

# BRINGING BURNS TAE LIFE

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Writing Drama in Scots based on Burns' poetry

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Robert Burns is a very dramatic writer. Although he wrote mostly poems and songs, his work is always populated by fascinating characters. Why not dramatise some of these characters from his poetry and bring them to life?

## Bringing Burns tae Life

### Step ONE

Choose at least two characters or more from a poem by Robert Burns whom you think would have something to say to each other, eg

- the conversation between the wooer and the object of his/her desire in **A red, red rose**.
- soldiers on the field of Bannockburn based on **Scots Wha Hae**.

Read some other poems by Burns and look for characters who could provide a strong basis for drama. (You'll find a list and some examples to help you on the following pages.)

### Step TWO

Discuss what you think the characters might say to each other. Make notes.

### Step THREE

Write a playscript in Scots based on the interaction between these characters.

## *Examples to get you started*

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Script based on **A red, red rose**

Male: Ah'll love ye, sae ah will, til aw the seas gang dry.

Female: Til aw the pubs gang dry mair like.

Male: Dinna be sae hard hertit. Ye ken ah love ye.

Female: Ah couldna care less. Awa and raffle yirsel.

Male: But ye're like that melodie that's sweetly played in tune.

Female: Tone deaf, pal. And whit dae you ken about music onyway?

Male: Ah'm intae Metallica.

Female: Says it aw that does. Are you gonnae lea in me alane or whit?

Male: Naw, ah'll walk a thoosand miles for ye.

Female: Weel, it's ainly fair tae tell ye ah widna walk the length o masel for you.

## Script based on **Scots Wha Hae**

First sodger: Ye seen hoo big their army is?

Second sodger: Tryin no to think about.

First sodger: There's about a hunner o us and thoosans o them. We'll get murdert.

Second sodger: We'll get murdert onyway. We hae tae fecht.

First sodger: No sure about that. Whit dae we get oot o it?

Second sodger: Wait tae ye hear whit King Robert's got tae say.

First sodger: Ye mean he's here? The Bruce? Big King Rab?

Second sodger: Aye, he's gonnae speak tae us in the noo.

First sodger: Weel, ah'll hing on tae ah hear him but if he sterts haiverin, ah'm aff.

Second sodger: Ye're aff onyway.

First sodger: Whit ye mean?

Second sodger: Aff yer heid. That's whit ah mean.

First sodger: Ya wee...

Second sodger: Wheesht yer greetin! Here's the King noo.

*[Enter King Robert the Bruce]*

Robert the Bruce: Scots wha hae wi Wallace bled...

Second sodger: Och, whit's he on about?

## List of possible scenarios or character pairs based on Burns' poetry

Kate and Nannie from **Tam o Shanter**

Tam and his horse from **Tam o Shanter**

A football/horse-race style commentary of the story of **Tam o Shanter**

Soutar Johnny and Tam in the pub from **Tam o Shanter**

The son or daughter or next door neighbours of Mr Anderson and his wife from **John Anderson, my jo John**

The congregation members in the kirk observing the lass in **Tae A Louse**

A group of soldiers on the field of Bannockburn based on **Scots Wha Hae**

A playscript based on a conversation between characters from **different Burns poems.**

**OR**

**a fictional conversation between Robert Burns himself and a real historical character eg**

Burns and Mary Queen o Scots

Burns and Napoleon

Burns and Mozart

Burns and James Joyce

Burns and Rab C. Nesbitt

Burns and Barack Obama

### **Suggested Reading**

Tam o Shanter's Big Night Oot, Itchy Coo

The Smoky Smirr o Rain, Itchy Coo

Buddha Da, Anne Donovan