

A Chitterin Bite

By Anne Donovan

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

A Chitterin Bite by Anne Donovan

'A Chitterin Bite' is one of the specified Scottish texts for National Five English. The text is not reproduced in this resource for the Scots Language Award, but it is available in the collection *Hieroglyphics and Other Stories* by Anne Donovan (2001, ISBN: 9781841955193).

Glossary of Scots words in the text

Scots	English
Adjectives:	
ain	own
aulder	older
aw	all
cauld	cold
daurk	dark
droukit	drenched
gluthery	wet and puddly, unpleasant
hauf	half
mair	more
roon	round
wan	one
wee	small
wersh	sour, unpalatable, tasteless
yella	yellow

Nouns:

airm	arm
breist	breast
chist	chest
chummy seats	double seats in old-fashioned picture houses
cossie	swimming costume
daud	lump
hame	home
heids	heads
hen	term of endearment; darling
laddie	boy
pieces	sandwiches
pixie	wee hat, as worn by a pixie
side shed	side parting
sumpn	something
weans	children
windae	window

Pronouns:

Ah	I
masel	myself
mines	mine
wer	our
yer	your
yous	you two, you plural

Prepositions:

fae	from
tae	to

Adverbs:

aye	always
naw	no
wi	with

Verbs:

blaws	blows
cairryin	carrying
cannae	can't
cooried	cowered, crouched, bent for protection
couldnae	couldn't
dae	do
dreeps	drops
footers	fiddles
fund	found
gie	give
haudin	holding
haun	hand
haunded	handed
hasnae	hasn't
heid	go, head
huvtae	have to
leppin	leaping
pap	throw
plash	splash
plunk	plump, drop
saften	soften
sclaffs	shuts with a gust of air
sook	suck
staunin	standing
whaps	whips, hits, slaps

Idiomatic expressions:

fulla	full of
steidy	instead of

Scots Language Award

History and Development Unit

Outcome 2: Scots words and Linguistic Features

Linguistic Features from Scots Language Awards Support Notes

Negatives formed by adding –nae or –na to auxiliary verbs	Page 62 “Naw, disnae feel like anythin really.”
Negatives formed with <i>no</i> in questions	Page 65 “How no?”
Present participles formed by adding –in	Page 66 “Agnes and me go first, intae the daurk picture hoose, Agnes leadin the way tae the back row where the chummy seats are.”
Past tense of weak verbs formed by adding –it or –t.	Page 68 “...ah wandered roon the streets, gettin mair and mair droukit ...”
Distinctive use of definite article and possessive pronouns	Page 63 “put your pixie on efter the swimmin or you'll get a cauld in the heid.”

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. Many of these features can also be found in other stories by Ann Donovan.

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 Donovan wrote this story?*
- *Who 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 Mary Henderson's character? What evidence is there for your conclusions?

What do we learn about Agnes, Mary's childhood friend? Give evidence for your answers.

What do we learn about Matthew, the man Mary is having an affair with now that she is grown up? Again, give evidence.

What details can you find in the story that draw similarities between Agnes and Matthew? In particular, look for how their actions affect Mary.

Structure

The story is set in two different times, and told by two different Marys – Mary the child, and Mary the adult. Why has the author decided to write the story in this way? What evidence can you find to support your answers?

At the end of the two 'stories within the story' what are the similarities and differences between where we leave Mary the child and Mary the adult? Quote from the text to support your answers.

Historical Context

The story begins with two very different swimming pools. The Scotland Mary grew up in is not the same Scotland she lives in now. But there are similarities. The story contains many references to food and places to eat. What details can you find in the text that show Scotland and the two different lives Mary has lived? You could draw a grid to record your findings:

Scotland in the 60s and 70s	Scotland in the 21 st Century

Use these details to further develop your ideas on why Donovan chose to write this story, and what themes the story is discussing.

Narrative voice

The story has one narrator: Mary, but is told by Mary at two very different points in her life. How does Mary change between the two points in her life? Look for details that Mary the child describes, and look at details Mary the adult describes.

Mary and Agnes are Scots speakers. Matthew is not. Half of the story is told in Scots, half is not. What is the effect of splitting the story in two like this? Why did the author choose to do this? Give evidence to support your answers.

Symbolism

In the story details are juxtaposed so that the reader is thrown from one set of circumstances to another. To what extent does this idea also apply to Mary? Make a list of where the story details two opposites meeting. Read through the answers you've given to the questions above and start your list with what you have already discussed. For example:

- Scots language / English
- cold / warm
- clean / dirty
- nice smells / bad smells
- wet / dry
- hungry / well-fed

Use your list and the idea of opposites to develop theories on the meaning of the story:

What changes for Mary across her life, what stays the same?

Why has Donovan written the story in such a way?

Looking at the end of the story, consider where Mary will go next in her life; what might stay the same, what might change?

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, Anne Donovan, telling her what you like about the story and asking any questions you may have about its meaning or language. You may wish to write your letter in Scots language.
- Think about your own life. Are there two events you can use to write a story like 'A Chitterin Bite'?
- Donovan uses two moments of rejection to link her story into one. Can you write a personal account of different moments when you have been rejected?
- The story is also about independence and about being a strong person who can stand on their own. Can you write a personal account of when you have shown independence and been brave?
- Retell either Agnes's side of the story or Matthew's side of the story.
- How does Agnes feel about Mary, who is her best friend, but she needs to distance herself from so she can be with her boyfriend?
- What sort of life does Matthew live? He is married, but he likes Mary.
- Have you found yourself in a situation where you have had to resist or given in to temptation?
- 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.

Any of these tasks could be done in writing or orally, with notes to help you.

Scottish Studies/Cross Curricular Links

Swimming pools, cafes and the prosperity of modern Scotland

What did swimming pools in Scotland used to be like?
How have leisure centres changed to what they are now?
What about cafes like Bellini's and restaurants like Sarti's?
What does this tell you about how Scotland has changed in the past 20/30 years?

Italians in Scotland

It is no coincidence that both the restaurants in the story are Italian: this adds to the symmetry Donovan is developing in the story and reflects the high number of Italians who have settled in Scotland and opened businesses here.

Research and chart the history of Italian immigration to Scotland.
What famous Italian Scots do you know about? How did their families end up in this country?
What links are there between Scotland and Italy today?
You could start by reading:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/higherscottishhistory/migrationandempire/experienceofimmigrants/italian.asp>

You may also like to look into the background of pop star Paolo Nutini and how his Scottish/Italian background influences his music and lyrics, or research the ongoing story of Orkney's wartime Italian Chapel.

Use of Scots

Mary is a Scots speaker as a child and a Scottish Standard English speaker as an adult.

How typical is Mary of people in Scotland today?

You could conduct a survey of your friends and family to determine how many of them use Scots now and how many did when they were younger. Present your findings in an appropriate way.

Look at the 2011 census results, particularly the break-down by age. What do these suggest?

<http://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk/ods-analyser/jsf/tableView/tableView.xhtml>

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