

FAIR FAA YE TAE THA LEID

**An Introduction to Ulster-Scots
Language and Literature**

4



THE WANDERER

by

JAMES ORR

Pre-reading Activities



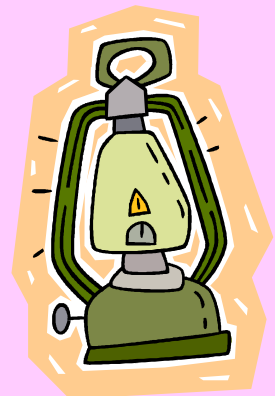
Imagine the situation:

You are alone in the house late at night. Someone raps on the window and begs for shelter.

Do you let him/her in?

What thoughts would run through your mind?

Then, imagine you are a wanted man or woman. You are on the run. It is late, dark, cold and you are out in the middle of the country. You cannot go home for fear of being caught, but you are desperate to find shelter. You see a light in a small cottage. Do you ask for help? What would make this a dangerous thing to do?



You have been given a copy of the first verse of a poem called "The Wanderer". You have a glossary that explains the difficult words. Work out the meaning of verse one in small groups or pairs.

Now read this:

This poem was written by a man named James Orr who had taken part in a Rebellion against government forces in Ireland in 1798. How long ago is that? What century was it?

James Orr lived in Ulster where a large number of the population spoke, and still speak, a form of the Scots language called Ulster-Scots. Orr felt his community was being treated unfairly by the government and he joined a group of men who were prepared to fight to make life more fair for everybody in Ireland. Orr and his friends were defeated at a battle at the town of Antrim on June 7, 1798.

Orr wrote this poem based on his own experiences as a man on the run. "Slimiss" is actually the Hill of Slemish, a wild area of County Antrim where Orr and some of the rebel leaders went into hiding. It was also an area where many people secretly supported what Orr and his friends had done, but they wanted to avoid getting into trouble with the authorities and were often afraid to help.

Group or Whole Class discussion –

Will the lassie let the Wanderer in?

What would make her think very carefully before opening the door?

What reason does she give for warning the Wanderer to be quiet?

Do you believe there is really a shepherd asleep in the loft?

Why might she be inventing this?

Reading the Poem

You have been given a copy of the whole poem.
Listen and read along while it is read aloud.

Now, in your groups, work out the meaning of the whole poem, using the glossary.

In groups discuss:

1. Which words or expressions sound particularly Scots to you?
How does the language of the poem make the reader aware of how cold and wild the landscape is?
2. How can we tell people have been unwilling to help the Wanderer?
3. How does the Wanderer manage to persuade the lassie to let him in? What makes it seem as if he and she already know each other?
Which line in the poem shows her taking a definite decision to help him?
4. What instructions does the lassie give the Wanderer? How does she show she thinks sensibly as well as kindly?

Responding and Writing



1. Imagine the Picquet calls at the cottage the next day, after the Wanderer has left. He questions the lassie about whether the wanted man has been seen in the neighbourhood.

Write (or improvise and act) the script of the conversation they might have. Try to include some Ulster-Scots words when the lassie speaks.

2. The Wanderer leaves the cottage the next morning. Write a short story of 200-500 words about what happens to him. Try to describe the countryside and his hopes and fears very vividly. Include some Ulster-Scots words if you can.
3. Imagine the Wanderer escapes to America and is interviewed by a news reporter about his experiences. Act out the interview. The Wanderer should use some Ulster-Scots words and expressions.

