



## **Looking North Of The Greek World: The Slavic Folk Poetry Of The Balkans**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 84.02.01  
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This unit is an introduction to Yugoslav epic folk poetry, showing some of its connections with the Greek classical traditions. The unit examines the historical background of the South Slavic (Yugoslav) epic poetry. It shows how the Slavs came into contact with the Byzantine Greeks upon their arrival to the Balkan peninsula. It gives historical proof of these encounters. It also deals with the overall European situation during the medieval Dark Ages and shows how the advance of the Asiatic people forced the Slavs to move southward to the Balkan part of the Byzantine Empire where they settled.

It discusses the isolated instances of some Slavs learning about the Greek classical masterpieces, the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey." It does not try to prove that the Serbian epic poetry grew out of the Greek classical literature, but that it was based on Yugoslav heroes and their deeds. It indicates an affinity with the Greek models of folk poetry of classical times. It seeks to show similarities in topics used in folk poetry of both traditions. It also gives some answers as to how epic ballads were and are performed.

This unit has an introduction to each of the three ballads. I translated two folk ballads from the cycle about Prince Marko of Macedonia. I also translated from Serbian a ballad from the cycle of poems about the decisive battle on the Kossovo Plain between the Serbs and the Turks. I have given to each ballad the historical background necessary to understand the main characters.

Included in the unit are helpful maps of the region to assist in understanding the locale of the poems and a lesson on phonetics. Separate bibliographies for teachers and students are provided.

(Recommended for Elementary School Storytelling, Middle and High School Geography, European Medieval History and Study of Narrative Poem classes, and High School World History classes)

### **Key Words**

*History Balkan Folktales Ancient Greek Poetry Balkan*

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