

Barbara Allen, a traditional Scottish ballad

In Scarlet town where I was born there was a fair maid dwellin'
Made every youth cry well a day. Her name was Barbara Allen.

'Twas in the merry month of May when green buds all were swellin'
Sweet William on his deathbed lay for love of Barbara Allen.

He sent his servant to the town the place where she was dwellin'
Sayin' master dear has sent me here if your name be Barbara Allen."

Then slowly, slowly she got up and slowly she drew nigh him
And all she said when she passed his bed, "Young man, I think you're
dyin.'"

Oh I am sick, so very sick with love my head is achin'
One kiss from you will cure me well. You'll keep my heart from breakin'

Do you remember that night, she said, when we were in the tavern?
You drank a toast to the ladies there, and slighted Barbara Allen

He turned his face unto the wall and bursted out a-cryin'
Adieu, adieu to my friends all. Be kind to Barbara Allen.

(Instrumental break)

As she was wandering o'er the fields, she heard the death bell knellin'
And every note it seemed to say "Hard-hearted Barbara Allen."

Father, O father, go dig my grave. Make it both long and narrow
Sweet William died of love for me, and I shall die of sorrow

They buried her in the old church yard, Sweet William buried by her
And from his heart grew a red red rose. From Barbara's a green briar

They grew and grew in the old church yard, till they could grow no higher
And there they tied in a true lover's knot, the red rose and the briar.

The earliest known reference to Barbara Allen is in a diary entry in 1666. It eventually travelled to America both orally and in print, where it became a popular folk song.