

FAIR FAA YE TAE THA LEID

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

**A Teacher's Resource Book:
For use with Pupil Workbooks 1, 2 ,3 & 4**



Contents

Teachers Notes

Swan Song

The Dance

Leezie McMinn

The Laird O Glencraigie

The Spae Wife

The Wanderer

Swan Song

by

Hugh Robinson

Context

This story is taken from Hugh Robinson's autobiographical collection of stories, *Across the Fields of Yesterday*, in which he shares his memories of life in the Ards area of County Down during the 1940's and 50's. Pupils engage readily with this story because it deals with the familiar world of school, but in a period when discipline was more harsh than it is today and when concepts such as children's rights were not in vogue.

Research Work

The preliminary activities develop oral and research skills. Discussing grand-parents' personal experiences of a strict educational regime should also help pupils to identify with the sufferings of the tale's narrator.

Language Work

Rather than teaching the Ulster-Scots language in a formal manner, these units are designed to develop familiarity with its vocabulary and grammar through the study of texts. At the same time, the various tasks help pupils quickly lose inhibitions about using Ulster-Scots words and phrases in speech and in writing.

The pre-reading activities are designed to help pupils engage quickly with the Ulster-Scots language. For reading purposes the story has been divided into three sections. The activities accompanying each section will be much more effective and interesting for pupils if they read and complete work on each section before receiving the following parts.

Issues

Once the story has been read, the social and educational issues it raises provide material for discussion with a Citizenship focus.

Swan Song 1

A niver liked schuil. An Ah couldnae be boathered wi them oul fellas that yaised tae tell us that schuil-days wur the best days o oor lives. It wus aa richt fer them tae taak. They didnae hae eccers tae dae ivery nicht o the week. But noo, lukkin bek owre the years, maybe they wur richt. We did hae sim guid times at the oul place, scunnin fer marlies and swopin ciggie-cards and raidin Wullie McKelvey's orchard oan oor wye hame fae schuil efter fishin fer spricks in the wee burn that trinkled aside the road. Ah wunner if the wee burn is still there? And if the sticklebeks and tadpoles ir as big as they yaised tae be? An Ah wunner if the scholars nooadays get intae the scrapes an boather we did?

The teachers wur comin an gan at oor schuil sae thick an fast it wus haird tae min o them aa. But there's yin oul character Ah'll niver forget. Mr Ferguson wus his name. But we jist ca'd him "oul Fergie".



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He wus a queer fish, oul Fergie. A wee skitter o a man wi horn-rimmed glesses an a hooked neb, he didnae enjoy the best o health. Because he wus heid-maister he wus anither yin entitled tae leeve in the big hoose nixt dure tae the schuil. An like the ithers afore him, he commuted atween hoose anschuil through the slap in the privet hedge. An he aye wore the same claes. Wunter an simmer, nae matter aboot the weather, Fergie wore yin o them big trench-coats an a hat the same as Humphrey Bogart wore in the pictures. He was niver wi'oot them. Niver.

Noo many a moarnin Fergie wudnae weigh in. Niver showed up. We wud be rakin aboot the playgrun scunnin fer marlies or kickin an oul fitbaa, whun Fergie's wife wud come strugglin through the hedge, lukkin like somethin oot o Mrs Beeton's cookbook in her white stairched apron an mop-kep.

Now children," she wud say, in a wee timid voice ye wouldnae hae heerd ahin a bus "now children, there will be no school today. Mr Ferguson is indisposed."

An that wus that. We jist went hame. Hared it awa up the loanen as haird as we cud go tae gie a haun at bringin in the praitas or cuttin the coarn. Wee Fred Lloyd couldnae rin very haird, but he had the guid sense tae keep gan an he generally goat awa wi the rest o us.

Yin thing puzzled me about thon episodes whun Fergie didnae appear. Ah didnae ken whaur this disposed place wus that Fergie kep gan intae whun he was supposed tae be larnin us tae read an write in the cless-room. Ah tackled big Ernie Cammell about it yin day whun Mrs Ferguson come intae the play-grun agane wi the guid news that oul Fergie wus yince agane indisposed. Ernie was bigger nor me. If onyboady kent the answer, it wud be him.

Ernie," sez Ah as we quit fer breath efter anither successfu get-away along the kesh fae the schuil, "whaur is this disposed place oul Fergie keeps gan intae?"

Ernie lauched an pu'd a plump bleckberry fae the briars hingin owre the hedge an couped it intae his mooth.

Are ye ignorant aathegither, Robinson?" sayed he as he chowed the bleckberry and scoured the hedge fer anither yin. He disnae gae onywhaur. It means he's no weel. He's goat a hangover. He wus oot oan the tear last nicht again. Ma da saw him comin oot o Grace Neill's pub at shuttin time, hairdly able tae bite his fing'r. He was fu."



So that wus it. Oul Fergie secret drinker. Or thocht he wus. An ivery time efter that whun Fergie wus indisposed Ah cud jist see him lyin in bed wi the big trench-coat an Bogie hat an the Andrews Liver Sauts an the heidache pooders aside him.

But Ah niver felt sorry fer him. Niver. Hangover or nae hang-over. He wus a cruel man oul Fergie, an he kep a big cane hingin owre the bleckboord tae punish wrang-daers, and simtymes tae punish them that had daen naethin wrang ava. Mony a rap Ah goat wi it, an aa because Ah didnae ken whit $2x+3x-4x$ wus. Ah coudnae unnerstaun algebra. Cud you? But Fergie niver gied up tryin tae hammer it intae me athoot tae much reward fer his efforts. But Ah coudnae dae it. Ah cud make an attempt at hunner-wechts an stanes an puns. But no the algebra. The x's an the y's wur owre ocht fer me.

But Fergie's wee son cud dae them aa richt, nae boather at aa! A regular wee clipe Cecil wus, a sleekit wee glype that lukked ivery inch the pairt. He wus jist the same age as me, but nice an neat an tidy. His jet-black hair wus aye shaded an kamed bek, an he peered oot o a pair o thick glesses. An there was aye a sneer on his bake. Cecil was Fergie's richt haun man, an he toul iverythin. Oan iverybody.

End of Section 1



Swan Song 2

Yin day in late simmer Fergie decided tae tak us aa oot gairdenin. In his gairden, o coorse. Taak aboot chape labour! We kenned it was jist an excuse fer him tae get his gairden dug owre an aa the weeds pu'd oot. Fer naethin. But we didnae care. Onything wus better nor algebra.

We clattered oor wye doon the front steps, gulderin an coddin an shovin oor wye through the slap in the hedge intae the gairden. The gairden was naethin mair nor a paircel o weeds wi an odd marigold fightin fer survival roon the edges.

Fergie wasnae lang in gettin us organised. He pu'd oot twa-three spades an pit the biggest o the boys tae the diggin an the rest o us tae the pu'in o the weeds.

It wasnae lang tae the bleckbirds an the thrushes wur in amang oor feet, gorbins oan the worms we wur turnin up. Noo, Fergie hud appointed wee Cecil charge-haun, wi instructions tae report ony wrang-daein, nae matter hoo smaa, tae him. Still an withal, Ah wud say there wus mair wrestlin an stane-cloddin an actin the eejit went oan thon day nor ony diggin or weedin. But the threat o wee Cecil wus aye there. We hud tae watch oor step.

Ah bluffed ma wye aboot the gairden as best Ah cud, yankin up the odd lump o chickweed an lettin oan Ah wus jist as busy as the rest o them. An then, of a suddent, Ah come oan this leek. Ah cud hairdly believe it. Fu grouwed it wus, as thick as yer wrist, an hoo oul Fergie's wife missed it, Ah'll niver ken. It wud hae made a poat o broth oan its ain. It wus a stoater.

Noo Ah hud wrocht a bit o a gairden at ma ain hoose, in a wee bit o grun jist fornent the hen-hoose. But Ah couldnae even get a scallion through. No even a scallion. An noo here wus this leek, fu grouwed, an aboot tae be chucked awa wi the weeds. A leek like that grouwin in my gairden wud quarely help the luk o ma vegetable plot.

Ah lukked aboot me tae see if onyboady else hud seen the leek. A wus in luck. They wur aa owre busy tae be takkin ony notice o me. Ah bent doon an grabbed houl o the leek an pu'd as haird as Ah cud. An up it come, as aisy as ye like. Nae boather at aa.

Ah shoved the leek up ma ganzie an went oan pu'in chickweed jist as if naethin hud happened. Ah cudnae wait tae get hame an get the leek planted in ma gairden.

Then, fae naewhaur, there wus this tap oan my shooder. Ah lukked roon an gazed intae the sneerin faces o wee Cecil an his oul da. The lang airm o the law hud caught up wi me.

“What were you going to do with it?” demanded Fergie, his neb richt up tae mine an his breath reekin o stale whuskey.

“Whit am Ah gan tae dae wi whit?” says Ah, lettin oan Ah didnae ken whit he wus taakin aboot.

“With that there,” bawled Fergie, stickin' his haun up my ganzie an pu'in the leek doon fer the hale class tae see. “What were you going to do with my leek?”

There was nae doot aboot it. Ah hud been caught rid-haunit an ma neb went the same colour o beetroot as wee Cecil staired tae snigger an giggle an incite the hale schuil intae a riot o lauchter at ma expense.

“You intended to steal my leek, didn’t you, Robinson!” snarled Fergie, his oul face screwed up like a dried turnip. “And if it hadn’t been for my son Cecil noting your despicable action, you would have stolen it. Wouldn’t you, Robinson?”

Ah niver made him answer. There wus nae point, even if Ah did-nae think takkin an oul leek that wus gan tae be chucked oot wus a joab fer the local constabulary.

“I thought so!” roared Fergie. “You’re a common wee thief! Aren’t you, Robinson. And we all know what happens to thieves. Don’t we, class?”

“Oh, ay, sir,” agreed ma schuil-mates. “We aa ken whit happens tae thieves.” Fine pals they wur.

“Cecil,” chirped Fergie to the boy-wunner, “ be a good boy and nip back to the class-room and get my cane.”

Wee Cecil bounded awa like a spring rabbit an wus bek in about twa seconds wi the cane.

“Thank you my boy,” beamed Fergie. He tuk the cane in his twa hauns an bent it dible tae impress me wi the soopleness o it. The mair soople, the mair pain.

Fergie’s cane wus very, very soople. Ah thocht Ah wus gan tae be seek wi pain as Fergie delivered me sax slaps o the highest order, no tae mention a clout on the heid fer no houlin ma haun up high eneuch. He left me oan ma knees in amang the chick-weed, houlin ma injured hauns and injured pride an listenin tae wee Cecil lauch an giggle.



But Ah niver cried. Ah waanted tae. But Ah wudnae. I wudnae gie them the pleasure.

Well, autumn come an gien wye tae the first froasts o wunter. An it wus a snell wunter that year. But roon about Christmas time Fergie was gettin indisposed mair an mair affen. An after Hoagmanay it wus even better. He wus niver about the place ava.

Yin coul January moarnin we wur kickin an oul fitbaa about the playgrun, killin time tae see if Fergie wus gan tae weigh in. Wee Cecil wus rakin about oan this bran new bike his da hud gien him fer Christmas. He wus the ainly yin in the schuil that iver hud a new bike, an richt eneuch, it wusnae bad. Och it hud brakes an a bell an iverythin ye cud think o, an wee Cecil wasnae hauf showin it aff tae us boys. He zoomed in an oot atween us, ringin the bell an makkin “vroom” “vroom” noises, lettin oan tae knock us doon. He skimmed me twa-three times, an he near couped me mair nor yinst.

“Richt, Cecil ma boy,” sez Ah tae masel. Yince mair. Jist come in oan me yince mair, an ye’re for it.” An he did. In he come again fae the far coarner o the playgrun, headin straucht fer me, an gan faster an faster as he goat nearer an nearer.

Weel, Ah waited tae he wus very near oan tap o me so he wudnae hae time tae chyng coorse. Then Ah grabbed ma schuil-beg by the straps an swung it roon ma heid an caught him fair in the gub as he come flyin in. He hut the grun like a felled pig an lay in the muck scraighin somethin terrible wi the bike lyin owre the tap o him. Ah thocht Ah hud him kilt. But Ah gien him anither guid dunt onyweye. Ah reckoned Ah owed him yin fer the leek.

An noo it wus wee Cecil’s turn tae hae the hale schuil jeerin an lauchin at him, an him roulin aboot in the gutters, gettin his nice claes aa dirty an his bran new Hercules lyin wi the front foarks shoved intae the bek wheel. It wus the best bit o fun we hud fer a lang time.

But it didnae last lang. Of a suddent, oot o naewhaur, Fergie wus oan the scene. Ah wusnae shair if he hud seen me knockin wee Cecil aff the bike or no. But if luks cud kill, Ah wus a deed man.

Then Fergie did a gye strange thing. He jist picked wee Cecil up by the scruff o the neck wi yin haun an the remains o the Hercules wi the ither an dragged the pair o them through the hedge an awa intae the hoose. An we jist went oan playin fitbaa. If Ah hud kent Ah wus gan tae get awa wi it as aisy as that Ah wud hae clabbered wee Cecil lang syne.

Fergie cam bek in aboot five meenits. Oan his ain. An he niver even lukked at me. He rung the schuil bell an herded us intae the class-room an ca'd the roll.

Fergie made the last scratch wi the pen in the roll-book an screwed the tap oan tae his ain bottle o ink. Then he ris tae his feet an plunnered aboot in the coarner press tae he fun a big printed sheet wi the tonic sol-fa oan it. He slung it owre the bleck-board.

“Right now,” he smiled. We’re going to have some singing lessons.”

We lukked at him, wunnerin if he wus richt in the heid. We cudnae sing. Nane o us. But fergie picked up the cane an pointed it at me.

“You, Robinson! Up to the front!”

Ah lukked at Fergie, wunnerin if the demon drink hud driv him clane mad. But the cane wus ainly an inch fae ma neb. Ah ris fae ma sate an dandered up aside Fergie an the tonic sol-fa.

“Right, Robinson,” growled Fergie, tappin the tonic sol-fa wi his cane. “It’s all very easy. All you have to do is sing doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, tee, doh.”

Ah shuk ma heid. Ah wusnae gan tae sing an make an eejit o masel in front o the hale class. An oul Fergie kenned it.

“Sing, Robinson!” he roared as he tapped the tonic sol-fa wi the cane an hut me a creek oan the heid wi his free haun. “Sing! Doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, tee, doh!”

Ah clenched ma teeth an shuk ma heid, the while gettin ready fer the nixt dunt. “Ah’m no fer singin,” Ah toul him.

“So,” whuspered Fergie. “So. You’re not going to sing. Well, hold out your hand and we’ll let the cane sing for you!”

An Fergie let the cane sing oan ma haun. Ah can still hear the whumph o it as it raised welts across ma fing’rs. Sax time oan each haun. It wus the warst threshin Ah hud goat an Ah waanted tae cry. But Ah wudnae. Ah tholed it ivery moarnin fer three weeks. Ivery moarnin Fergie wud hae me up tae the front.

“Sing, Robinson!” he wud roar.

“Ah’m no singin!” Ah wud answer.

“Hold out your hand, Robinson! Bawled Fergie, an awa we’d gae again. An aa because Ah wudnae sing. Weel, that’s whit it wus supposed tae be fer. But Ah kenned whit it wus really fer. It wus fer knoackin wee Cecil oan his mooth an nose an wreckin his bran new Hercules. That’s whit it wus really fer.

End of Section 2



Swan Song 3

Weel, time went oan. Christmas time cam roon again an Ah wus sent up tae Belfast in the oul steam train tae veesit ma granny's sister wha hud sim Christmas boaxes fer Ann an masel. Sarah Jane met me at the train station an whun it wus time tae mak fer hame brocht me bek an pit me oan the train wi ma twa paircels lapped in Christmas paper.

Ah'll niver forget it. It wus comin oan tae snaw an the wun wus blawin in fae the Lagan an drivin sleet an snaw richt intae the station. Ah waved guid-bye tae Sarah Jane an shuk the snaw fae ma kep an kicked it fae ma buits as Ah apened the carriage dure. It wus wairm an cosy an empty, barrin yin oul cratur in a trench coat an hat like Humphrey Bogart yaised tae weer, lyin sleepin in the far coarner. An ye dinnae need me tae tell ye wha it wus.

Ye're richt. It wus oul Fergie, drunk as a loard an sleepin it aff, his mooth apenin an shuttin in time wi his snores. The carriage wus reekin wi the smell o whuskey an beer an Ah thocht aboot takkin anither carriage. But Ah didnae. Ah thocht Ah wud trevel wi Fergie.

Ah stepped intae the carriage an shut the dure queeit-like. Ah didnae want tae wauken Fergie in case he wud ax me tae sing agane. Ah sut doon in the sate fornenst him an watched him snorin an gruntin, minin aa the terrible hammerins he hud gien me at the schuil.

Of a suddent, the carriage lichts gied a bit o a flicker, the oul engine goat up a bit o steam, an wi a toot oan the whussle we wur oan oor wye tae Donaghadee. The suddent lurch woke Fergie up. He grunted as his een flickered apen an stared at me. But he didnae recognize me. He gien anither grunt then drapped his heid an went bek tae sleep.

the time we goat tae Newtownairds, he wus snorin like a trooper. We rattled oan awa intae the nicht an the snaw, through Ballyfotherly an Cannyreagh, an finally intae Donaghadee.

Noo this wus ma stoap. An it wus Fergie's tae, fer the oul train wus at the enn o the line. An Ah did think aboot waukenin him. Ah did. But shair it wud hae been a shame tae wauken him, noo that he wus sleepin sae peacefu.

Ah lifted ma Christmas boaxes an ris tae ma feet as queeit as Ah cud. Ah apened the dure an then tuk yin last luk at oul Fergie, sleepin like a babby, as hairless a cratur as ye wud see ony-whaur. There wusnae a soun as Ah stepped oot intae the snaw an shut the dure.

It wud a foundert ye, an Ah cud see ma granny waitin fer me awa doon at the ticket barrier. But Ah stud an watched the engine get un-heuked at the buffer enn o the train an a new engine heuked oan tae the front, ready fer the haul bek tae Belfast. Ah watched, feart Fergie micht wake up an get aff. But he didnae.

Ah'll niver forget it. Ah stud oan th platform in the snaw an sleet an wun as Fergie rolled awa bek up tae the big smoke. Noo, whether he woke up in Newtownairds, or whether he went the hale road bek tae Belfast, Ah niver did fin oot. But Ah hud a funny feelin he wud be indisposed oan Monday an there wud be a lock o happy weans pittin as muckle distance as they cud atween theirsels an the oul schuil.

Ah ah'll tell ye somethin else. As Ah stud an watched the train pu Fergie awa intae the bleck nicht, Ah wus singin. At the tap o ma voice.

It's funny hoo ye can sing. Whun ye hae goat somethin tae sing aboot.

Hugh Robinson



The Dance

By Charlie Gillen

Context

This is a comic poem by a contemporary Ulster-Scots writer. It draws on the community tradition of humorous monologues, detailing the exploits of larger-than life characters in amusing or awkward situations. Its depiction of a charmless and physically unattractive woman may appear rather cruel, but this should not blind the reader to the strong sense of the absurd evident in the poem or to the writer's self-mockery.

Recording

Charlie Gillen reads his poem on the tape *Loanin En Rhymes*. Listening to the recording is recommended, particularly before pupils attempt the Choral Speaking activity, as it will help to make them familiar with an authentic North Antrim accent.

The Dance

Lang ago whun I wus young an wedges wusnae big
Six poun' ten for fifty 'oors lukin efter auld Moore's pigs
Whun I got my first week's wedges I wus in a kine o' trance
I loked at my twathry shillin' an' says I, I'm for a dance.

So I polished up my beetle boots an' geen mysel a steep
If they play a when o' waltzes I'll birl them aff thir feet
So I sprayed alo mae oxters an' poothered a' mae feet
In case that they got scadded wi' dancin in the heat.

I loked intae the lukin' gless boys I wus lukin' sharp
Then I struck aff tae M'lernon's for a pint or twa o' Harp
For a couple maks ye bouler for chattin up the weemin
But tak it hurrid canny for they dinnae lake ye steamin'.

Well I wheeled oot the auld bicycle an' I put on baith my clips
Tae keep my new bell-bottoms fae crackin lake a whip
It was a ticht auld push agen the win an mae poor wee legs wus
sore
But I could think o' naethin but birlin roon the floor.

Whun iver I got near the hall I already hard the ban'
So I fired the oul bicycle ahint the cream'ry stan'.

I surveyed the hall an occupants wi' a very casual glance
They wur hurckled up in corners, well saes I, I'm here tae dance
Oh as nice a bunch o' lasses as ye'd ever hope tae meet
But the only yin that wud dance wae mae, had pirfa size o' feet.

She wus six fit three an' sixteen stone wae shooters lake a horse
The only thing that helped her wus her freen wus even worse
For she had legs lake horses hems an' her ja's wus clappit in
Her hair wus lake a sookit rine an' Lord but she wus thin.

The big yin riz an' I loked up at the stibbles on her chin
An' the hair alo her oxters wud a minded ye on whins
Well she grabbed mae lake a 'rassler I hard mae wee ribs crackin'
Saes she I iways dance wae hir so I'm nae use at the backin'

Well the ban' it started pleyin' an she let oot the clutch
Naw anither sowl got on the flure she wus spalterin' that much
She loked tae hae some freckles, hir legs wus mazled wae the fire
But thon freckles wusnae freckles, she'd been brushin' oot the byre.

Whun the waltz wus ower she set me on a form
An' she drew a cloot across her broo an' saes I'm dampt it's warm.
Saes I, I'm gan oot for a smoke I'll see you in a minute.
She produced an ounce a Warhorse fae somewhur doon hir simmit.

Saes I young lasses shoodnae smoke. Saes she aye that's the truth.
An snicked a wallop aff it an stuck it in her mooth.
She saes noo joost you sit there for I man go doon the stairs.
The oul thin yin she gane wae her for they seemed tae hunt in pairs.

I waited for a minit tae I got her in the loo
Saes I if yer'e tae escape fae thon ye better dae it noo.
I run while I wus able tae whur the bicycle wus hidden
For I wus gled an' thankfa tae be redd o' thon big midden.

They sae she owned her ain wee farm but even had she two
The thocht o' thon big wummin maks me trimmle even noo.
Imagine thon gan intae bed it wud mak' yer bluid rin coul
Wae her gless eye in a jampot an' her false teeth in a boul.

Charlie Reynolds

Leezie McMinn

They talk o' the spaewife o' misty Glenramer,
O' Madge o' the hill-tap, an' Kate o' the Linn;
But trew me for devilrie, cantraips and glamour,
They may a' cast their caps at auld Leezie McMinn
Sune as her loof ye hae cross'd wi the siller
She birls roun' the cup, an' she bids ye leuk in.
Och, the foul thief himsel' sure the words whispers till her,
That fa' frae the lips o' auld Leezie McMinn.

Wanters o' men come ilk day Leezie seekin',
Frae hill an' frae valley, frae hut an' frae ha';
Some in gay cleedin', some barely a steek on,
Wee glipoes, young widows, auld maidens, an' a'.
They come in the spring-time, they come in the simmer,
They come when the snaw-drifts hae lang setten in.
They come o' Fate's black book to get a bit glimmer,
For wha can unravel't like Leezie McMinn?

She hecht to wee Mary the han o' the Gauger,
Tho' lang syne his trothe he had plighted to Nell;
To Jeannie she spoke o' a cuddy creel cadger,
An, as she predicted, just sae it befel.
The cross-bones, the coffin, a ring that was broken,
Betocken'd that Nannie wad never get ane.
Nan swore it was lies the fause spaewife had spoken;
But as yet, true's the word o' auld Leezie McMinn.

Should prowlers by nicht or by day rype your biggin',
Despoilin' your coffers o' gowd an' o' gear,
On the tip-toe o' hope to auld Leezie gae jeegin'
Regardless how scoffers an' scorners may jeer.
She'll tell ye what's stolen, she'll tell ye wha did it,
An' gin ye hae courage her glass to keek in,
The face o' the thief to your e'e she'll exhibit,
Sae great is the power o' auld Leezie McMinn.

Gin Hawkie fa' back o' her milk an' her butter,
Or haply lies rowtin' elf-shot I' the straw,
Let Leezie but sain'er, some mystic words mutter,
An' sune deil haet ails the puir beastie ava!
She's far kent an' noted for a' I hae quoted,
An' sair she'll be miss'd when death tucks up her chin.
Tho' frail noo, an feckless, an mair than half doted,
Yet show me the peer o' auld Leezie McMinn.

Samuel Turner

Leezie McMinn: Glossary

Verse 1— words in order of appearance in the text

spae— foretell

trew— trust

cantraips - magic, charms, spells

loof— palm of the hand

siller— silver

fa'frae— fall from

Verse 2

ilk— every

frae hut an' frae ha' - from hut and from hall (poor and rich)

gay cleedin' - fancy clothes

wee glipies— young girls

a bit glimmer— a little insight

Verse 3

hecht— promised

Gauger— exciseman

lang syne— long ago

cuddy creel cadger— pedlar of donkey baskets

betocken'd— indicated, showed

fause— false

Verse 4

rype your biggin— break into your house

gowd— gold

gear— money, possessions

jeegin— full of expectation

gin— if

glass— crystal ball

e'e— eye

sae— so

Verse 5

hawkie— pet cow

fa'back— stops producing

rowtin— mooing

elf-shot— under a spell

sain'er— bless her

deil haet— nothing

ava— at all

far kent— well known

sair— sore

feckless— helpless

The Laird o' Glencraigie

Haena ye heard hoo the Laird o' Glencraigie,
Cam' courtin tae Kate, on his white-fitted nagie,
Hoo he smoked wi' the mither, an' drank wi' the daddy,
While Kate toss'd her heid wi' the airs o' a leddy.
The hoagherin', broigherin', bald-pated lairdie,
Wi's twa toothless gums, an' his white-blossom'd beardie,
Sae bleer-e'ed an' doited, sae taen awa fairly;
Owhare lives the lassie wad tak the auld earlie?

'Twas just on last Munday e'en I' the gloamin',
The waesome cam stoiterin' doon the lang loanin'
Baith dowie an' wae-like, an' fairly furfoughen',
The yad wi' the spavie, the Laird wi' the coughin';
The haverin', claverin', spindle-shank'd bodie
First held wi' the auld folks, confab I' the study—
Got baith their consents, wi' sma' word o' entreaty,
To marry the limmer, my winsome wee Katie!

He hitched up his breekums—he smoothed doo his beardie,
Syne flung his twa sleeves roun' the lass I' the yardie;
Kate lap shouther heich, cryin', "Losh! odds, my lifie!
You've muckle mair need o' a nurse than a wifie;
For shame, man, gae hame man, gie ower your teasin',
The cauler nicht win' may sit sair on your wheezin';
The nicht's owrecasten—your gate's dreich an' dreary-
Gae wa', man, gae wa', I can ne'er be your dearie."

The mither leuked furies—dad’s e’e-brows were knittin’,
An’ cries, “Ye cursed slut, in your ain licht you’re sittin’;
It sets ye fou ill this rampagin’ an’ railin’;
He’s baith a bien hoose an a’ weel stockit mailin’”.
But haud awee—bide awee— Kate didna’ tarry,
But scuds through the trees, light o’ fit as a fairy;
Skirts the lawn, gains the coppice whare grew the tall holly,
For weel, weel she minded the tryst wi’ her Willie.

Ae leuk at the auld folks—ae blink at the carry,
An aff stumped the Laird in an awfu’ quandary;
Gaed hame—spake o’ swingin,’ heich, heich in a wuddy;
Syne drown’d a’ his love in a tankard o’ toddy.
He sipped, he tippled, until he grew dizzy,
Aft cryin’, “ The deil’s in the tappitless hizzie;
She’ll marry some young ane, tho’ e’er sic a vagie,
An’ turn up her nose at the Laird o’ Glenraigie.”

Samuel Turner

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The Laird o' Glencraigie: Glossary

Verse 1

fitted nagie—footed horse

hoagherin' - smelly

broigherin' - sweaty

taen awa fairly—completely away with it

Verse 2

e'en—evening

wasome—woeful

stoiterin—staggerin

loanin' - lane

dowie—dull

wae-like—sorrowful

furfoughen—exhausted

yad wi the spavie—horse with the spavin disease

haverin—incoherent

claverin' - nonsensical

limmer—young girl

Verse 3

breekums—breeches

syne—then

lap shouther heich—leaped shoulder high

muckle mair—much more

cauler nicht win' - colder night wind

set sair—sit sore

gate's dreich—manner is dull

gae wa' - go away (as a call to a sheep dog)

The Laird o' Glencraigie: Glossary (contd.)

Verse 4

in your ain licht—in your own light

fou ill—no good

bien—wealthy, well-to-do

mailin—rented farm

haud awee—hold a while

bide awee—stay a while

tryst—agreed meeting

Verse 5

carry—foolish girl

heich—high

wuddy—noose

deil—devil

tappitless—foolish

vagie—lay-about

THE SPAE WIFE

Ye frien's o' deep knowledge, if wise ye wad be,
Creep into my cave an' a' secrets ye'll see;
If maiden, or mother, *uncertainty* bother,
Frae doubt an' frae darkness, their min's I can free:
Ilk lass, no tald lees on, wha deems, an' wi' reason,
The youth she oblig't frae her fond arms will flee,
An' wife, in a fear ay, that jilts meet her dearie,
May learn the hale truth by applyin' to me.

Gif Chanticlear's ta'en frae the roost whare he craw't;
Or horse, kye, or sheep, frae the pasture-fiel' ca't,
My head I'll bestow ye, if I dinna shew ye
The leuks in a glass, o' the loun that's in faut;
Or else if ye cleek up, an' toss my delft tea cup,
If danger, or death's near, the gruns plain will shaw't:
By cutting' o' cartes folk, an' no' by *black arts*, folk,
O past, present, future, I'll read ye a claut.

A spunkie reply't, wha oureheard the dark dame -
"Guid wife! They wha trust ye defeat their ain aim;
"The henpecket taupie, wha'd wiss to be happy,
"Sud ax nane wha ken— what the wife does at hame:
"Ilk sport-lovin' weary, might dread to come near ye,
"Wha ken'st the dark neuk whare she try't the blithe game -
"The grand plan of Nature's conceal'd frae a' creatures;
"Nor cud their skill chang't gif they kent the hale scheme.

"Ye promise promotion, an' sin' frae the mead
"The shepherd to sea, whare some shark soon he'll feed;
"The young thing, sae bonie, weds some canker't clownie,
"Because ye've presage'd that nae ither's decreed -
"While dupes trust the *sybil* far mair than the bible,
"An' change the last sixpence that ye may be fee'd,
"I'll scorn *the to-morrow*, an' banishin' sorrow,
"Learn mair light frae whickey than e'er fill't your head.

James Orr

Spae Wife Glossary

A

Ain own

An' and

Ax ask

Ay always

B

Blithe happy

C

Canker't short-tempered

Chanticlear cockerel

Claut scraping, selection

Cleek up hook up

Clownie distant relative, coarse fellow

Craw't crowed

Cud could

D

Deems judges

Dinna do not

E

E'er ever

F

Fee'd paid

Frae from

G

Gif if

Gruns dregs

H

Hale whole

I

Ilk every

Ither other

J

Jilt contemptuous term for a young woman

K

Ken know

Kye cattle, cows

L

Light wisdom, enlightenment

Lees lies

Leuks looks, appearance

Loun young male, youth

M

Mair more

Mead meadow

Min's minds

N

Nae no

Neuk nook

S

Sin' send

Spunkie spirited young man

T

Ta'en taken

Tald told

Taupie foolish person

W

Wha who

Whare where

Wi' with

Wiss wish

Scots Poetry in Ulster: An Introduction

Strong links have existed between Scotland and Ulster since prehistoric times due to the narrowness of the North Channel, which has acted not so much as a barrier, more as a corridor of communication. Plantation settlers and fleeing Covenanters put down permanent roots in the north of Ireland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly in Counties Antrim and Down.

During the eighteenth century a poetic movement developed in Ulster which was influenced by and coincided with the Scots Literary Revival of the same period. The poets were from many levels of society, but prominent among them were the so-called “Rhyming Weavers”, often radical in their politics, who followed the example of Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns, frequently writing in their vernacular tongue. For the Ulster poets this was a form of Lowland Scots which had developed in Ulster subject to influences from both Irish Gaelic and English. They also used typically Scots verse forms such as the *Christis Kirk* and *Standard Habbie*.

The poem offered here for classroom exploration is by James Orr, a handloom weaver and revolutionary radical. Orr took part in the United Irishmen’s Rebellion of 1798. This was an attempt to establish a more democratic and just Ireland where Catholics and Presbyterians (Orr’s own creed) would not be subject to discriminatory legal and taxation systems. The Rebellion failed and Orr had to spend a period on the run from the authorities. “The Wanderer” is believed to have been based on his experiences while in hiding in the Mount Slemish area of County Antrim. It has the rhyme scheme and metrical pattern of a folk song, and Orr’s note to the text indicates that it was to be sung to the tune of “Mary’s Dream”, a popular Scots air of the time. It is written in what Orr himself called “Braid Scotch”. A glossary follows at the end of these notes.

The activities are designed for pupils of 14+. Initially, engagement with the text is encouraged, with pupils working in small groups. Following this, pupils could try some of the Responding, Writing and Appreciation activities, either individually or in pairs.

The Wanderer

“Wha’s there?” she ax’t. The wan’rer’s rap
Against the pane the lassie scaur’d:
The blast that bray’d on Slimiss tap
Wad hardly let a haet be heard.

“A frien’,” he cried, “for common crimes
Tost thro’ the country fore and aft.”

“Mair lown,” quo’ she – thir’s woefu’ times!
“The herd’s aboon me on the laft.”

Glossary

a'	all
aboon	above
aft	often
awee	a short time, little while
ax't	asked
bauld	forward, confident in an impudent way
blast	violent blowing of the wind
cauld	cold
fae	enemy, foe
fore and aft	back and forth
frien	friend
Gae	Go
gaun to	going to
gie's	give me
hae	hey! – a "tag" exclamation
haet	thing
han'	hand
laft	loft
lown	quietly
mair	more
nae	no
picquet	patrolling officer
scaur'd	frightened
sic	such
stap	stop
tak'	take
takin'	troubled state
thir's	these are
wad	would
wadna	would not
wat	wet
Waes me	Woe is me, ie: Goodness me!
Weel!	Well!
weel I wat	well I know
wi'	with
wight	person
wham	whom

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“The herd’s aboon me on the laft.”

“I call’d,” he whisper’d, “wi’ a wight
“Wham aft I’ve help’d wi’ han’ an’ purse;
“He wadna let me stay a’ night –
“Weel! sic a heart’s a greater curse:
“But Leezie’s gentler. Hark that hail!
“This piercin’ night is rougher far” –
“Come roun’,” she said, “an’ shun the gale,
“I’m gaun to slip aside the bar.”

“Waes me! How wat ye’re? Gie’s your hat,
An’ dry your face wi’ something – hae.
“In sic a takin’, weel I wat;
I wad preserve my greatest fae:
“We’ll mak’ nae fire; the picquet bauld
Might see the light, an’ may be stap;
“But I’ll sit up; my bed’s no cauld,
Gae till’t awee an’ tak’ a nap.

James Orr (1770-1816)

Concluding Activities

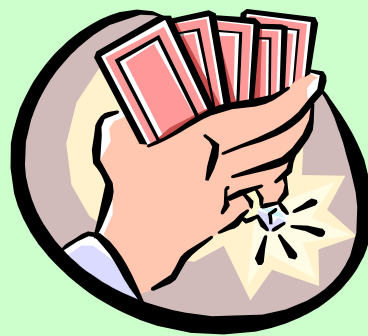
1. **Pair work**—Pupils should explore the three texts once more and discover all the words for numerals, both ordinal and cardinal, that occur.

Lists of these could then be made into a chart for display.

2. A set of cards has been supplied with this teacher's Book. Each card shows an Ulster- Scots word taken from the text of "Swan Song".

Use these cards for a class game of the popular television show *Give Us a Clue*.

The class could be divided into teams with pupils from each team taking it in turns to perform the charades.



SCHUIL

CLAES

PRAITAS

SLEEKIT

GAIRDEN

GULDERIN

GORBIN

SMAA

CLODDIN

AYE

WYE

STOATER

WROCHT

FORNENT

DOON

GANZIE

NAETHIN

AIRM

HAUN

LAUCHTER

SAX

CLOOT

AMANG

YIN

OOT

COUPED

S'TRAUCHT

SCRAIGHIN

DUNT

INTAE