

SCOTS HOOSE WRITING TIPS

WRITING A SCOTS STORY

Read this extract from Scots writer Anne Donovan's short story 'Hieroglyphics'.

"Ah mind they were dancin and birlin roond like big black spiders. Ah couldnae keep a haunle on them fur every time ah thoat ah'd captured them, tied them thegither in some kindy order they jist kep on escapin.

Just learn the rules pet. Just learn them off by heart.

But they didnae follow oany rules that ah could make sense of. M -A -R -Y. That's ma name. Merry. But that wus spelt different fae merry christmas that you wrote in the cards you made oot a folded up bits a cardboard an yon glittery stuff that comes in thae wee tubes. You pit the glue on the card and shake the glitter and it's supposed tae stick in a nice wee design. It wisnae ma fault, ah didnae mean tae drap the whole load ae it on the flerr. But how come flerr wisnae spelt the same as merry and sterr wis different again and ma heid wis nippin wi coff an laff and though and bow, meanin a bit aff a tree. Ah thoat it wis Miss Mackay that wis aff her tree, right enough.

A pride of lions

A gaggle of geese

A flock of sheep

A plague of locusts

We hud tae learn aw they collective nouns aff by hert, chantin roond the class every afternoon when we came back in fae wur dinner, sittin wi oor erms foldit lookin oot the high windaes at the grey bloacks a flats and the grey streets, and sometimes the sky wisnae grey but maistly it wis."

Anne Donovan is an award-winning writer. Her short story 'Hieroglyphics' won the Macallan/Scotland on Sunday prize.

Read the extract again.

What do you learn about Mary?

What do you think Mary is worrying about?

What does she think of her teacher, Miss Mackay? Why?

Look at the Scots words Mary uses. Do you think she sounds like a real person?

What makes Anne Donovan such a good writer is her ability to bring her characters to life. She does this by writing about real-life problems and concerns. And she does it by using Scots which is easy to read and is like the way people actually speak.

Writing a story in Scots

Once you have an idea for a story, think about who your main character is going to be. This is an important decision because what happens in the story is going to be about them or told through their eyes.

Think about your main character's voice. What kind of Scots words would they say? Make a list before you start. (One of these Scots words may also give you a title for your story.)

One of the hardest things about writing your first story in Scots is to keep writing in Scots until the end. Many first-time Scots writers start off brilliantly in Scots but after a few paragraphs go back to writing in English.

A good Scots story is one which is consistently in Scots all the way through.

To stock up on Scots words to help you with your Scots stories, go to the Scots Hoose LEARN pages.

And to read more short stories in Scots, go to the Scots Hoose READ pages.