Scottish Literature in the Classroom

Scottish Poetry Collection for National 5 English:

‘Lochinvar’ by Walter Scott

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Using the Teaching Materials

The Scottish Literature in the Classroom project aims to support teachers of secondary English by providing resources on the new Scottish Set Texts at National 5 and Higher. This teaching guide is part of a series focused on the Scottish Poetry Collection for National 5. Each guide provides contextual information on the poem and author and a detailed reading of the given text, as well as discussion prompts and practice exam questions. Other online resources that may be helpful to teachers and students are also listed here.

Teachers are encouraged to utilise and adapt materials to best suit their own classrooms, combining with their own activities on, for example, poetic techniques and literary analysis.

'Lochinvar' was written by Walter Scott. Teaching resource written by Pip Osmond-Williams. Thanks also to Rhona Brown, Jennifer Farrar, Maureen Farrell, Corey Gibson, Ronnie Young, and teacher colleagues across Scotland for their guidance and support.

Context

Poem overview

'Lochinvar' is a literary ballad embedded in Sir Walter Scott's long narrative poem *Marmion* (1808). It tells the story of a Romantic hero who rides alone and unarmed from the west to stop the wedding of his beloved, Ellen, who is about to marry another man. Lochinvar enters the wedding feast at Netherby Hall and, when questioned by the bride's father, claims to want only a drink and a dance. As he dances with Ellen, Lochinvar seizes their chance to escape. They are chased across the countryside by Ellen's family and neighbouring clans but are never caught. The poem ends by celebrating Lochinvar's daring spirit in love and war.

The narrative unfolds with an episodic structure, each stanza functioning as a mini-chapter and advancing the action.

Author background

Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832) was a novelist, poet, playwright, and historian, widely regarded as one of the most influential literary figures of the Romantic era (see **Romanticism** on page 8 of this resource). Born in Edinburgh, Scott suffered a bout of polio as a young child. To improve his health, he was sent to stay with family in the Scottish Borders. These formative years profoundly shaped his literary imagination and instilled a lifelong fascination with the folklore and history of the region.

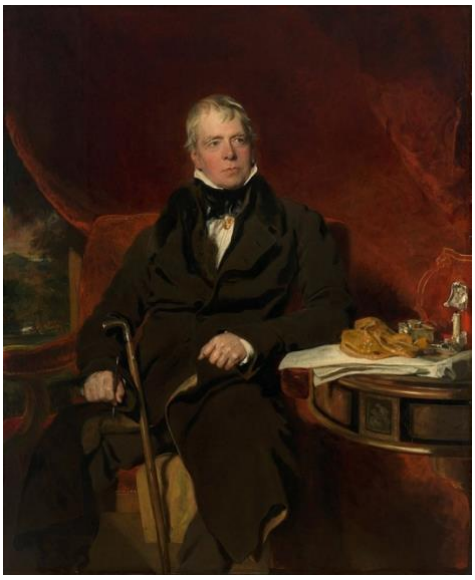

Image: 'Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832)' by Thomas Lawrence. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

One of Scott's foundational early works was *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–03), a collection of ballads compiled, edited, and partly authored by Scott. Preserving the oral and written traditions of the Scottish-English Border region, *Minstrelsy* played a key role in the Romantic revival of folk literature and influenced Scott's later literary creations, including 'Lochinvar'.

Having gained fame with narrative poems including *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), Scott turned to prose and, in 1814, published *Waverley*, which is regarded as the first historical novel. This marked a transformative phase in his career, establishing Scott as one of the most influential novelists of the 19th century. In their resurrection of Scotland's past, Scott's works played an important role in shaping the nation's global image. Against the backdrop of the Borders and the Highlands, Scott popularised a vision of Scotland as a land of noble clans and brave warriors, rich in honour and tradition.

Publication details

Marmion: A Tale of Flodden Field is a long narrative poem that includes the ballad 'Lochinvar', which is embedded as a song in Canto V. Published in 1808, *Marmion* unfolds in the early 16th-century Scottish-English Border region. Culminating in the 1513 Battle of Flodden, where Scotland's King James IV was defeated by English forces, the poem evokes national pride and loss. It is divided into 6 cantos, with extensive introductory epistles and notes that showcase Scott's historical research on the Battle of Flodden as well as Border culture. *Marmion* was Scott's second major narrative poem, following *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), and solidified his reputation as a leading Romantic poet before he turned to novels.

'Lochinvar' is a self-contained ballad that is not directly tied to *Marmion*'s main plot. However, its themes of bold love and defiance echo the title character Marmion's own romantic entanglements. 'Lochinvar' became one of Scott's most famous pieces and was often published independently in later collections.

Online resources

The Association for Scottish Literature's teaching note on the Poems of Walter Scott: https://asls.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Scott_Poems_Teaching_Notes.pdf

The version of 'Lochinvar' printed here and published in the SQA's 'Scottish Texts for National 5 and Higher courses' document is the one that will be used in exams, valid from session 2025–26 onwards.

'Lochinvar'

by Walter Scott

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
And save his good broadsword, he weapons had none,
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,
There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He stayed not for brake, and he stopped not for stone,
He swam the Esk river where ford there was none;
But, ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late:
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he entered the Netherby Hall,
Among bride's-men, and kinsmen, and brothers, and all:
Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword,
(For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word,)
'O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?'

'I long woo'd your daughter, my suit you denied;
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide;
And now I am come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
There are maidens in Scotland, more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar.'

The bride kissed the goblet: the knight took it up,
He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup.

She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh,
With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar, —
‘Now tread we a measure!’ said young Lochinvar.

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume:
And the bride-maidens whispered, ‘’Twere better by far
To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar.’

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall-door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croup the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
‘She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
They’ll have fleet steeds that follow,’ quoth young Lochinvar.

There was mounting ’mong Graemes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran:
There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne’er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e’er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

Romanticism

Originating as a reaction against the Enlightenment's emphasis on reason and order, Romanticism was a major artistic, literary, and intellectual movement that emerged in Europe in the late 18th century and flourished through the mid-19th century. Rapid urbanisation in the late 18th century prompted Romantics to idealise rural life and nature, while the American and French Revolutions fuelled Romantic ideals of liberty and equality. Key characteristics of Romanticism include:

- emphasis on emotion and imagination;
- celebration of individualism;
- reverence for nature;
- interest in the past and the exotic;
- rebellion against authority;
- exploration of the supernatural and gothic;
- fascination with the sublime.

Image: 'The Monarch of the Glen' by Edwin Landseer (1851), one of the most famous paintings of the Romantic era. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Scott's ballad celebrates the Romantic ideal of the passionate and courageous individual who defies society for love and honour. Lochinvar's solitary and defiant rescue of Ellen reflects the Romantic hero's bold self-assertion against societal norms, while his love-driven actions prioritise passion over calculated restraint.

Nature is depicted as an ally – the wild landscape of the Borders reflects the rebellious spirit of Lochinvar, and provides him with an escape from the stifling Netherby Hall. The poem's geographical setting and chivalric tone revive medieval romance, highlighting Scott's Romantic fascination with the past.

Geographical setting

'Lochinvar' leverages its geography to evoke a sense of place steeped in romance and conflict. It is set in the Debatable Lands, which was a territory along the western Scottish-English border that covered parts of Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland and Cumbria in

Image: Anglo-Scottish border, with historical areas and dates of division. Created by Notuncurious, licensed under CC-BY-SA-3.0.

England. From the 13th to 16th century, ownership and authority of the territory were contested – both Scotland and England claimed sovereignty, but due to the area's lawlessness and the influence of powerful local families, neither state could assert consistent authority. The lack of clear jurisdiction fostered anarchy, which made the area a haven for outlaws and cattle rustlers. Operating in this area were the Border Reivers – raiders from both Scottish and English Border clans.

Scott, having grown up in the Scottish Borders and having collected its lore, imbues 'Lochinvar' with this legacy. He names specific clans who were historically reiver families. The Graemes – the family of the bride, Ellen – were particularly infamous, known for both their lawlessness and their later integration into noble life.

The location of their estate, Netherby Hall in Cumbria, indicates that Ellen is English, while the mention of Lochinvar's westward origins and his journey through specific locations such as the River Esk tie the ballad's hero to Scotland's Border heritage. Marriages across the Anglo-Scottish border were discouraged, suggesting a possible reason why Lochinvar is not accepted by Ellen's parents in the poem.

Scott casts Lochinvar as a product of a lawless region and grounds him in a storied land. His actions resemble a reiver raid: a swift strike into hostile territory to 'steal' the bride, followed by a daring escape. The poem romanticises this reiver-like heroism, transforming a brutal history into a chivalric ideal. In doing so, 'Lochinvar' allows readers to celebrate a spirit of national character and resistance without endorsing or longing for the actual historical conditions of anarchy and bloodshed. Idealisation becomes a tool for cultural memory – a means of honouring a fierce legacy while safely distancing contemporary identity from its harsher realities.

Traditional and literary ballads

Ballads are narrative poems or songs that recount dramatic events, e.g. battles, betrayals, or romances. Often rooted in the oral tradition, traditional ballads blend history and folklore to preserve cultural memory.

Traditional ballads are thought to have originated during the late medieval period and were revived in the 18th and 19th centuries by antiquarians like Walter Scott. 'Lochinvar' is an example of a literary ballad, a poem that mimics the form and style of a traditional ballad. By bridging oral tradition and print culture later writers and antiquarians like Scott aimed to preserve the spirit of traditional balladry while adapting it for modern tastes.

Feature	Traditional	Literary
Authorship	Anonymous, communal.	Known author.
Transmission	Oral, sung with music, evolved through variants.	Written down, primarily read though sometimes recited.
Origin	Folk tradition, medieval/early modern (13th–15th centuries).	Romantic era (late 18th–early 19th centuries), folk forms revived for literary audiences.
Language	Simple and direct, stock phrases.	Refined and poetic, often more descriptive.
Structure	Simple quatrains, alternating iambic tetrameter/trimeter, rhymes (ABCB or ABAB).	Often quatrains, but can experiment with other lengths (e.g. sestets or octaves). Flexible metre and rhyme.
Content	Universal themes: love, death, betrayal, supernatural. Impersonal, often tragic or stark, focus on action/dialogue.	Similar themes but sometimes with philosophical or romantic overtones. Often reflect the author's perspective/intent.
Purpose	Communal entertainment, cultural preservation.	Artistic expression, often nostalgic or thematic.

Border ballads

Border ballads are traditional narrative songs that originated in the Anglo-Scottish border region, an area that was historically wild and lawless. They are part of the broader tradition of folk ballads, but with a distinct regional flavour shaped by centuries of conflict between England and Scotland.

Feature	Description	In the context of 'Lochinvar'
Border setting	Set in the Anglo-Scottish border region, a place of rugged landscapes and clan strongholds.	References to the Solway Firth and the wild Border terrain; main action takes place at Netherby Hall in Cumbria; reflects the Border culture of clans and family honour.
Action-driven plot	Fast-paced narratives centred on dramatic events.	Concise and action-packed plot that focuses on one event: Lochinvar's abduction of Ellen.
Theme of conflict	Feud, raids, battles, family vengeance.	The conflict between Lochinvar and the Graemes mirrors clan rivalries, but is softened into a romantic dispute.
Heroic/rebellious protagonist	Bold, daring figures – often outlaws or reivers.	Lochinvar is brave and rebellious, defying the bride's arranged marriage to claim his love.
Dialogue and drama	Heavy use of dialogue to advance the plot, creating immediacy and tension.	Includes key dialogues (e.g. the father's challenge, Lochinvar's taunt) to drive the drama of the tale.
Historical anchors	Grounded in real or semi-historical events, places, or families, lending authenticity.	Names real Border clans and locations such as Netherby Hall, tying the poem to historical reiver culture.

Full analysis

Form and structure

'Lochinvar' consists of 8 sestets (6-line stanzas) with an AABBCC rhyming pattern. This uniformity reflects the disciplined form of the traditional ballad. 'Lochinvar' balances brevity with narrative depth, and mirrors the reliance on rhyme in traditional ballads for memorability and musicality. Each stanza advances the plot incrementally, a hallmark of ballad storytelling.

'Lochinvar' has a mixed metrical structure:

- Some lines contain 11 syllables, made up of one iamb (unstressed-stressed) and three anapaests (unstressed-unstressed-stressed):
  e.g. O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west

- Other lines have 12 syllables, following a regular anapaestic tetrameter pattern (i.e. four anapaests in a row): e.g. For a laggard in love and a dastard in war

Scott's use of anapaests creates a galloping beat that mirrors the action of the poem and helps to build momentum.

Speaker

An omniscient, third-person narrator recounts the tale of Lochinvar. Although the speaker remains impersonal, avoiding 'I' or personal reflection, they shape how the reader views Lochinvar to ensure sympathy lies with the hero. The speaker embodies the bardic voice of Scottish oral storytelling, a role that Scott – a collector of ballads – revered.

Lines 1–6

O, young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
And save his good broadsword, he weapons had none,
He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
So faithful in love, and so dauntless in war,

There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

Stanza 1 depicts Lochinvar as the quintessential Romantic hero, who defies danger and convention for the sake of love, and equates him with ideal knightly virtues: loyalty in love and valour in war.

A typical ballad opener, the exclamation 'O' signals an emotional invocation of, and heroic introduction to, the titular character. 'Young' points to Lochinvar's vigour and idealism, whilst his westward origin evokes the romantic image of a lone knight riding from a lawless frontier.

'Wide Border' locates Lochinvar more specifically in the Anglo-Scottish borderlands, a region of historical conflict. Travelling unarmed and alone in such a place signals his individualism and fearlessness, aligning with the romantic ideal of the solitary hero.

Line 6 establishes the exceptionalism of the titular character, elevating him to legendary status. It is both a statement of admiration, representing how Lochinvar is perceived by others, and a setup for the dramatic tale that follows.

Lines 7–12

He stayed not for brake, and he stopped not for stone,
He swam the Esk river where ford there was none;
But, ere he alighted at Netherby gate,
The bride had consented, the gallant came late:
For a laggard in love, and a dastard in war,
Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

Line 7 uses negation and parallelism to emphasise the physical endurance of Lochinvar, who embodies the Romantic trait of triumphing over nature. Rivers in literature often represent boundaries or transitions. Crossing the Esk marks a shift in Lochinvar's journey, from solitary quest to social confrontation (entering the wedding's contested space), and foreshadows his ability to surmount still greater challenges ahead.

As Lochinvar arrives at the fictional hall of Netherby, 'but' signals a shift in direction. 'The gallant came late' delivers a moment of tragic irony, with Lochinvar's bold quest undercut by timing.

The penultimate lines of stanzas 1 and 2 contrast to emphasise the theme of courage vs cowardice in the characters of Lochinvar and the bridegroom. Possessive phrasing ties 'fair Ellen' to 'brave Lochinvar' emotionally, framing the bride as his rightful partner and implying his intent to reclaim her.

Image: Netherby Hall.
Photograph by Kognos, licensed under CC-BY-SA-4.0

Lines 13–18

So boldly he entered the Netherby Hall,
Among bride's-men, and kinsmen, and brothers, and all:
Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword,
(For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word,)
'O come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?'

Lochinvar enters the social arena of the wedding in bold defiance. His solitary heroism demonstrates the same strength of character witnessed in his physical journey. Again Lochinvar is positioned in contrast to the 'craven' [cowardly] bridegroom, whose passivity and silence imply a weak and ineffective character. The narrator's parenthetical aside in

line 16 mimics a conspiratorial whisper to the reader, inviting them to root for Lochinvar as he disrupts the status quo.

Lochinvar is met by the unified opposition of an all-male collective. The gesture of the bride's father with 'his hand on his sword' reflects the martial culture of the era and implies a potentially volatile situation.

The father's question offers three possibilities – peace, war, or celebration – but his tone suggests he doubts Lochinvar's peaceful intentions. By forcing Lochinvar to declare his purpose, the father sets up a verbal duel that mirrors the physical threat of the sword. While the formal address 'Lord Lochinvar' acknowledges Lochinvar's status, 'young' carries a patronising edge that serves to assert the father's authority.

Lines 19–24

'I long woo'd your daughter, my suit you denied;
Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide;
And now I am come, with this lost love of mine,
To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
There are maidens in Scotland, more lovely by far,
That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar.'

Line 19 establishes the hero's backstory. By acknowledging the father's rejection of his past pursuit of the bride, Lochinvar frames himself as a lover wronged by authority. This signals a personal grievance that justifies his bold arrival.

Lochinvar uses a simile to compare love to the Solway Firth, a Scottish estuary known for its powerful tides. 'Swells' suggests the intensity of his passion, while 'ebbs' hints at its transience or Lochinvar's acceptance of lost love.

The phrase 'lost love of mine' is ambiguous, implying both resignation and a lingering claim. This, alongside Lochinvar's modest request of 'one measure' (a dance) and 'one cup of wine', builds suspense as the father is kept guessing about Lochinvar's true motives.

Lochinvar's closing lines assert his desirability to other women. By undermining the bride's unique value, Lochinvar presents himself unbothered by the father's denial, which adds further ambiguity regarding his intent.

Lines 25–30

The bride kissed the goblet: the knight took it up,
He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh,
With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.
He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar, —
'Now tread we a measure!' said young Lochinvar.

The goblet links to medieval customs where a drinking vessel – such as a loving cup or quaich – was used to symbolise unity. Sharing a ritual ties Ellen and Lochinvar together symbolically and hints at intimacy or a reclaimed bond. By drinking from the same cup kissed by the bride, Lochinvar subtly defies the groom and the father's authority.

Lochinvar's decisive acts in line 26 contrast with the groom's passivity seen earlier in the poem. The bride responds with a series of gestures that portray her complex emotions: she is bound by duty but emotionally drawn to Lochinvar.

The romantic and proprietary act of taking the bride's 'soft hand' is both intimate and bold, with Lochinvar claiming the bride in front of her family. The bride's mother is introduced as a new obstacle. Her attempt to intervene is swiftly bypassed by Lochinvar, whose quick action highlights his cunning and resolve.

'"Now tread we a measure!"' is a command and a challenge. 'A measure' fulfils Lochinvar's earlier stated intent to dance with the bride, but his spirited tone suggests more than mere formality. By bringing Lochinvar and the bride together, the public act of a shared dance potentially humiliates the groom and provokes the bride's family.

Lines 31–36

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume:
And the bride-maidens whispered, ‘’Twere better by far
To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar.’

Line 31 presents Lochinvar and Ellen as an ideal pair. The hyperbole ‘never a hall’ amplifies the spectacle of the two dancing a galliard – a lively, Renaissance dance – to suggest that their partnership outshines all others. ‘Grace’ describes their refined movement and implies a moral or romantic rightness, endorsing their union over the groom’s claim.

‘Fret’ and ‘fume’ capture the escalating anxiety of the bride’s parents and the unravelling of their authority as Lochinvar’s bold actions disrupt the status quo.

The groom’s inaction reinforces his earlier ‘craven’ silence, rendering him a passive, almost comical figure. The phrase ‘dangling his bonnet and plume’ subverts the intended grandeur of the groom’s accessories. In historical Scottish and broader European traditions, a bonnet was a decorated hat that signified rank or clan affiliation, while a plume (a feather or cluster of feathers) was a symbol of gallantry or martial prowess. Here they become ironic emblems of a hollow status: the groom is socially privileged but personally ineffectual. Notably, Lochinvar is not described with such accessories – his status derives from his actions and inherent qualities.

The bride-maidens present a collective voice of approval for Lochinvar. Although ‘whisper’ suggests the need for secrecy and the risk of dissent, their endorsement is unequivocal and amplifies the social challenge to the wedding.

Lines 37–42

One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
When they reached the hall-door, and the charger stood near;
So light to the croup the fair lady he swung,
So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
‘She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;

They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth young Lochinvar.

Line 37 captures Lochinvar's minimal yet potent influence. 'Touch' and 'word' suggest intimacy and secrecy, implying a private moment where Lochinvar secures the bride's consent.

'Hall-door' marks the threshold between the controlled space of the wedding and the open world beyond. The 'charger' [a warhorse] waiting nearby reveals a premeditated act, adding a layer of strategic cunning to Lochinvar's romantic heroism. The proximity of the horse heightens suspense, signalling imminent action.

The repetition of 'so light' emphasises the ease and grace of Lochinvar's movements, romanticising the abduction its fluid movement. Lifting the bride to the 'croup' [the horse's hindquarters] and springing 'before her' in the saddle positions them intimately and reinforces their partnership.

Lochinvar's triumphant declaration in line 41 claims the bride as both prize and willing partner, framing her abduction as a mutual triumph. 'Bank, bush, and scaur' [hills, shrubs, and rocky slopes] reintroduces a rugged terrain. The natural world provides an escape route where they can evade pursuit, functioning as a protective barrier. In its untamed state, nature aligns with and facilitates their romantic rebellion.

Lochinvar acknowledges pursuit but dismisses its threat. 'Quoth young Lochinvar' reinforces his heroic persona, with his dialogue framed as a chivalric boast in the ballad tradition.

Lines 43–48

There was mounting 'mong Graemes of the Netherby clan;
Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran:
There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lee,
But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
So daring in love, and so dauntless in war,
Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

The final stanza opens on a frantic scene as the bride's family attempt to respond to the elopement. The collective 'Graemes' points to the clan's unity, but their haste suggests disarray which contrasts with Lochinvar's calculated precision.

'Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves' expands the pursuit to allied families, with Scott naming historic regional clans to ground the poem in a Scottish Border context. The inclusion of multiple families emphasises the scale of opposition that Lochinvar overcomes. Alliteration and parallel verbs ('they rode and they ran') amplify the frenetic energy, depicting a sprawling but futile chase.

The rhyme 'racing and chasing' sustains the high-energy pursuit. The open landscape of Cannobie Lee (a meadow in Canonbie, a small village in Dumfriesshire) contrasts with the confined hall of Netherby.

Line 46 delivers the narrative's resolution with stark finality. 'Lost' carries dual meaning: the bride is both physically gone and symbolically severed from her family's control.

The narrator praises the hero's dual virtues of romantic passion and martial courage, elevating Lochinvar to mythic status. The direct address in the final line engages the reader, inviting awe and admiration. The rhetorical question assumes no equal exists, sealing Lochinvar's legend.

Discussion Prompts

Introductory

- What do you know, or what can you find out, about the Scottish Borders and the Border Reivers?
- What historical tensions or traditions does the poem draw from?
- In what ways does 'Lochinvar' contribute to the romantic image of Scotland?
- How does the narrator shape our understanding of the events?
- What role does nature play in the poem?

Techniques

- How does the rhythm of the poem reflect Lochinvar's actions?
- What kind of language is used to describe Lochinvar and how does it shape our view of him?
- How does Scott build tension in the scene at Netherby Hall?
- What kind of pace does the poem have? How is this achieved?
- What effect does the rhetorical question at the end of the poem have on how we remember Lochinvar?

Themes

- In what ways does Lochinvar represent a national or cultural hero?
- Compare Lochinvar and the bridegroom – what does their contrast say about honour and masculinity?
- What does the bride's decision to leave with Lochinvar say about individual choice versus social obligation?
- How do Lochinvar's actions fit with Romantic ideals?
- What attitude do you think the poem takes on this period of Border history?

Practice Questions

Look at lines 1–12.

By referring to **two** examples of language, explain how the poet presents Lochinvar as a heroic figure. (4 marks)

Look at lines 13–24.

By referring to **two** examples of language, explain how the poet introduces tension to the scene at Netherby Hall. (4 marks)

Look at lines 25–36.

By referring to **one** example of language, explain what we learn about Ellen's feelings towards Lochinvar. (2 marks)

Look at lines 37–48.

By referring to **one** example of language, explain how the poet creates a dramatic ending. (2 marks)

By referring to this poem and to at least one other poem from the National 5 Scottish Poetry Collection, show how setting is an important feature. (8 marks)

NB. Poems that Walter Scott's 'Lochinvar' might be compared with for the 8-mark question are:

- 'The Bonnie Earl o' Moray' (traditional ballad)
- 'A Red, Red Rose' (Robert Burns)
- 'The Twa Corbies' (traditional ballad)
- 'Auntie' (Nadine Aisha Jassat)
- 'Little Girls' (Len Pennie)

Connections / Comparisons

The visual below highlights connecting themes that may be useful to consider for the 8- or 10-mark exam question. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list – you may wish to explore beyond these categories and consider how different themes might overlap or contradict one another within and between texts.