

## **SCOTS HOOSE WRITING TIPS**

### **WRITING A SCOTS MONOLOGUE**

People in Scotland speak Scots everyday. Maybe you're one of them. Maybe you speak Scots with your family. Or perhaps there are folk in the community you live in who come out with Scots words and phrases all the time.

But what's that got to do with writing monologues in Scots?

Well, everything.

The best writers of monologues (and drama too) are those writers who keep their lugs well and truly open. Listening to how real people speak and the way in which they express how they're feeling can make you a better writer of monologues (and a better writer in general).

A monologue is one person talking.

The person can be of any age and they can be talking about absolutely anything. They can be talking to you, to a friend, to a pet, to an audience or to themselves.

As that person talks, we might learn some things about them. We might find out their name, where they live and other personal details. But it is not compulsory for the person in a monologue to state their name, address and postcode. We might not find out who they are until the end. Or perhaps their identity is kept secret and we are left guessing.

What we really want to learn from a monologue is how the person feels.

Do they feel good, bad, happy, worried, confident, excited, nervous, stressed, terrified?

And what is making them feel that way? What has happened or is happening or is about to happen to them?

The person might have just been given incredibly good news or perhaps someone is giving them a really hard time. They could be jumping for joy; they could be falling off a cliff. They are possibly at the centre of the action or a witness to an event.

Your job is to tell a story through the voice of your character.

## **Before you start writing...**

Before you start writing your monologue, there are a few things you can do to prepare.

Make some notes about your character. You're going to put words in a person's mouth. Who is that person? You don't have to include all these notes in the monologue. But making notes can give you a better picture of your character.

AGE? MALE/FEMALE? JOB? DO THEY HAVE A FAMILY? BEST FRIENDS? ENEMIES?

HOW ARE THEY FEELING? WHY?  
DO THEY HAVE A PROBLEM? WHAT IS IT?

## **Writing in the character's voice...**

A monologue is about imagining a character - deciding who they are - and then trying to fit the right voice to that character.

The voice is all important. It is the only tool a writer has for a monologue. It can be a very powerful tool.

Try writing two or three practice monologues. Use only one emotion. Happy. Sad. Frightened.

"Ah wis jumpin for joy. Ah couldnae believe ma luck. Tickets for Kylie at the Hydro. Ma Auntie Tessa jist gied them tae me. It wisnae even ma birthday..."

"Ah couldnae stap greetin. Ah gret aw day, tears streamin doon. He wis ma best pal in the haill world and noo ah'd never ever see him again..."

"Whit wis that? Where's that noise comin fae? Ah dinnae ken if ah locked the back door. There it's again! An awfie quiet fitstep, like somebody doon on the landin testin the stairs, seein which wans creak. Ah want tae jam that table ahint ma bedroom but ah'm too feart tae move..."

Once you've written a few simpler monologues, you'll be able to try a monologue where the speaker's mood changes.

Writing a monologue is like looking at the world through someone else's eyes. It's also a little bit like being an actor.

Once you written your monologue, read it out loud to yourself. You'll hear instantly what works and what you need to change. Record yourself reading your monologue and play it back. Film yourself or a friend reading it and watch the film

The secret of a great monologue is to make the voice of your fictional character so real and believable that your character comes to life.

Janet Paisley's famous *Sharleen, Ah'm Shy* is a great example of a monologue in Scots.

### Sharleen, Ah'm Shy by Janey Paisley

Ah'm shy. Aye, ah am. Canny look naebody in the eye.  
Ah've seen me go in a shoap an jist hoap naebody wid talk tae me.  
Things that happen, likesae – yer oot fur a walk  
and some bloke whits never even spoke afore goes by  
an he's given ye the eye. See me, ah jist want tae die...

For the full poem, go to -

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/k/kistscotslanguag e/texts/sharleenahmshy/index.asp>

Another example of a dramatic monologue is *Whit Time's It About?* which was first performed by Callum Garriock as King James VI at the launch of Scots Hoose on 10th September 2014 at the Netherbow Theatre, Edinburgh.

King James the Sixth of Scotland: Callum Garriock

Narrator: Cameron Fleming

Mary, Queen of Scots: Manon Maurage

Two English soldiers: Daniel Whitney and Patric Kasprzyk

### **Whit time's it about?**

*King James the Sixth downstage, Mary Queen of Scots upstage seated at dressing table, the two soldiers wait in sight at side of stage.*

**Narrator:** It is Tuesday the Eichth o February in the Year o Oor Lord, Fifteen Hunner and Eichty Seeven.

Mary Queen o Scots has been a prisoner o the English Queen Elizabeth the First for seeventeen year.

Mary is in Fotheringay Castle awaiting execution.

Her son, King James the Sixth o Scotland, is in Edinburgh waitin for news.

That's him there.

**James:**

*King James IV of Scotland is 20 years old.*

*Impatient, anxious, guilty, defensive, crabbit, sad.*

Whit time's it about? Does naebody hae the time on them? Whit's the time?

*King James addresses the audience.* Dae you ken the time? Whit? Dae you ken how tae tell the time?

It's happenin soon. I ken it. Eichth o February - that's the day. On the oor o ten o'clock. That's about noo. She wrote in the letter.

*(reads letter)*

'Fae the Queen o England tae the King o Scotland, hullo. It has come tae oor attention that your mither has become a right pain in the royal bahookie. Even though I locked her up in one o ma castles and threw awaw the key, your mither continues tae gie me jip. The pair wummin still thinks she can be Queenie. She wants ma joab and that is niver gonnae happen. So the wee bizzum has started plottin against me. Weel, we cannae hae that, can we?

I ken she's your mither and everythin but I'm gonnae chop her heid aff.

Yours wi love and kisses,

Liz

I'm paraphrasin a wee bit but that's whit it said. Queen Elizabeth o England is gonnae kill ma mammy. I'm here in Edinburgh (*points to audience*) wi you lot. Ma mither's in Fotheringay Castle in England. In a wee while, twaw muckle big English sodgers are gonnae come in and tak ma mammy awaw. And I'm lettin it happen.

Mibbe Queen Elizabeth will change her mind. Mibbe she'll let Mary aff wi it. Mibbe she'll no execute her efter aw. Mibbe mammy will come hame and we'll hae a big pairty for her and a lunch-oot at Marks and Spencers Cafe and a picnic on Arthur's Seat...

But here, that wouldnae be very good for me. Ye see Elizabeth o England has nae hair...I mean...she has nae *heir*...tae the throne, ken. She has nae bairns tae tak ower when she's deid. There's only twa people next in line...ma mammy and (*points to himself*) moi!

Oh, I wouldnae mind being King o England. I wouldnae mind that joab, I'm tellin ye. Scotland's awright but ken, it's a bit o a dump. Draughty palaces, mingin food, mingin weather, mingin peasants

*(looks at audience and shudders)* But England? England is pure minted. Trade and commerce wi half the planet. Ships comin in fu o gold. And for the King, comfy palaces, a place in the sun, aw the scran ye can eat, servants, jewels, hunners and hunners and hunners o money!

But if Elizabeth o England backs doon and Mary doesnae get her heid chopped aff, ma mammy will be Queen o England afore me....

But Elizabeth willnae change her mind. No noo. She hates Mary too much. Naebody messes wi Queen Lizzie. Mary ma mither will die the day.

But I'm a king. King o Scotland. Ma mither is in prison in England. No France or Spain but England. Oor enemy, oor auldest enemy is about tae execute a Scottish queen, Mary Queen o Scots, ma mum!

*The two English soldiers come from side of stage. Mary stands. The soldiers escort Mary off stage.*

And whit am I daein aboot it? Nuthin. They're gonnae tak her awa, intae a big hall in front o hunners o strangers and then they're gonnae cut her heid aff. And where am I? Hunners o miles awaw in Edinburgh. Am I gonnae help her? Am I gonnae lift a fingir tae help ma mither? Nut, I'm gonnae wash ma hands o her. I'm gonnae dae nuthin.

Whit time is it? I wonder whit time it is. Whit time's it aboot?