

BURNS' VOICES

Writing a monologue based on a Burns poem

Scotland's national poet Robert Burns was a very skilful writer. He could look at a person or a creature and write down exactly what that character was thinking and feeling.

Burns' Voices

Step ONE

Choose a creature or a character from a poem by Robert Burns whom you think would be an interesting subject to write about, eg

the moose from **Tae A Moose**
Mrs Wastle from **Willie Wastle**

Meg, Tam's horse from **Tam o Shanter**
Burns' dentist from **Address to the Toothache**

Read some other poems by Burns and look for characters who would be good to write about. (You'll find a list and some examples to help you on the following pages.)

Step TWO

Discuss what you think the character might be feeling or thinking. Make notes.

Step THREE

Write a monologue in Scots from the point of view of this creature or character.

Examples to get you started

The Moose

Hi. Ah'm cawed Moose. Markie Moose. Ah wis in ma field yesterday efternoon. Ye'll never believe whit happened. Ah wis sittin in ma wee nest mindin ma ain business. Ah wis jist awa tae pit the kettle on and mak masel a cup o tea when CRASH! this muckle great daud o metal smashes through ma wee hoose o straw and twigs. Ah wis feart, ah can tell ye. Ah thocht the sky wis fawin in on ma heid.

But it wisnae the sky. Dae ye ken whit it wis? It wis a giant. Yin o thae muckle hackit crabbit glaikit cratur that are ayewis smashin up moose hooses and burnin doon widds and daein awfie things tae nature. Weel, it

wis yin o them. But this yin wisnae hackit or crabbit. He didnae even look aw that glaikit. This muckle big giant wis different frae aw the rest...

Mrs Wastle

Folk are aye tellin ma husband that he has an ugly wife. Wid ye credit that? Ah mean, whit a cheek. They caw me hackit. Weel, ah'm Mrs Euphemia Wastle and ah'm here tae tell you that if ah'm hackit, then ma husband is a hunner times worse.

Dae ye want tae hear about his soacks? Weel, he wears the same pair for ten weeks thegither and then when he taks them aff, they staun up on their ain. Ah'm sure they could walk about the room and run awa by theirsels. Ah ken ah want tae.

And Willie (that's whit he's cawed) Willie Wastle is the grippiest maist miserly man on the planet. He'll no easily pairt wi a penny and greets when he has tae. It's been twinty lang year since that auld eejit bocht me...

List of possible Burns' characters

Nannie, the witch in **Tam o Shanter**

The Lass in the kirk or the Louse frae **Tae a Louse**

The Haggis or someone about to eat a haggis in **Address tae a Haggis**

Hughoc, Mailie the sheep's shepherd, frae **The Death and Dying Words o Poor Mailie**

A Lass or Lad who doesn't want to get out of bed frae **Up in the Mornin's No for Me**

Someone walking across or near by the two bridges talking to each other in the poem **The Twa Brigs**

One of the owners of the two dogs in **The Twa Dugs**

A bystander at the corner of the town observing **The Deil's Awa Wi The Exciseman**

Some Tips for Writing in Scots

1. Think about the Scots words for parts of the body, clothes, birds and animals, landscape and the weather. Write them down:

heid, lug, oxter, jaiket, bunnet, breeks, craw, houlet, dug, brae, glen, dreich

2. Use these and other Scots words to write a short description of yourself, a friend, a family member or a famous person.

Ah'm cawed Craig. Ah hae broon hair. Ah bide on a brae. There's aye craws ootside ma windae...

3. Don't put apostrophes all over the place (except when you really have to). Use greetin, mingin, daein, lowpin, bletherin, birlin, o, wi, oor, flooer, ower, etc

4. Once you've had a practice at writing in Scots, write a monologue from the point of view of a character from or based on a Burns' poem.