Ballad of Birmingham

BY DUDLEY RANDALL

(On the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963)

"Mother dear, may I go downtown
Instead of out to play,
And march the streets of Birmingham
In a Freedom March today?"

"No, baby, no, you may not go,
For the dogs are fierce and wild,
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails
Aren't good for a little child."

"But, mother, I won't be alone.
Other children will go with me,
And march the streets of Birmingham
To make our country free."

"No, baby, no, you may not go,
For I fear those guns will fire.
But you may go to church instead
And sing in the children's choir."

She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair,
And bathed rose petal sweet,
And drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,
And white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know her child
Was in the sacred place,
But that smile was the last smile
To come upon her face.

For when she heard the explosion,
Her eyes grew wet and wild.
She raced through the streets of Birmingham
Calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,
Then lifted out a shoe.
"O, here's the shoe my baby wore,
But, baby, where are you?"

TYPES OF RHYME

END:	Seamus Heaney's "Digging": Under my window, a clean rasping sound When the spade sinks into gravelly ground	
INTERNAL:	Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven": Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,	
SLANT:	Seamus Heaney's "Digging": Between my finger and my thumb The squat pen rests; snug as a gun	
EYE:	Shakespeare's Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer's lease hath all too short a date	