?

- A Discuss.
- B Address.
- C Implore.

7 Highlight all the actions performed by Geordie's lover  
in lines 4-12.

8 Refer to lines 17-21. Who has the woman mentioned? To whom? What is the effect she hopes to get?

9 Explain the sentence 'I'd freely part with them everyone' (line 19). Choose from the following.

- A The woman is ready to leave London with her children.
- B The woman is ready to separate from her children in order to save Geordie.
- C The woman is ready to marry the judge to save her lover.

10 What does the adjective 'left' (line 21) mean?

- A Favourable.
- B Permitted.
- C Unfavourable.

11 What impression do the phrases 'I'd freely part' (line 19), 'I cannot pardon' (line 24), 'Geordie will be hanged' (line 25) convey?

- A Violence and death.
- B Accumulation.
- C Repetition.

12 Re-order the events of the text.

- The judge tells her it is too late and that Geordie will be hanged.
- She also says she is again pregnant.
- The woman is lamenting for her lover's imminent death.
- She states she would be ready to give up her children in order to save Geordie's life.
- She decides to go to London's Court of Justice to plead for Geordie's life.
- She has a dialogue with the judge: she mentions the children she has borne to Geordie.
- A storyteller narrates the story of Geordie and his lover.

13 Report what you have learnt about the ballad *Geordie*.