



CFE Level 2 (Ages 9-11)

Dahl in Scots

Introducing Scots to pupils
through *Geordie's Mingin'
Medicine* by Matthew Fitt

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Note to practitioners

The activities within this resource pack link to *Geordie's Mingin Medicine* but could easily be adapted to other Scots language translations of Roald Dahl favourites such as, *Sleekit Mr Tod* or *The Eejits*.

If you are interested by the sound of this project but do not feel either your class or your own skills/knowledge of Scots is ready to embark on a full project just yet, then look at the main resource web page and download the activity titled “If you only do ONE thing...” and see if that might be a better way for your learners to begin: <http://bit.ly/2c9moBS>

This resource has been written by Scots Language Consultant Bruce Eunson. Bruce has been writing CfE resources and promoting the educational benefits of Scots language for over six years. Previously he worked exclusively for schools in Shetland, now he is employed by Education Scotland working across the whole of Scotland.

The resource contains activities promoting the use of Scots language in the classroom, looking specifically at Matthew Fitt's *Geordie's Mingin Medicine*, a translation into Scots of Roald Dahl's *George's Marvellous Medicine*.

It is recommended that this resource be used with learners who understand that the book is a Scots translation of a Roald Dahl original, and that they understand what Scots is.

All three of the translations mentioned above were published by Itchy Coo, which was founded in 2002 by James Robertson and Matthew Fitt. Itchy Coo has become an established imprint within Scottish publishing, with close to 50 titles which have sold almost a quarter of a million copies. <http://www.itchy-coo.com/>

For more information on “What is Scots?” and extensive audio examples of all the dialects of Scots, please visit the Scots Language Centre: www.scotslanguage.com/

The Dictionary of the Scots language is also extremely helpful:
www.scuilwab.org.uk/

For specific guidance on the place of Scots in Curriculum for Excellence, please read Education Scotland's CfE Briefing Paper on Scots language:
<http://bit.ly/2c9bOuH>

About Roald Dahl, Matthew Fitt and Scots language

Roald Dahl was a British novelist, short story writer, poet and screenwriter. His books have sold over 200 million copies worldwide. Roald Dahl famously said, "If you have good thoughts they will shine out of your face like sunbeams and you will always look lovely."
<http://www.roalddahl.com/>

Matthew Fitt is a well-known Scottish writer and poet. He is also a popular children's author. He has over 10 years' experience of working as a Scots language consultant. <http://www.mfitt.co.uk/>

Scots language

Even for teachers and learners who are less well acquainted with Scots, studying the language holds enormous benefits.

With its various dialects, Scots language forms an integral part of Scotland's heritage and cultural life, playing a vital role in children's and young people's learning about Scotland. It can also make a strong contribution to the development of children's and young people's literacy skills. Including Scots as part of Curriculum for Excellence can help motivate some learners and their families by showing them that the language they use at home is valued. This briefing provides background information about the nature of the Scots language, the learning opportunities and benefits offered by the inclusion of Scots in the curriculum. It explores how Scots is developing across educational establishments as part of Curriculum for Excellence, within literacy and languages and across the wider curriculum.

Activity 1 – Listening to Scots

LIT 2-04a, 2-05a, 2-06a, 2-07a, 2-09a, 2-10a
MLAN 2-11a, 2-11b, 2-11d

Let's set the scene for the learners involved by first having them listen to some Scots language. Begin by having someone read out loud to the whole class – you can do it, or you can ask a confident pupil. Start with the first chapter of *Geordie's Mingin Medicine*, titled 'Grannie'.

Read from the beginning up to the first illustration then pause to have a class discussion. Here are some things to explore first:

- The story is written in prose, entirely in Scots language. What examples of Scots is there from the opening few pages?

For example, you'll find words like: 'gaun', 'wee', 'glaikit', 'scunnered', 'bahookie'...

Translate and discuss the meaning of each. Perhaps some learners use these words themselves, perhaps some have heard them used by others?

- Also there are words such as: 'ony', 'oot', 'jist', 'wis', 'dug', 'tae', 'lookin'...

These Scots words look and sound very similar to their English equivalents. Ensure the class is aware that Scots and English are "sister languages" and while Scots has a great many unique words, vocabulary, examples of grammar and its own National Dictionary, which make it a separate language from English, there are a great many words that look and sound the same, as well as other words that are exactly the same. Examples found throughout *Geordie's Mingin Medicine* include: 'the', 'she', 'are', 'this'...

- There are also some Scots words which look and sound exactly as an English word, but are entirely different. For example, the Scots word "gang" used in Matthew Fitt's translation for the word "go", looks and sounds exactly the same as the English word "gang" meaning a number of people forming a group.

This is rare but always understood when considered in context, so read learners the full sentence the word is used within and see if they can work out what the word means.

Building vocabulary

Ask learners to begin keeping a personal dictionary of Scots language words they enjoy, as well as words they don't recognise. Encourage learners to add at least five words for each page of the book they read (though they can easily add far more than five). **This should be continued across each activity in this resource.**

In between activities learners should be given the opportunity to source definitions for the words. You may have copies of Scots dictionaries in you

class or school library, and there is also the online Dictionary of the Scots language: www.dsl.ac.uk

Reading on

After you've discussed the opening, read from where you left off to the next illustration. The first chapter establishes the two central characters of Grannie and Geordie. Ask the class to describe each of them and give examples from the book so far to support their descriptions.

Also, ask them what they think is going to happen next, and whether they think this is an effective way to begin a story.

Finally, read the rest of the first chapter. A common and great feature of Roald Dahl's writing is his delicious descriptions and his use of alliteration and assonance. Matthew Fitt has done a great job of keeping this quality within his Scots translation. Ask your learners to listen closely and tell you their favourite descriptions after you've finished reading. Some good ones are:

"She wis a grabbie crabbit auld wumman."

"She had peeliewally broon teeth and a wee snirkit-up mooth like a dug's bahookie."

"...she wis aye compleenin, girnin, greetin, grummlin and mulli-grumphin..."

Consolidating the learning

To help retention and engagement, ask learners to produce a very short 'illustrated dictionary' of some of their favourite adjectives from Matthew Fitt's descriptions. They should accompany the adjectives with a picture of Grannie to further illustrate what the adjective means. Learners' illustrations could be made into a classroom display!

Activity 2 – Reading Scots

LIT 2-11a, 2-16a, MLAN 2-01a

In this activity, learners will move from exploring spoken Scots words to exploring written ones.

This activity focuses on the next chapter, entitled ‘The Mervellous Ploy’. Explain to the class that a Scots language text – especially a fun one such as this translation of Roald Dahl – is often written the way the author speaks, or the way a writer has heard Scots speakers in conversation. Now read the first paragraph to the class.

The next piece of dialogue is Geordie’s. The line is in Geordie’s voice. Have the class read this line out loud:

‘I’m no gonnae be frichtened by her.’

Geordie is a Scots speaker. Like in many other books, the dialogue is in Scots – but what makes this book stand out, is that the surrounding narration is also in Scots.

This time have the class read the same line, but also the following sentence:

‘I’m no gonnae be frichtened by *her*,’ he said softly tae himsel.
But he *wis* frichtened.’

Ensure everyone understands that the entire story is told in a Scots voice. It isn’t just a story where the characters speak in Scots, the narrator is also *telling the story* in Scots.

Learners should now read the rest of this short chapter to themselves. Once they have finished, discuss what they enjoyed about the story and reading Scots language, as well as what they found difficult and any words they didn’t understand. Encourage peer review where individual learners ask the rest of the class if they know the definition of a word they did not understand. Encourage them to refer to Scots dictionaries or online sources if some words prove a mystery!

Activity 3 – Speaking in Scots

LIT 2-13a, EXA 2-01a, MLAN 2-05a

A fantastically funny poem ends the chapter ‘The Mervellous Ploy’. There are eleven couplets. Organise the class so that each learner says either a couplet, or together with a partner, says one line of a couplet. Perform the poem and practice the delivery and pronunciation of each line and Scots word.

The third chapter is called ‘Geordie Sterts tae Mak the Medicine’. Read this chapter as a class by the teacher asking someone to begin, then once they have read a few lines, the teacher asks someone else to take over. Read through the chapter out loud, by getting every learner to take a turn at being the reader.

** We have left this Activity as a short one because speaking in Scots is often the most difficult of all – particularly for those who are learning their first Scots words.*

Activity 6 has another task that follows on from this where those who are eager for more can excel in their Scots speaking!

Activity 4 – Writing Scots

LIT 2-20a, 2-21a, 2-22a, 2-23a

The first line of the next chapter is “It wis at this point that Geordie aw o a sudden thocht up an extra guid pliskie...”

A pliskie is a trick or a prank.

Before reading on and hearing what Geordie does next, have learners create their own piece of Scots writing. It should be an imaginative piece of prose, a hilarious and creative page or two of Scots language writing about what this “extra guid pliskie” of Geordie’s might be.

Some guidance on spelling and vocabulary

The experience of writing in Scots can vary depending on which area you live in. Here are some things to discuss with your learners before they write:

- Discuss whether the Scots used in *Geordie’s Mingin Medicine* is a good representation of the Scots used either by the learners in the class, or the families and communities in the areas close to the school.
- Which words are not used in your area? Is there a local equivalent? For example, in the Northern Isles, they don’t use the word “wee” for

“small”. In Orkney they would say “peedie” and in Shetland they would say “peerie”. What examples are there similar to this for your area?

As discussed in Activity 2, a Scots language text is often written the way the author speaks. With that in mind, each learner should decide how the Scots language they are about to write will sound as well as how it will look on the page. **Learners should aim for consistency** in terms of how they spell their words. Use the personal dictionaries for this task – which should be filling up with many interesting words by this point.

The most important detail to emphasize is to be imaginative. That’s what Roald Dahl did best, and that’s why Matthew Fitt chose this book to translate into Scots – because it is great fun and wildly witty.

Differentiating the task

Another approach (both for those who are not as confident writing in Scots, and for those who would like a new challenge) could be to let learners format their piece of writing differently. For example, they could write their pliskie as a **step by step list of instructions**, or as a **short comic strip** – using Quentin Blake’s illustrations as inspiration. This approach could be a productive way to engage learners who are better suited to the creative and imaginative, rather than the grammar and sentence construction skills required to write continuous prose in Scots.

If there are learners who are only learning their first Scots words, and are not confident at speaking Scots, suggest they try using the exact words and spellings that Matthew Fitt has used in his translation. That way these learners can give plenty of thought to their story and what the “extra guid pliskie” of Geordie’s is going to be, then use the words and spellings they have heard and read so far to help them create a short Scots text.

Some further resources to help

There are a great many resources available on writing in Scots from the following sites:

- Education Scotland: <http://bit.ly/WriteInScots>
- Scots Hoose: <http://www.scotshoose.com/write.html>
- Scottish Book Trust: <http://bit.ly/writinginscotres>

Activity 5 – Scots instructions

LIT 2-15a, ENG 2-12a, HWB 2-36a

This is a hands-on activity that first requires looking closely at the book. Learners should begin by reading the next three chapters, 'Peels for the Beasts', 'Geordie Biles It Up' and 'Broon Pent', as well as re-reading the previous chapter 'Geordie Sterts tae Mak the Medicine'.

As they read, learners need to write down all the ingredients that go into the mingin medicine and any utensils he requires. So everything from "a big muckle pot" and "GOWDEN BREEZE HAIR SHAMPOO" to "A haunfu o CREESH" and "a lang widden spoon."

Learners should now re-write the list as a proper step-by-step recipe. They should include details of when to start cooking and what to watch for coming from the pot to indicate when to move onto the next instruction.

The class are now ready to write recipes of their own! Using either a recipe they already know, finding one in a book or on the internet, or even inventing an imaginary one, learners should write their recipe in Scots language. There are plenty Scots words and phrases in Matthew Fitt's book that can be used, as well as many more the learners may know themselves. Some examples are "a wee daud o", "a fou tube", "howk oot the contents o", "steer", "skiddle the hail lot in", "tummle", etc.

Once all the recipes are complete, each learner or pair of learners, should read theirs out to the rest of the class. At the end you should choose one and prepare the ingredients for them to cook what we hope is not a mingin' medicine but instead a delicious dish!

For inspiration you might like to look at the Food and Drink section of the Visit Scotland website: www.visitscotland.com/see-do/food-drink/traditional/

There is also a huge list of Scottish recipes here:
www.rampantscotland.com/recipes/blrecipe_index.htm

Activity 6 – Performing Scots

EXA 2-12a, 2-14a, MLAN 2-05b

The next chapter, ‘Grannie Taks the Medicine’ is probably the liveliest, most outrageous part of the book as Geordie feeds the medicine to his unsuspecting Grannie. It is hilarious fun to perform as a piece of drama.

Begin by dividing the lines said by Geordie and by his Grannie to different learners, as well as dividing up the various lines of narration. Remember that it doesn’t need to be a boy who reads for Geordie and it doesn’t need to be a girl who reads for Grannie. We suggest one narrator reads along with Geordie, and another narrator reads along with Grannie, so that in a script for a drama performance, the lines are divided like this:

Narrator 1: Grannie sat humphy-backit in her chair by the windae. The wickit wee een follaed Geordie closely as he crossed the room towards her.

Grannie: “Ye’re late,”
Narrator 1: she snashed.
Geordie: “I dinna think I am, Grannie.”
Grannie: “Dinna interupt me in the middle o a sentence!”
Narrator 1: she shouted.
Geordie: “But ye’d feenished yer sentence, Grannie.”
Grannie: “Ye’re daein it again!”
Narrator 1: she skirled.
Grannie: “Ayewis interruptin and argle-barglin. Ye really are a scunnersome wee laddie. Whit’s the time?”
Geordie: “It’s exactly eleeven o’clock, Grannie.”
Grannie: “Ye’re leein as usual. Stap haiverin and gie me ma medicine. Shak the bottle first. Then poor it intae the spoon and mak sure it’s a haill spoonfu.”
Geordie: “Are ye gonnae gowp it aw doon in the yin gollop?”
Narrator 2: Geordie spiered her.
Geordie: “Or are ye gonnae sook it slowly?”
Grannie: “Whit I dae is nane o yer business,”
Narrator 1: the auld wumman said.
Grannie: “Fill the spoon.”
Narrator 2: As Geordie taen oot the cork and sterted gey slowly tae poor the claggy broon stuff intae the spoon, he couldna help thinkin about aw the mingin and mervellous things that had gane intae makkin this dementit stuff...

Different groups of four learners can practice reading a page or so. They should practice the timing of where each reader starts and stops, before and after the next reader. And they should consider their acting skills to give dramatic effect to Geordie, Grannie and the tone of voice of the narrator.

Once the various groups of learners have practiced, they should perform their short play to the class. Each group should stand at the front, or somewhere everyone else can see, and deliver their lines, before leaving the stage and letting the next group perform the next part of the story.

Activity 7 – Scots language is...

ENG 2-19a, 2-30a, LIT 2-25a, 2-26a, 2-29a

It is now time for learners to read the rest of the book if they have not already done so. Learners should read it themselves in their reading time or time at home (if possible, set a deadline).

Once finished, learners should prepare a short presentation reviewing the book which they will share with their peers – if possible, in Scots. Learners should note down a few headings for what they will cover in their review. It should be a personal review on Roald Dahl's story, the Scots used in the book and the experience of using Scots in the classroom.

Learners may wish to include details from when they read parts of the story in class, comments from discussions, as well as their thoughts and feelings on the plot of the story and how it ends.

The presentation should end with a sentence that starts “Scots language is... ..” But this should not be a definition of what Scots is, instead the statement should be the learners' own personal opinion on the place of Scots language in Scotland today and its role/importance in their lives today.

Here are some prompt questions to get your learners thinking:

- Do a lot of people in Scotland still speak Scots today?
- What about the people who don't – is it important for them to know about the Scots language?
- What are some arguments for and against teaching Scots language in Scottish schools?

Finally, the learner presenting should take questions from the audience. Encourage learners who have similar opinions on the place of Scots in society to discuss why they are of this opinion, as well as asking those whose opinions differ to debate why this may be and how people in society with differing views must treat those of others.

Discuss as a class the range of answers and personal opinions on Scots language. Can learners work together to communally write a statement that begins: “Our class believe Scots language is...”

To what extent is the agreement within the class? What might there be strong opinions on where learners hold differing views from one another?

Activity 8 – A good blether in Scots

ENG 2-17a, MLAN 2-06a

Now would be a great time to share what the learners have been working on and the reviews they presented as part of Activity 7.

Perhaps best done in small groups, depending on the size of your class and school, learners should visit other year groups in the school, as well as different people who work in the school – everyone from the Head Teacher to the Janitor will enjoy a visit!!

Learners should prepare a short introduction to what they have been studying and why. Mention Roald Dahl, Matthew Fitt and Scots language. Learners should inform the audience what they are about to present (perhaps learners working in groups would like to give a performance, like in Activity 6) and afterwards will answer questions. Whether the audience is young or old, dressed in a shirt and tie or a boilersuit, the learners must speak clearly, listen carefully and help each other in providing accurate and interesting answers to any questions they are asked.

After this in-school session, each learner should be encouraged to go home and tell others; parents and/or carers, siblings and/or wider family about the Scots Language & Roald Dahl project they have been working on in their class. Learners should take their personal dictionaries home with them as it will be a good opportunity to discuss the words they have been learning – possibly getting new/alternative definitions for some of the words.

Back in the classroom, learners should share who they have told about the project, what the response has been – and whether they have any further questions to ask!

An Extra Marvellous Activity – Beyond the bowf an bang!

Many of the Es&Os covered in the above activities will be reinforced here, as well as additional creative learning opportunities

If the work done in this project has gone well and the class, or some learners, would benefit from one last big challenge then a marvellous finale would be for the learners to write their own Scots language translation.

This could be a translation of Roald Dahl – perhaps a book that has not yet been translated into Scots (such as Matilda) or a Scots translation of one that already is in print, but is not in your regional variety of Scots.

Matthew Fitt is from Dundee and you can see that the Scots he writes in is not representative of the Doric spoken in and around Aberdeenshire, or that of the Northern Isles, like the dialects spoken in Orkney and Shetland.

For an example of this, you can get a copy of Christine De Luca's Shetland dialect version of this same Roald Dahl book, *George's Marvellous Medicine*, which Christine wrote in Shetland dialect as *Dodie's Phenomenal Pheesic*. Christine De Luca is the Edinburgh Makar, the appointed poet of Scotland's capital, and has done quite a few translations – both children's books and poetry.

For very precise examples of a popular children's book originally written in English then translated not only into Scots, but various dialects of Scots, you need look no further than the world famous book *The Gruffalo*. Originally written in English by Julia Donaldson, the book was first translated into Scots by James Robertson.

Following on from that we now have: *The Glasgow Gruffalo* by Elaine C. Smith; *The Dundee Gruffalo* by Matthew Fitt; *The Doric Gruffalo* by Sheena Blackhall; *The Orkney Gruffalo* by Simon Hall and *The Shetland Gruffalo* by Laureen Johnson.

Which story and which Scots do you think should be the next title in this gallus literary journey that Scots language is on?

Any new works of translation from learners can be sent on to Scottish Book Trust and Education Scotland as we would love to see how the learners get on!

If you and your pupils loved *Geordie's Mingin' Medicine*

Lit 2-11a

Try one of the books on this list of Scots titles for 8-11:

scottishbooktrust.com/reading/book-lists/scots-language-books-8-11

For books which feature specific Scots dialects, try this list:

scottishbooktrust.com/reading/book-lists/6-books-featuring-regional-scots-dialects-8-11