

The Moose

By Gráinne Smith

The Scots Language Award: Support materials for levels four and five – A detailed Scots text

The Moose by Gráinne Smith

“Fit are ye gaun tae gie Betty for yer anniversary?” It wis the maist asket question o John in the past week or twa. “Ye’ve got aathin sine movin intae this place.”

“A moose!” wis aa John wid say. “We’ve aathin but a moose.” John smiled tae himself, thinkin o the lang discussions wi the quine doon the road. Only he kent that the mornin o their anniversary, a wee moosie fooshioned oot o gowd doon tae the last fuser, wid appear on the mantelshelf. The quine hid been real taen wi the idea, it wis a bittie different fae the designs she usually did in her line o wark, and she wis affa impressed that undernaith the aal biler suit John aften gaed about in there wis sic romantic hairt. She’d spent hoors on the wee gowd moose, hoors an hoors tae hiv it ready in time for the anniversary. It wis jist perfect.

* * *

“It’s an affa thing tae cam doon in the world!” Her mither’s words rang in Betty’s heid an she snifft, tears beginnin tae rin doon her nose intil the suds. “Aa very romantic at the stert, nae sae romantic faan it cams tae keepin yersel clean. Nae sae romantic faan it cams tae gaan oot tae the sheddie at nicht in yer goonie. Nae sae romantic faan it cams tae feedin yersel an there’s nae fishin an nae money!”

Betty turnt her heid an wipet her nose on her sleeve, blinkin furiously. She scrubbet hairder at the sheet on the board tae avert fullscale greetin. She’d kent fae the stert that her mither didna approve o her mairrying John bit it wis only noo, aifter they’d been mairriet a guid eight months, that the depth o Mam’s disapproval wis showin itsel mair and mair clearly. Throwin herself awa, that’s fit her mither thocht; Betty had jist thrown awa aathin her parents hid worket for. Aa their pride in providing an education for Betty as weel’s her brithers, aa their sacrifices throu lang years, years o arguing wi family and freens aboot the stupidity o educatin a girl... An tae gie it aa up tae mairry a fisherman!

John’s mither an aa. Her disapproval hid a different cause: ivery time they saa his mither, she looket Betty’s trim figure up and down – even mair trim in the last few months – and pursset her lips. The weekly remark or three aboot her longin for grandchildren wis inevitable. Betty hid cam tae dread the Saiturday aifternoon visits bit couldna think o a reason or excuse tae avoid them. An noo she’d teen tae drappin in sudden-like during the day. Jist tae see fit like, ye ken, she wid say, wi her een flicherin awa aawye. If her mither-in-laa waaket in ev noo tae find her sittin aboot...

She wis nithin better nor a slave! The hoose hid tae be cleaned fae tap tae bottom each day, nae skimpin or there’d be mair comments from John’s mither. Water hid tae be collected fae the tap outside, an heatet up ower the fire. There wis aa the washin. Mendin the nets faan John cam hame. And fit aboot the wye the men expectet tae be treatet jist like kings faan there wis nae fishin an they were at hame? Ivery day the boats went oot, the women hid tae cairry their menfolk on their backs throu the bitter water until they could get intil the boats... She kent it wis tae keep John dry-fittet rather than hae him sittin for hoors wi caal weet feet, bit that made her feel nae better aboot it! She coodna mind the laist time onybody hid treated her like royalty, she wis jist a skivvy, it wis jist nae fair...

An on the tap o aathing, there wis the knittin. John’s mither jist aboot killt herself lauchin at Betty’s efforts at knittin. John’s mither had spent mair than thirty year knittin for her man and fower bairns, it wis fit aa fisher wives did. Knittet ganseys, knittet socks an sarks an draaers, aathing, tae be completet in her spare time. Spare time!

Bit tryin tae get eesed tae the dry lavvy in the sheddie wis the warst. Gaan fae hame wi its proper bathroom intil the nurses’ haim... there, there wis hate waater and baths at aa hoors faaniver you cam aff duty. Or afore you wint on. Or baith. Nithin, nithin, hid preparat her for the reality o...an haein tae empty the buckets... she cowket jist at the thocht o it.

An faan there wis nae fishin, John got tae lie in his bed. Royalty!

At least faan she wis nursin she hid her time aff an her pals. Her pals... they'd hid sic fun, aye lauchin and haein a cairryon, waakin intil the toon tae the dancin an.... Here there wis naebody for Betty tae talk tae, aabody hid kent aabody else fae afore they were born. Naebody tae talk tae, she wis an outsider. Betty gied hersel up tae the luxury o a proper greet.

She hardly daur think about the bit she really wintet tae ask aboot, talk aboot. Fowk thought that nurses kent aathin there wis tae ken aboot bodies. Aifter an aa, did they nae hanle them aa the time, ivery day? Weel aye, bit there wis a warld o difference atween bein mairriet tae John, an washin doon as far as possible, up as far as possible an leavin Possible tae the patient. Eence, faan she'd nae lang staired, a fool aal mannie hid pit her haan doon – there – and she'd been that flegget that she'd jumpet back and knocket the basin and the weet soapy cloot ontill his slippers at the side o the bed. Faan Staff Nurse hid discoveret the reason she'd first gien her a dressin-doon nae handy, an then hid laached fit tae burst. "Ye'll jist hae tae get eesed tae half the population being male!"

Aa the itehr nurses hid enviet her, Betty Tait, faan John hid traivellt aa the wye back intil Aiberdeen jist tae ask her oot, waatched at the windaes faan they'd waakt out. There'd been a great party afore she left and they'd aa clubbet thegither tae gie her the china. Here there wasna even a press nor a dresser tae show it aff.

It wisna that John had changed. Whiles if she wis awaak afore him she liket tae watch him sleep, jist for the pleesure o seein the wye his eyelashes curvet on his cheek. Onywy, faa could she tell? Her mither? Her mither-in-laa...wid jist say that was fit aa wives did, it wis richt that John should expect the same fae his ain wife. Aifter an aa, hid she hersel no treatet her ain man like a king for ower thirty year... Ony proper wife tae John widd...

Tears spent, Betty dried her een an sighed. Sittin there in the aul chair, her hans foldet in her lap she watchet the flames for a few mair minutes. She didna feel like gaun back tae wark, nae jist yet awhile. The morn wis her day for waaking ower tae Banff for the weekly bath at Mam's. Mebbe she'd speir her mither...but mibbe no.

Fit tae dae aboot...the bit atween sittin in the evenins and gettin into bed. Foo tae..manage it. There hid tae be an easier wye than aye tryin tae be first tae say she wis riddy for bed, rushin oot tae the sheddie, back tae the box bed, cooryin in under the blankets and quilt tae be undressed an in her nichtie afore John cam throu. John jist couldna understand it, her shyness aboot undressin wi him there – he himsel hid nae sic hesitancy. She tried tae nae look faan he undresset an slid in aside her. Eence they were baith anaith the covers aathin wis fine, it wis jist the bittie in atween sittin at the fire an....

Naebody hid iver prepared her for these smaa practicalities o mairret life wi John. If only they hid a proper bathroom. There'd nae be a problem then, she could undress in the bathroom and pit on her nichtie. An the pot anaith the bed...she jist hidna bin able tae makk hersel use it at nicht. Jist in case John wis awaak an could hear her. Nichts she'd lain there pittin aff the meenit faan she jist hid tae makk the rin oot tae the sheddie in the freezing caal an win until she jist couldna pit it aff ony langer. Ae nicht she'd gotten that caal she'd waakent John faan she creepit in the bed again. Mind, he'd seemt fine enough pleased, niver ony complaints fae him aboot bein waakent in the middle o the nicht, nae maitter the reason.

Weary, Betty pushed strands o hair back aff her face, retied the knot o hair at the back o her heid, an picket up the sheet in the tub.

Drat, the splashin an the feel o the waater on her hans hid made her desperate for the lavvy. Wipin her hans on the roch apron, Betty ran oot tae the shed. Sittin there, Betty felt the caul air fae under the door. She hugget her arms across her. The bag o peat John hid gotten cheap wis leanin against the waa, near touchin her leg; nae room in the hoose for it. At least it wid keep them gaun for a whilie. Betty shiveret again. The fire wid need makkin up if she wintet ony mair hate waater.

She wis jist pullin up her knickers faan she saa it. Twa tiny bricht eyes were staring stracht at her. There wis somethin in the peat, somethin lookin oot fae the darkness o the bag. Then it moved. There wis a moose in the bag o peat. Noo it wis runnin doon the side o the bag. Betty screamt, haalin her

petticoats an heavy woolen skirts up tae her waist an jumpin ontae the wooden seat aa in ae movement. She shut her een a meenit, then opent them again tae see if it wis still there. It wis. Noo she screamt in good earnest, she jist couldna stop. She screamt an screamt.

Faintly Betty heard John's voice shoutin, "Far are ye?! For God's sake, fit's the maitter? Far are ye, far are ye?" He must be searchin the hoose, an oot the back. His fittsteps as he ran doon the path tae the sheddie, the door as he yarket it.

"Are ye aaricht? Fit are ye screaming about?"

"A moose! A moose! It's there, ahint the bag!"

"Fit bag? Fit bag? Far is't?!"

Betty's shakkin finger pintet. John's fittsteps again, then he was back wi the shovel. Wi ae blow the beastie wis reduced tae a smaa bloody mess. John scrapet up the pathetic body and threw it intae the weeds.

"Fit a fricht ye gave me! I thocht there wis some-one attackin ye! A bogie mannie at the verra least!"

Betty wis still shakkin. Aa she could say for meenits was "Oh John. Oh John."

"Calm doon, ma quine. It's awa noo. It's aaricht, it's awa." John pit his airms aroon her and Betty clung tae the comfortin bulk.

"I hate them. I hate mice, it's the wye they rin sae fast. I aye think they'll be up ma skirts in a meenit. Oh John. Oh John."

"His onybody been murdert?" Katie's voice cam fae the street.

John an Betty looket at ain anither. There they were in the sheddie, Betty still standin on the lavvy rim, John in his draaers.

"I got sic a fleg I'd nae time tae pit on ma breeks!" he whisperet in Betty's lug, his een beginnin tae twinkle and his face beginnin tae crease. "It wis a moose," he cried back tae their neighbour. "Betty got an affa fricht....it's aa richt noo, I've killt it."

"I'll awa back tae ma washin then, if ye're aaricht."

"Thanks onywye, Katie."

For anither meenit they listent tae Katie's steps gaan doon the pathie and back along the pavement. Her door shut an aa they could hear noo wis the win and the sea, soughin an crashin on the shore only the breadth o the road and the washin green fae their ain door. In really stormy weather the sea threw hale waater, rocks and weed aa ower the green. On wild days the women gaitheret tae keep waatch for the boats nae in. The reason John hid been at hame today at aa.

"I'm jist glad ye were at hame." Betty reachet up tae kiss John.

"I hae ma eeses. Bit I dinna think ony bogie mannie wid risk onything wi a skirl like thon!" John began to laach. "Ye'd better ging oot first an see if there's onybody else aboot an then I'll rin intil the hoose an get ma breeks."

Faan they were sure the street wis empty an there wis naebody gaan aboot, John picked Betty up an ran intae the hoose wi her in his airms. Noo they jist couldna stop laaching. John wis miming Betty jumpin aboot an haudin her skirt an shoutin, "It's a moose! Save me, save me fae the giant moose! Help, help! It's a moose! I've niver seen onything sae funny as you."

"An you rinnin aboot in yer draaers!"

“I didna ken faar ye were...”

“I hate gaan oot tae that sheddie, I hate haein a dry lavvy. But it wis funny, yer face wis jist a picture faan ye realised...” An aff they’d go again.

“We’re gaan tae hae a hoose up the toon wi a proper bathroom an rinnin watter nae handy.” John haaled his sark ower his heid an stood bare naaket. He grinnt at his wife. “Nae mair rinnin oot tae the sheddie, moose or nae moose.” The dark eyes twinklet as Betty smilet back. “Iverythin ye could wint, ye’ll hae it. Nithin bit the best, I’m gaan tae see tae it. Ye’ll hae a bath an a proper bathroom. Bill Davidson the plumber telt me aboot pittin a shoo-er intae ane o the big hooses, ye’ll hae ane o those an aa. Aathin. Ae day. Jist ye wait an see, ma quine.”

(Reproduced by permission of the author)

Glossary:

Adjectives

Aa	all
Aawye	everywhere
Ae	one
Ain	own
Caal/caul	cold
Dry-fittet	dry-footed
Fleggit	frightened, afraid
Fool	dirty
Gowd	gold
Hate	hot
Roch	rough
Sic	such
Stracht	straight

Adverbs

Eence	once
Faan	when
Far	where
Fitt	what
Foo	how
Sine	since

Nouns

Breeks	trousers	Dutch - broek
Clout	cloth	Middle English - cloute Old French - clouté
Draaers	underpants	
Fleg	fright, scare	
Fusker	whisker	
Gansej	fisherman's jersey	English - guernsey
Goonie	night-gown	
Gowd	gold	
Lavvy	toilet	English - lavatory
Lug	ear	Swedish – lugga (forelock)
Meenit	minute	
Press	large (wall) cupboard	
Quine	a young (unmarried) woman	Old High German- quina, Old Norse - kvenna - woman
Rin	run	
Sarks	shirts	Old Norse - serkr
Skirl	scream	Norwegian – skryla (to wail, of a child); skrella (to shriek with laughter)
Skivvy	drudge, servant-maid, menial worker	

Prepositions

Ahint	behind	German – hinter (behind)
Anaith	beneath	
Aside	beside	

Compare

German possessive - mein;dein
German - kalt

English - foul

Middle English - hett

German - wann

Dutch - broek
Middle English - cloute
Old French - clouté

English - guernsey

English - lavatory
Swedish – lugga (forelock)

Old High German- quina,
Old Norse - kvenna - woman

Old Norse - serkr
Norwegian – skryla (to wail, of a child); skrella (to shriek with laughter)

German – hinter (behind)

Verbs

Cooryin	snuggling, nestling	
Cowket	retched, was nearly sick	Old Dutch- kolcken (to gulp) Dutch - kolken (to belch) German - kolken (to gulp) German dialect - kölken, kolksen, (to vomit) Danish – kulke (to gulp)
Eesed	used	
Greetin	crying	
Haalin /haaled	pulling/pulled	
Hanle	handle, deal with	German- handeln (to deal with) Handelstadt for the Hanseatic ports Dutch/German - kennen
Kent	known/knew	
Pintet	pointed	
Rin	run	
Speir	ask	Old Norse - spyrja
Waaket	walked	
Yarket	jerked, tugged or pushed	Middle English – yerk (to pull tight)
Idiomatic expressions		
Fit like	how are you / how things are going	
Haein a cairryon	behaving in an unseemly fashion, having a laugh, fun	
Hale waater	very heavy fall of rain, downpour	
Nae handy	really good/ in large amounts	
Lauched fit tae burst	laughed enough to split one's sides	German - lachen (to laugh)

Words listed have been divided into the parts of speech which they represent *in this text*.

This list could form the basis of a word bank for writing in Scots. Learners could add further examples of their own.

Any of these words could form the basis of the study for Outcome 2: Scots Words in the History and Development unit.

Scots Language Award

History and Development Unit

Outcome 2: Scots words and Linguistic Features

Linguistic Features from Scots Language Awards Support Notes

Use of initial <i>f</i> - rather than <i>wh</i> - in North Eastern Scots	Page 6 – “ Fit are ye gaun tae gie Betty for yer anniversary?”
Past tense of weak verbs formed by adding –it or –t.	Page 6 – “It wis the maist asket question o John in the past week or twa.”
Present participles formed by adding –in	Page 6 “Ye’ve got Aathin sine movin intae this place.”
Use of the fricative sounds [x] and [hw]	Page 6 - “Nae sae romantic faan it cams tae gaan oot tae the sheddie at nicht in yer goonie”
Negatives formed by adding –nae or –na to auxiliary verbs	“Betty hid cam tae dread the Saiturday aifternoon visits bit couldna think o a reason or excuse tae avoid them.”
Distinctive plurals	Page 6 – “Jist tae see fit like, ye ken, she wid say, wi her een flicherin awa aawye.”
Negatives formed with <i>no</i> in questions	Page 7 – “Aifter an aa, did they nae hanle them aa the time, ivery day?”
Scots demonstratives	Page 9 – “Bit I dinna think ony bogie mannie wid risk onything wi a skirl like thon! ”
Additional Linguistic Features	
Use of the diminutive	Page 6 – “The quine hid been real taen wi the idea, it wis a bittie different fae the designs she usually did in her line o wark...”
Making adverbs by adding –like	Page 6 – “An noo she’d teen tae drappin in sudden-like during the day.”

References given are to the first example of each feature within the text. Further examples of most/all of the above can be found in the story.

Learners could look for further examples within the text before finding examples of a feature’s use in other contexts.

Scots Language Award

Understanding and Communicating Unit

Outcome 1: Understanding, analysing and evaluating detailed texts in Scots

Questions to consider. Evidence from the text as well as detailed explanation of ideas should be given.

- Why do you think the Smith wrote this story?
- What do you think the audience for this story is?
- What do you think are the main ideas of the story?
- How effective do you find the use of Scots in the story?

Characterisation

What do we learn about Betty's character? What evidence is there for your conclusions?

What do we learn about John's character? Again, give evidence. How does his behaviour early in the marriage seem to contradict the other evidence? Can you account for this?

What character traits do Betty's and John's mothers share? How does their portrayal differ? Can you account for these similarities and differences?

Ellipsis

Smith makes effective use of ellipsis at several points in this story. How many different purposes can you find for her use of this technique?

Euphemism

Smith uses the euphemism "Possible" when talking about bed baths on page 7. How effective do you find this? Is there anything which adds to this technique?

Historical context

Why do you think Betty felt so shy?

Why did people have outside lavvies?

How did people manage without a bathroom?

What do you think it might be like at night in winter if you have to go to the toilet?

Narrative voice

There is a third person narrator in this story. Whose point of view is given in each section?

This story is unusual in that it uses Doric Scots for narration and dialogue. What effect does this have on your appreciation of the text?

Setting

How does the writer establish setting in time?

In place?

Structure

The story flashes back from the first section to the second. How much time do you think elapses between the events of the second section and the first? What clues are there?

How much time elapses between the second section and the third? What leads us to believe this section is closer in time to the first section? What leads us to believe it is actually closer in time to the second section?

Symbolism

Can we open these questions out a bit, like this?: 'Symbolism is where an object or something featured in a story is used to represent something else. What do you think the moose might symbolise in this story? What about the dry toilet in the shed?'

Scots Language Award

Understanding and Communicating Unit

Outcome 2: Create and produce detailed communication in Scots for a specific purpose

Some suggested activities in Scots:

- Write a letter to the writer, Grainne Smith, telling her what you like about the story and asking any questions you may have about its meaning or language.
- Write the sequel to the story, showing what happens when John presents the mouse to Betty.
- Write a play script for one of John's mother's visits to Betty's house, "jist tae see fit like."
- Write a personal account of a time when you planned in secret to give a gift to a loved one.
- Retell the second part of the story from John's point of view. How does he view his new married life and his new wife's efforts? This could be done in writing or orally, with notes to help you.
- Produce a review of the story, for radio or a magazine, encouraging others to read it. Think about who would enjoy the story and why. "Sell" the story, without spoilers.
- Using the information in the story, plan and deliver a talk on what life was like for fishermen's wives at the beginning of the twentieth century.
- With a partner, perform a role play. One of you should be Betty, the other a nursing friend who she meets in Banff six months after her wedding. You could reminisce about your previous life in the nursing home and update each other on what life has been like since. Perhaps the friend has married and moved to Banff? Think about how honest the friends will be about their lives.

Scottish Studies/Cross Curricular Links

Fishing

Where did the fishing boats catch the fish they brought back?

What kind of fish did they catch?

How would/could the fishing forecast affect the boats and their crews?

Nursing

What was it like to be a nurse in Scotland at the beginning of the twentieth century?

How has nursing changed over the intervening years?

Building

How were houses built before indoor toilets were commonly adapted for modern use?

When did this happen?

What other changes have taken place in house design and use in the last century?

Education Scotland

Denholm House
Almondvale Business Park
Almondvale Way
Livingston EH54 6GA

T +44 (0)141 282 5000

E enquiries@educationscotland.gov.uk

www.educationscotland.gov.uk