

# FAIR FAA YE TAE THA LEID

An Introduction to  
Ulster-Scots  
Language and Literature

1



**Text 1**

**Swan Song**

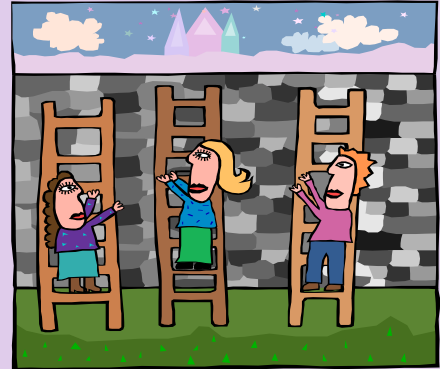


**by  
Hugh Robinson**

# Swan Song

## Pre-Reading Activities

### Whole class discussion:



1. Read the first two paragraphs of the story . In whole class discussion predict what is going to happen.
2. How does the author say: I could not  
They did not  
  
How would he say: They could not?
3. What pastimes does the author say he and his friends enjoyed?
4. What was the “eccer” he had to do every night?

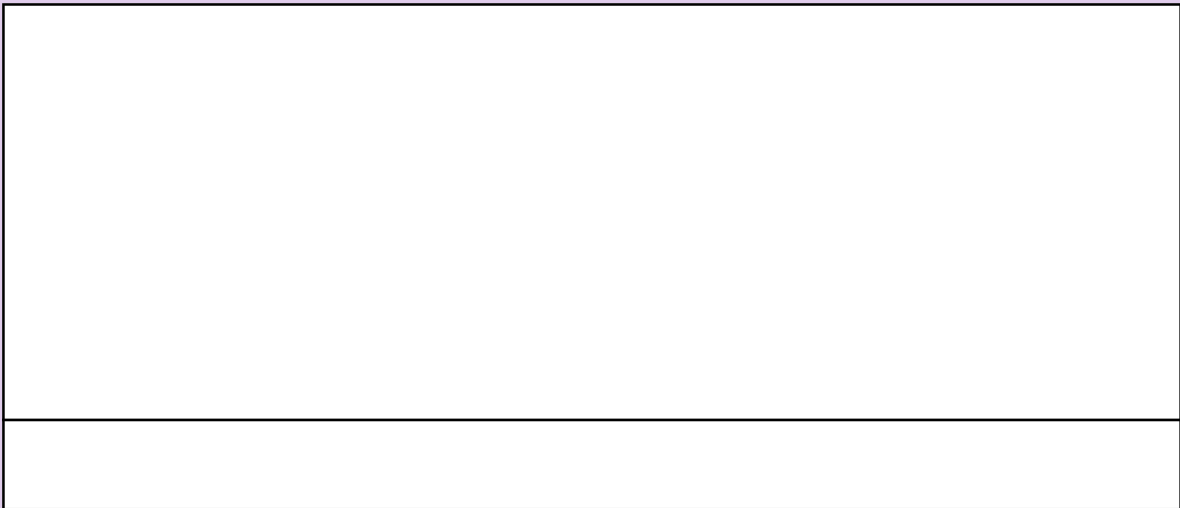
## Swan Song 1

The story is divided into three sections. When you have read Section 1 re-read it carefully, looking for Ulster-Scots words associated with school .


Find the sentences in the story which briefly describe Mr Ferguson and Cecil as they are introduced. Practise saying these descriptions aloud as a class.

Make cartoon-style sketches of Fergie and Cecil, using the sentences as captions:

### Oul Fergie



### Wee Cecil



## Swan Song 2

After reading Section 2 see how effectively you can summarise it in no more than 50 words.

Move into groups of 5 or six and compare your summaries, choosing the best one to be read aloud to the class. The writers may remain anonymous.

As you listen, rate each summary you hear on a scale of 1– 10, judging for **Detail and Accuracy**. Keep a note of the scores, then as a class vote with a show of hands for the most effective summary.

Add any more school words that you find in Section 2 to your list.

### Group activities— Do one of the following:

1. Find the sentences in the passage which use each of the expressions below. Work out the meaning of each expression.

guldrin an coddin no matter hoo smaa a stoater fornent quarely tholed whit	
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

2. Find words or expressions that you recognise but might have assumed were slang. The first two letters and the meanings are given:

cl ne ra du	throwing nose playing wildly a hard thump
----------------------	----------------------------------------------------

3. List all the expressions you can find that refer to body parts, appearance or clothes. Write down the Ulster-Scots words and the English translations.

--	--

At the end of this activity, groups should swap their word lists so that everyone has all three.

Work with a partner. Repeat the words and their meanings aloud.

Cover up the words and meanings. Your teacher will test how much you remember by asking each person “round the class”, for the Ulster-Scots equivalent of one of the expressions you have learnt.

### **Display**

Make a card for display showing the word you were asked for and including a small illustration as a reminder of the meaning.

## Swan Song 3

Read the final section of the story. Work in your groups at the game of Word Bingo below. Provide English words or expressions for the Ulster-Scots ones used here. Once your group has filled in the whole card shout **"Bingo!"**

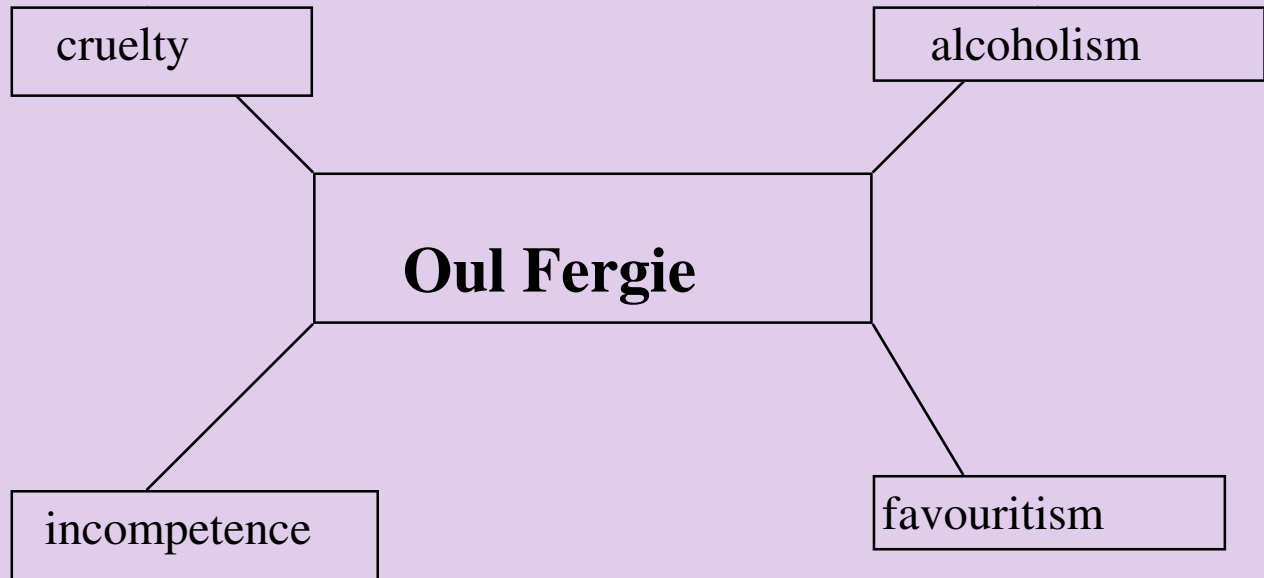
nicht	snaw	sate	kesh	wun
gien	lukkied	ris	yaised	drapped
feared	ain	richt	ivery	caul
fae	intil	tae	doon	wi

Now "round the class" use each word in a sentence, eg:

*I drapped a glass and it broke.*

## Issues Raised in the Story

The ending of the story is humorous and so is the style but the tale raises some serious, even shocking issues:



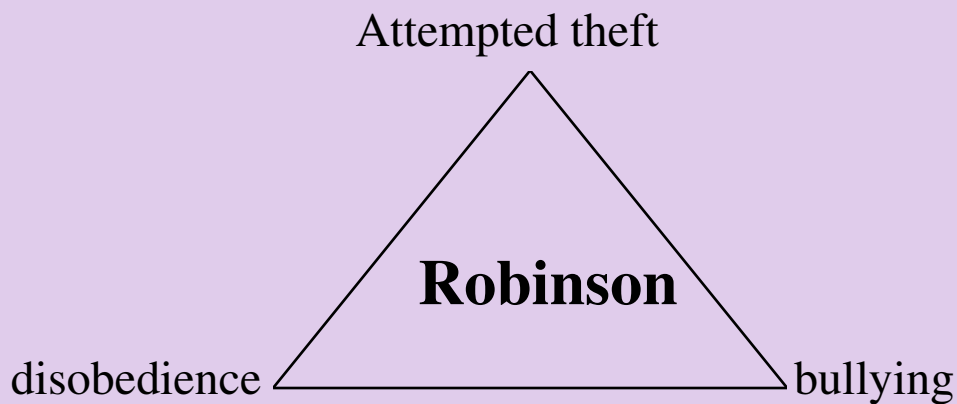
## Research:

1. Human Rights and national legislation which would make it impossible for Fergie today to get away with the sort of treatment he gives Robinson.
2. Your school's policy on behaviour and discipline.

Follow up with a poster for display which gives guidelines on the treatment of young people in educational or care institutions. Use I.T. to create your poster.



Robinson, the narrator, is guilty of all the offences below – at what points in the story ?



Do you feel only sympathy for him, or would you criticise him for any of the above?

How does your school deal with bullying, or problems in relationships between pupils?

Robinson is not given the opportunity of a good education, but he does take quite an interest in the rural environment and the work associated with it. Scan the complete story again and highlight all the words, phrases or short passages that show evidence of this.



**Write now!**

Why do you think Mr Ferguson was so angry when he found Robinson with the leek? Imagine Robinson's mother complained that he had thrashed her son too severely. Work out a reply that he might have written to her in a letter.

Begin: Dear Mrs McCrory.

## Style of the Story

1. Although you are reading a written version of this story, even the narrative (not in direct speech) passages show some of the characteristics of spoken language, as if the narrator is telling the story aloud to a listener. Re-read Section 1 and suggest some of the ways in which the writer has created this effect.
2. Look at the following lines from the story:

*Now children, there will be no school today.*

*What are you going to do with it?*

*Right now, we're going to have some singing lessons.*

*Hold out your hand Robinson.*

All the sentences above are in English and were said by Mr Ferguson or his wife.

Can you put them into Ulster-Scots?

Work with your partner. Use the words you have already learned and scan the text of the story carefully to try to make your translation as authentic as possible.

Practise saying your translations aloud .





## Concluding Activities: Speaking and Writing in Ulster-Scots

### 1. **Role Play**

Work with your partner. One of you is Robinson, the other is his Mum or Dad. Role play the conversation they might have had when Robinson came home and complained about Fergie's attempt to force him to sing. Both should use as many Ulster-Scots words and phrases as possible.

### 2. **Script—written work for pair**

Robinson has applied for a job as a gardener at a large stately home, such as Mount Stewart on the Ards Peninsula. Write the script of his interview with the estate manager. He should be asked about his experience and his education. The manager should speak in English, while Robinson speaks in Ulster-Scots.

### 3. **Individual Written Work**

Oul Fergie has applied for a job at a new school. Write a reference covering his character and his ability. Write it in Ulster-Scots using the information, words and phrases in the story to help you.

### 4. **Game**

In pairs design a Word Search game using no fewer than 10 Ulster-Scots words from the story. Swap with another pair and try out each other's games. Also, translate the words you find into English. Using **Word** or **Publisher** make a copy of your game for display.

