

# A Burns supper with Liz Lochhead

A selection of poetry by Burns and Lochhead



## Introduction to this Resource

The possibility of a Burns Supper is always something to look forward to: good friends – and the possibility of meeting new ones – good food; poetry and song. But this resource anticipates a very special Burns Night where the Scottish Makar, Liz Lochhead, will be the guest of honour. Liz Lochhead is a wonderful contemporary poet and a real champion of the aural and oral tradition of poetry reading, so in this resource I have tried to encourage the discussion and reading of poetry as much as possible. There are opportunities to discover or rediscover three of Burns best-loved poems alongside three great Liz Lochhead poems, chosen to compliment or contrast them.

The first two in the pack are one of Burns most recited poems – *To a Mouse* – and *From a Mouse* by Liz Lochhead, a parody on the original; the second pair consider the role of the poet as storyteller: *Tam O' Shanter* by Burns is contrasted with *The Ballad of Mary Shelley's Creature* by Lochhead. The final coupling, *Kidsong/Bairnsang* and *A Man's a Man*, ask pupils to consider the national voice of Scotland, the role of a Scottish Makar and how we present ourselves as individuals and as Scots.

Activities range from reciting to writing; discussing and drawing; performing and reflecting. The Curriculum for Excellence Outcomes and Levels (ranging from Level 2-4) should guide you to the best activity for your class, but the most important outcome is that pupils enjoy the poetry – both the sound of it on the tongue and the creative process of reflecting on it and then writing it. Obviously mix, adapt and use any resource as you wish. I hope the work generated by these activities gives your pupils plenty of food for thought ahead of a great Burns Night 2012.

### CM

I should like to acknowledge the invaluable support of the Scottish Poetry Library in putting this resource together. The recommended reading at the end of this pack lists a range of anthologies and other books which can all be found there.

## On turning up her nest with the plough, November 1785

NOTE: This poem is many pupils first introduction to Burns and it is well worth spending some time on to make sure that the children understand what they are reading or reciting. It has all the wonderful hallmarks of Burns – his fondness of nature, his social understanding, a little politics and his humanity. While he is often referred to as ‘the ploughman poet’, Burns’ wide reading and (largely self) education is displayed in the form and rhythm of the lines and the universality of his theme: we, like mice, may make plans, but life and circumstance do not always work out to let them bear fruit.

### ACTIVITY 1

Explain to the class that much of Burns’ poetry was written in Scottish dialect. A dialect is a form of a language which has most of the characteristics of the parent language but which differs in some ways.

So, Burns’ Scottish dialect looks quite similar to English (the parent language) but some grammar and words are different.

Ask the class if they know any Scottish dialect. E.g. wee (little), ay (yes).

Distribute copies of this Burns’ poem to the class. Don’t tell them that the title of the poem is “To a Mouse.” Read out the first verse to the class:

Wee sleekit, cow’rin, tim’rous beastie,  
O, what a panic’s in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi bickering brattle!  
I wad be laith to rin an chase thee,  
Wi murdering pattle!

Ask the pupils to write down what they think these words mean:

- wee
- sleekit
- cow’rin
- tim’rous
- beastie

Ask pupils:

- What type of animal do you think Burns is describing? Mouse. The title of the poem is “To a Mouse.”
- What words or lines make you think this?
- What is the mouse doing? Trying to run away.
- The mouse is scared of the “murdering pattle.” What do you think this

Reading and  
Writing  
Level 2 and 3  
Reading-  
Understanding,  
Analysing,  
Evaluating  
LIT 216a  
LIT 316a  
ENG 319a

might be? Plough-scraper which is a small, long-handled spade for removing clay from the ploughshare.

Read out the rest of the poem to the class.

Divide the class into seven groups and give each of them a verse from 2-8

Ask them to work out what is happening in their verse. They may need to refer to a glossary.

Some groups may find it easier to draw a picture, especially those working on verses 4, 5 and 6.

One member of each group reads out their verse and another member explains what they think is happening.

The poem is about a mouse which carefully builds a winter nest in a wheat field, only for it to be destroyed by a ploughman.

NOTE: *In To a Mouse*, Burns uses empathy to describe how the mouse must be feeling at that moment. Discuss with pupils how Burns manages to combine fantasy with reality, creating a balance between the two. Discuss together the idea contained in the last verse. Ask pupils to remember a time when a plan they or their family had made went 'aglay'. They could write this up as a personal/reflective piece. What was the outcome of the change of plan – did the cloud have a silver lining or did it cause real problems? Does it depend on the way you look at life?

#### WRITE YOUR OWN POEMS

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Tell students they are going to write a Burns style poem about an animal. Make sure it is a bird/animal that they might actually encounter.

Each student writes down the name of an animal and something that happens to it. E.g. a hungry rabbit finds food. Then they write down three or four adjectives or phrases to describe their animal. E.g. A hungry rabbit might be starving, cold and weary.

Using these words to form the first line of their poem, students write a one or two verses about what happens to their animal. Some students may want to follow the AAABAB rhyme scheme of "To a Mouse" while others may prefer to use free verse. You can vary the outcome to provide differentiation.

They then alter words or phrases to create a Scots voice. It is not a perfect imitation of Burns but allows the pupils to experiment with dialect and Standard English mixing words and sounds to create something fresh to the ear.

**To a rabbit**

You starving, cold and weary, beast,  
 Looking to the sun rising in the east,  
 Wondering where to find your next feast.  
 With many a feeble bound and then a hop,  
 You know your hunger pangs have ceased,  
 As you stumble on a mammoth carrot crop.

**To a rabbit**

Ye starvin, cauld and wearisome beastie,  
 A-lookin afore the sun arising int' eastie,  
 Wonderin where to find thy next wee feastie.  
 With monny a feeble bound and aft an hopit,  
 Thy're sure ye henger pangs will ceasedy,  
 As ye tumble ont' mammoth carrotty cropit.

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## To a Mouse/From a Mouse

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*From a Mouse* by Liz Lochhead featured in a work of poetry and responses called *Addressing the Bard* (SPL, 2009) as a celebration of Burns' 250th anniversary. It parodies the Burns poem and provides a lovely, light-hearted imitation of the original with the mouse doing the talking! In an interview for *The Guardian*, Liz Lochhead spoke of Burns 'writing down the voice of each of his poems... [that] all his voices were sincere but none were necessarily the whole of Burns'. In Liz Lochhead's poem, *From a Mouse*, look out for the voice not only of the mouse, but of the women who hate mice, yet claim to love the Burns 'moose'. The gentle fun poked at the cult of Burns that persists today seems to suggest that we should always pay more attention to the poetry than simply to the man himself!

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### ACTIVITY 2

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Pupils at this level should be able to see the parody and humour in Liz Lochhead's verse.

Stanzas 1-3: Ask pupils to point up the contrast between the treatment of the mouse in the poem and the reaction of women to mice in real life. Which lines or phrases add a sense of comedy to the poem?

Stanza 4-6: Liz Lochhead uses italics on several key words. Write them down and try to explain why each is emphasised at this point in the poem.

Lochhead says a wean might cry 'greet' over the 'plough torn nest' but not see the gap between the 'fause' world of Poetry/an baited trap'. What does she mean by a trap and why is this an effective image to choose?

Literary Study  
 Level 4:  
 Reading  
 LIT 304a  
 LIT 419a  
 LIT 417a  
 Listening/  
 Talking 402a

Stanzas 7-10: seem to have a different tone? What is it and how does the word-choice make it clear that the mood (and voice) have changed? Write down any words to show this. What is the mouse's view of Burns attitude to the 'lassies'?

How does the poet bring in twenty first century language to mock our cult of Burns? Write down any phrases or words which seem to be slang/colloquial?

Stanza 11: suggests this poem has a 'green' message – perhaps ahead of its time? What can you see that might be true to this idea in the original poem?

Although this activity could lead to a piece of critical writing on the poem, it is worthwhile reading it to enjoy discussing Burns as a figure of our culture; our attitudes to him and to one of his most enduring poems for the pleasure of reflecting on it once again.

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## Tam O'Shanter

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### ACTIVITY 3

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The purpose of the next activities is to consider the role of the poet as story teller. Ballads and narrative poems are part of our long cultural tradition of oral storytelling. Most famous of all Burns' narrative two poems is 'Tam O'Shanter'

Listen to the poem read aloud.

This is a poem that begs to be performed. The link below is to a good aural and visual combination to begin your study, or use your own voice or one of your favourite poetry CDs.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkiZbpd9stw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkiZbpd9stw)

and/or for an opening or closing to your lesson, this comical short animation gives the spirit of the tale with a modern twist which pupils will probably enjoy.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvRlvq-Abeo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvRlvq-Abeo)

Levels 2 & 3:  
ENG 219V  
ENG 319V;  
Discussion,  
209J

NOTE: This wonderful story of Tam O’Shanter has kept audiences entertained as long as Burns’ gatherings and suppers have been held. The tale of drunken Tam taking a peek at the whirling devils at Alloway Kirkyard and then being chased all the way to the Brig o’ Doon by the witches has become part of our national culture, even inspiring the name of a hat.

Having got the gist of the narrative, the best approach might be to arrange the class into small groups of three and dividing up the verses. Glossaries might well be helpful and are available at

### STORYBOARD THE TALE.

Instead of simply ‘translating’ the Scots words, ask groups to draw one large A3 picture to illustrate their verse – perhaps they could agree on the key incident or image in their lines. This can be a simple black/white line drawing or full scale collage, depending on the age and skill of your group or if you wish to provide cross-curricular link with art. In discussing what to draw, they will be analysing the events and language for meaning. Then line up the pictures in order and ask each group to explain to the class what is happening in each section. It should ‘read’ like a storyboard of a film.

Art EXA 2-03a  
EXA 2-04a  
Reading  
LIT 216S  
LIT 316S

### RECITATION/DRAMATIC

Next ask groups to swap lines with another group. This time they must learn the group of lines given for a performance. Each pupil should learn at least 4 lines. Some pupils will relish the opportunity; others will dread it. Try to motivate all readers to convey the atmosphere of the story and remind them of their purpose of the poem: to entertain those who are listening. Props and costumes add greatly to a sense of occasion and would be highly recommended! [Note – take photos of the performance in advance of activity 4] Speaking the words aloud brings the whole poem to life and is great fun. Perform it to another class in your year or to the whole school or to younger pupils or at your very own class Burns Supper.

Reading Drama  
EXA 2-12a  
EXA 3-12a

### LITERARY STUDY

Reading to appreciate the language of Burns can be more challenging but highly satisfying for older pupils at the exam stage. By now the class should have a very good understanding of the narrative. Divide the poem into verses and blow up the words to a large font – at least 20 point. (This could work equally well on a smartboard if you prefer a whole class activity or for modelling). Each group/pair considers the poetry of their lines by underlining some of the key techniques used by Burns.

LIT 312N  
LIT 412N  
ENG 319a  
ENG 413P  
ENG417T

Discuss together some or all of the following, marking up on the sheets or your smartboard with coloured pens:

- Use of imagery and colour – what it adds to the description?
- Use of **sound** – some wonderful onomatopoeia/alliteration and assonance
- Use of **irony** – consider some of the items on the ‘haly table’ – what do you think Burns’ thought of lawyers and Priests, for example?
- Use of **form** – consider the use of repetition, rhyme (work out the scheme), form and rhythm. How does Burns seem to accelerate the pace as the great chase begins?
- Use of **humour** – this is a supernatural tale but never a chilling one. It is always kept light and fun. How does Burns make this so? You might point pupils to the humorous images; the appeal to the reader on ‘bold John Barleycorn’; Tam’s very honest human failings; the concluding lines; use of irony etc.

If done in groups, photocopy all the groups’ pages to share the findings of the whole class with each group.

The result of these studies could form part or the whole of an essay for the Standard Grade Folio:

- ‘To Consider the poetic techniques by which Robert Burns appeals to the reader in his narrative poem ‘Tam O’ Shanter’ (Credit)
- Or ‘Discuss the techniques by which Burns presents the supernatural in ‘Tam O’Shanter’ (General/Credit)

#### PREPARE A NEWSPAPER REPORT OF TAM’S GREAT STORY

Ask pupils to work on their own if they have done the other group tasks or in groups if this is their only activity. Have a variety of newspaper front pages available to study.

- Discuss with pupils the layout of the pages and remind them of key terms – title, headline, sub-headings and pictures.
- Discuss what types of stories make front page news and the different language used for different types of publication/different target audience
- Elicit from pupils what type of information a news report needs to have and write these on the whiteboard.
- Use the who/what/where/why/when approach to ensure that the main aspects of the story are covered. Then encourage pupils to add in eye witness accounts of Tam flying towards the bridge or quotes. Some of the photos taken of your performance could become photos for the front page or arrange ‘set piece’ photos or images from Google: click on photo below for the link \*\*\*\*\***THE LINK SUPPLIED DOES NOT WORK - can it be emailed separately?**



Share your criteria for your assessment providing a checklist if appropriate and then ask pupils to write the story and once redrafted use ICT to create a real front page. Windows has various options in the newsletter format of Publisher or you can download free mock front pages from:



[www.sparklebox2.co.uk/356-360/s2b359.html](http://www.sparklebox2.co.uk/356-360/s2b359.html)

Creating Texts  
LIT 220a  
LIT 320a  
LIT 420a

## The Ballad of Mary Shelley's Creature

This Liz Lochhead poem continues the narrative ballad tradition and provides a great text to study alone or as a comparative piece to 'Tam O' Shanter'.

The text is entitled *The Ballad of Mary Shelley's Creature* and at first it is unclear whether Lochhead is referring to the monster as Shelley describes it in the novel, Frankenstein, or the doctor of the novel's title. Perhaps it is both – the imaginative power of Mary Shelley to 'create' this character with aspirations beyond the grave as well as the monster he makes, the 'Hellish dolly-rag of a Charnel house bag'.

### ACTIVITY 4 – STUDYING THE BALLAD

Begin by asking the class what they know of Frankenstein. Chances are they will tell you it is a green faced monster with bolts in his neck! They might be surprised to learn who Frankenstein actually was. Give a little background to the creation of the novel as it is clearly linked to the poet's story.

NOTE: Frankenstein was conceived by Shelley when she was eighteen years old, and holidaying with her lover (and later husband), Percy Bysshe Shelley. They were visiting Lord Byron at the Villa Diodati by Lake Geneva in Switzerland. The area was still under a long cold volcanic winter caused by the eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815, and so the trio remained indoors. Conversation turned to galvanism and the feasibility of returning a corpse to life. They read German ghost stories and Byron suggested writing their own. Shelley dreamt of this. Later, she would write:

*"I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for SUPREMEY frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.*

With these ideas in mind read the poem aloud and then let the pupils take a verse or couple of lines each and read it 'round the class'. The novel 'Frankenstein' has an alternative name – 'The Modern Prometheus'. Just as Prometheus stole fire from Zeus to breathe life into his human creation, so the discovery of electricity gives Frankenstein the power or 'spark' to bring his creature to life. Throughout the poem the impossibility of the task is stressed and the overreaching ambition and determination of the doctor is emphasised. Some of the following questions might be useful to elicit discussion starters.

Level 3 and 4  
LIT Discussion  
307/407,  
Critical  
Evaluation  
LIT 316  
LIT 416  
ENG 317  
ENG 417  
ENG 319a  
ENG 419a

Which key words are repeated and what do they emphasise?

- Frankenstein is seeking the spark of life but must forage among the dead? Which images does Lochhead use to show the grotesque and macabre nature of the doctor's experiment in contrast with its aims. (Put key phrases and images on the smartboard for analysis.)
- Prometheus was a god and what he created was beautiful. As human creator, Frankenstein's task is almost impossible. Which phrases help to show Frankenstein's ambition and which phrases show the horrific reality of what he actually creates.
- The concluding three stanzas emphasise Frankenstein's pride. How is the sense of self congratulation conveyed in the lines?
- ... 'Nothing will ever/ Ever be the same'

How would you describe the tone of these lines? Now read the extract from the novel which actually describes the mixture of emotions Frankenstein feels as he brings the creature to life:

*'It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me, that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.*

*How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful!--Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriations only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.*

*The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart.'*

Reread the Lochhead ballad again. Which aspect of the text do you feel Lochhead has tried to convey? How has she helped us to understand the conflicting issues facing such an experiment? How does the tone of the poem help to communicate the inherent warnings about overreaching?

Finally share this quotation from Ch. 4:

*'Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow'.*

The closing lines of the poem allude to this reflection. What is done cannot be undone and for Frankenstein nothing will ever, ever be the same.



### Homework – Levels 3 and 4

The close analytical work on this ballad could naturally lead to a piece of critical writing. A Standard Grade Folio piece or Int 2 level critical essay.

ENG 317/417a

## LEVEL 4 EXTENSION – COMPARISON WITH TAM O'SHANTER

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To compare the two narrative poems would be a challenging written task for a Level 4 pupil, but it would make an interesting discussion for the whole class. Areas for comparison might be:

- Purpose and subsequent use of language to convey a suitable tone.
- Use of supernatural vs scientific
- Use of imagery
- Concluding 'message'
- Narrative form

Listening/  
Talking:  
LIT 404a

## ACTIVITIES 5 AND 6

What is a Makar? In January 2011 Liz Lochhead became the new Makar of Scotland. Ask pupils if they know what a Makar is? When asked herself Liz said that Dunbar had described a makar as a 'shaper and maker of words'. The Makar also represents the people's voice in Scotland and Liz Lochhead's remit will take her into all sorts of places including schools to promote poetry across the land.

On her appointment as Scotland's new Makar, Ms Lochhead said:

*"I am delighted as I am surprised by this enormous honour, which I do know that I don't deserve. .."Nevertheless, I accept it on behalf of poetry itself, which is, and always has been, the core of our culture. And also in grateful recognition of the truth that poetry, the reading of it, the writing of it, the saying out loud, the learning of it off by heart, matters deeply to ordinary Scottish people."*

Like Burns, whom we think of as Scotland's National Poet, Liz Lochhead brings a personal quality to the universal themes that concern us all. Her friend, colleague and the UK poet laureate, Carol Ann Duffy said on hearing the news:

*'Since her early work in the 1970s, she has been an inspirational presence in British poetry – funny, feisty, female, full of feeling; a fantastic performer of her work and a writer who has tirelessly brought poetry to the drama and drama into poetry. Like her wonderful predecessor and pal, Edwin Morgan, Liz Lochhead possesses the deeply Scottish qualities of independence, inquisitiveness and inventiveness'.*

The two poems in this section help us to question our identity as Scots in the wider context.

### ACTIVITY 5

This poem says so much about our culture, attitudes and the future of Scots in such a seeming simple way. Every Scottish child can relate to the first day of school and the strangeness of new ways and rules. This poem homes in on the way the Standard English of the classroom tramples over the poet's mother tongue. Hear the poet reading this herself at:



[www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/liz-lochhead-kidspoem-bairnsang-poem-only/6503.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningzone/clips/liz-lochhead-kidspoem-bairnsang-poem-only/6503.html)

First read through the poem and ask the pupils to react to the words and ideas in the poem, the emphasis on changing accent should make the key idea accessible to all the children.

### DRAMATISE AND DISCUSS

Have one group of pupils on one side of the class and the other half on the other. Ask one side to read the Scots lines and then immediately follow with the Standard English side. Ask one pupil to walk down the 'corridor' of voices. How did they feel about the sounds of the different voices. Which did they prefer? Ask the pupils to consider the end of the poem? Can they explain the list of adjectives which Liz Lochhead uses to describe how writing in Standard English made her feel – 'posh, grown up, male, English and dead?' Write each of the words down on cards and hand them to members of the group. Can they identify with her reasons for using these words?

(Older pupils may consider the use of repetition and form which so beautifully brings the theme to life. The use of both identities, the rhyme to close, the circular aspect and the poignant tone contrasting with the final words).

Many children will identify with the poet's experience – being one child at home and another at school. Some pupils' parents will have already tried to change or 'forget' the way they learned to speak – how do they feel about that? The discussion should naturally follow onto what it means to be Scottish, the use of dialect, society's attitude to accent and identity. While some of these ideas can lead to a sophisticated debate, any pupil can have an opinion on the topic and thus it makes a great stimulus for group or whole class discussion (Standard Grade/ optional Intermediate 2)

LEVEL 2, 3, 4  
Reading LIT  
216a, 316a,  
416a

Ask pupils to bring in their own P1 school photos. You could be even more ambitious and ask them to bring in their parents or grandparents school photos! (photocopy if precious!) and make a collage or suspend the photos on ribbon/tape from the ceiling or pipes. Ask pupils to write on mini banners words they know in Scots from their home – they may need to go back a generation to their grans and granddads for some good expressions. Then tape these to the ribbon or collage underneath the photos. Try to show the pupils that through the passing of time that language can be lost. How many of them still use the words they have brought in? By the time their children's photos grace the same classroom walls, what words will be left? Is it important to Scottish people anyway?

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## A Man's A Man for a' That

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### ACTIVITY 6

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This is a lyric song that evokes so many emotions for Scots that if we are asking pupils to think about Burns as representing our national voice, it's got it all! The clip from YouTube shows Paulo Nutini singing – perhaps a bit more accessible to younger audiences than the Corries, though I have also added the excellent clip of the opening of the Scottish Parliament which is interspersed with commentary and some thoughts about the song as a national anthem for the Scottish people.



[www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOBcFt5tevY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wOBcFt5tevY)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=9raiKg7R1JY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9raiKg7R1JY)

[www.bbc.co.uk/robertburns/works/a\\_mans\\_a\\_man\\_for\\_a\\_that/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/robertburns/works/a_mans_a_man_for_a_that/)

NOTE: 'Another of Burns' greatest hits, A Man's a Man for A' That is a song that promotes both Burns' political and moral sensibilities. Published anonymously in The Glasgow Magazine for fear of recriminations or even arrest, it is thought the song is proof of Burns' support for the Revolution in France, and is often used as evidence of Burns holding 'socialist' ideals.

What seems beyond doubt is that Burns was influenced by Thomas Paine's The Right's of Man, both of them dealing with idea of liberty, equality and universal human rights. With these themes to the fore it is interesting, and hopefully prophetic, that this was the song chosen to be sung at the opening of the devolved Scottish Parliament in 1999'.

*Alistair Braidwood*

After giving out the text of the song, listen to one or two versions of the song to give pupils a flavour of the variety of interpretations there are. Many may never have heard it and this is an opportunity to look at the ideals Burns was promoting. Taking each stanza in turn, look at the key idea in each verse. Who was Burns criticising and lampooning? What qualities was he promoting?

**Example**

*What though on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that;  
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine;  
A Man's a Man for a' that:  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Their tinsel show, an' a' that;  
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,  
Is king o' men for a' that.*

Pupils could underline words they see as criticism in one colour and strengths in the other. Burns was keen to point out that rank, pomp and show does not make a man or woman. Which modern people do the pupils feel display these weaknesses – gather photographs of well known people to illustrate those who Burns might be critical of today – hypocritical politicians, jumped up celebrities and pompous know it alls. Create a display against the words of the poem to bring its relevance up to date.

**DEBATE: A NATIONAL ANTHEM?**

Though losing out to 'Flower of Scotland', the famous rugby song, in a national vote for a Scottish anthem back in 2006, many people still feel that this could be a national anthem for Scotland. What are the pros and cons of such an outcome. Why was it chosen to be sung at the opening of the Scottish Parliament? Do pupils still feel it has universal truths for Scottish citizens today? If so what are they? Prepare a class debate on the topic.

**WRITE: CREATING TEXTS**

Liz Lochhead on her appointment said:

*'It will be very good to encourage the writing of poems in various different kinds of Scots, and Scottish accents of the mind, Scots and Scots English and English and modern speech'.*

As a small group, ask pupils to use the form of the stanza to create their own verse in which they choose a quality they wish to uphold and some modern foibles that irk them to mock. Read aloud in Scots, English or a mixture of both.

LIT 209a  
LIT 309a  
LIT 409a

ENG 327a,  
ENG 331a

## **SING IT!**

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Prepare a rendition of the song in a mixed media form or as a choral/instrumental group.

## **DISCUSS: WHAT IS A MAKAR FOR?**

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Having looked at poems that deal with our identity as Scots, do you feel we need a Makar? What is poetry for? How does poetry and song communicate in ways that prose and drama do not? Hold a discussion to generate debate on the topic. Prepare some questions for Liz at the Meet the Authors event!

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## Further Reading

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The Scottish Poetry Library is an excellent resource both in items to borrow and advice from their staff.

*Robert Burns In Time and Place* – Frances and Gordon Jarvie:  
Perfect introduction for Primary and early Secondary pupils

*Selected Burns for Young Readers* – Geddes and Grosset:  
Contains a good selection of Burns' poetry and a thorough glossary

*The Broons Burns Night*: A fun look at a Burns Supper with excerpts from the infamous comic strip (in Scots) alongside accessible history, recipes (genuine!) and sheet music.

*The Thing That Mattered Most*: A lively and imaginative new anthology aimed at readers aged 8-13. Scottish poets from Jackie Kay to Carol Ann Duffy, Liz Lochhead and Matthew Fitt, Julia Donaldson and John Burnside and many more contemporary Scottish voices.

*Addressing the Bard*: Twelve contemporary poets respond to Robert Burns with poems and commentary of their own.

*The Colour of Black and White* – Liz Lochhead: An anthology of Liz Lochhead's poems 1984-2003 including Kidsong/Bairnsong and The Ballad of Mary Shelley's Creature.

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### USEFUL WEBSITES

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<http://hopscotchtheatre.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/The-Life-Times-of-Robert-Burns-Teacher-Resource-Pack.pdf>

Excellent resource pack for Hopscotch Theatre. Aimed at Primary School Teachers, contains many further references to other helpful websites as well as lesson plans.



[www.ltscotland.org.uk/enterpriseineducation](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/enterpriseineducation)

New Robert Burns website developed by Learning and Teaching Scotland. Type Robert Burns into the Search Box.