

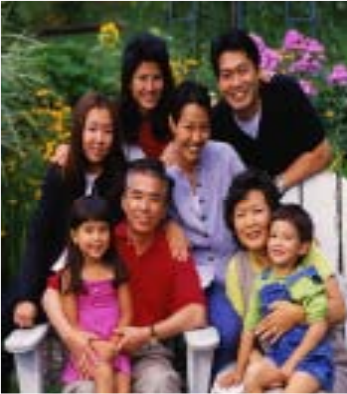
# A Wheen O Wurds



**AN ULSTER-SCOTS POETRY AND  
SHORT STORY RESOURCE FOR  
KEY STAGES 3 & 4**

**PART 2**

# Poetry About childhood and Families



Here we can look at two poems written by Ulstermen Seamus Heaney and James Fenton. These two men come from different traditions within Northern Ireland but as they write of their memories of childhood in their poetry you can see that they share experiences of life.



## Meet the Poets



**SEAMUS HEANEY** was born in Derry on 13 April 1939. He was brought up on the family farm at Mossbawn.

He was educated at Anahorish, St Columbs and Queen's University. He trained as a teacher and went on to work at both Harvard and Oxford Universities.

In 1995 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.



**JAMES FENTON** was born in 1931 and grew up in the townlands of Drumadarragh and Ballinaloob in County Antrim.

He was educated at Stranmillis College and Queen's University and became a teacher and then a school principal.

He wrote 'The Hamely Tongue' which is a collection of Ulster-Scots words and this poem comes from his first poetry collection 'Thonner and Thon'.

He lives now in Glengormley on the outskirts of Belfast.

# Poetry About childhood

In these two poems Heaney and Fenton are writing of their childhood memories. They were both brought up in farming communities and so they are remembering episodes from their childhood to do with adults working on the land.

## Digging

By Seamus Heaney



Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window a clean rasping sound  
When the spade sinks into gravelly  
ground:  
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the  
flowerbeds  
Bends low, comes up twenty years away  
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills  
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the  
shaft  
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.  
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright  
edge deep  
To scatter new potatoes that we picked  
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade,  
Just like his old man.

My grandfather could cut more turf in a  
day  
Than any other man on Toner's bog.  
Once I carried him milk in a bottle  
Corked sloppily with paper. He  
straightened up  
To drink it, then fell to right away  
Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods  
Over his shoulder, digging down and  
down  
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the  
squelch and slap  
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge  
Through living roots  
Awaken in my head.  
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb  
The squat pen rests.  
I'll dig with it.



# Poetry About childhood

## Dinnis

By James Fenton

A gaen farder, thon day, nor iver, adgin canny  
Ower the stick brig, booin nerra  
Ower the slow blak watter o the sheugh, an awa  
Ower the sookin fog an gruppin ling,  
The boag streechin oot aheid, far,  
An far, waitin, an thonner  
He wuz, stretchtin hissel in the bink-bottom, blak  
Han lifted, the gless o  
The square bottle glancin lake fire,  
The heid bak, thrapple thrabbin wae  
The lood glug o his swally, tae  
He stapped, waited, rifted an  
Pushed it bak doon inty the blak  
Glar.

Pechin, sweerin, he hilshed hissel up,  
Plartin doon, heavy, on the binkheid, the face  
Big, roon, bleezin rid an  
Rinnin wat.  
'Davy Leary his a machine  
Dis this'  
(*His an dis, naw haes an daes: an*  
Ower his shooter,  
Thon far, dark shape on Tullaghans).

A lucked roon, luckin  
Bak, an sa the ithers, awa  
Thonner, booed  
Ower the fittin, an,  
Niver missed,  
Stud wee in the wileness o the boag  
an  
The wile, hantin reek  
O whuskey.



## AN OLD NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT

Did ye hear about oor Wullie?  
He was up in Bilfast last week.  
An' his shedda wus tuck wae a spy gless,  
A declare ye wud think it cud speak.

Ye niver saw onbything like it.  
Jeest yesterday—what dae ye think? -  
His sweetheart cum in fur tae see it  
An' she sade that his e'ee gee'd a wink.

Noo. Wullie's a guid-luckin' fella -  
He's jest a year oot o' his teens -  
An' the picture wus tuck up in High Street,  
Jeest next daur tae Forster Green's.

Roon the daur there's a hale lot o' picturs  
Haes a nice wunnin' wie o' his ain,  
He shows ye sae much o' his kindness  
Till yer no very share whut yer daen'.

There's naithin sae nice is a pictur,  
Bit some ir a perfect disgrace;  
If ye want tae mak share that it's like ye,  
Then Mr MCBRIDE'S is the place.



**ON THIS PAGE AND THE NEXT YOU WILL FIND POEMS ABOUT THE DEATH OF A YOUNG BOY.**

## **Mid-Term Break**

I sat all morning in the college sick bay  
Counting bells knelling classes to a close.  
At two o'clock our neighbours drove me home.

In the porch I met my father crying -  
He had always taken funerals in his stride -  
And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram  
When I came in, and I was embarrassed  
By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were 'sorry for my trouble'.  
Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,  
Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.  
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived  
With the corpse, stanced and bandaged by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops  
And candle soothed the bedside; I saw him  
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,  
He lay in the four-foot box as in his cot.  
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.

A four-foot box, a foot for every year.



## Fur David, Weechil o love

No muckle tae show efter five shoart yeir –  
 A smuith timmer box withoot onie feelin ava  
 No fit tae chirk oor tears, oor pain.  
 It sits, lake ye, frae ither.  
 A void atween oorsel an ye  
 An yet it bides here wi us  
 Jaist as ye bide an aa, Flure-Chil.

Bricht Love-Chil, growin iverie day  
 The man inower the wean appearing tae oor een  
 New thrashels aheid  
 Iverie new day a adventure fur ye  
 An, in openness, ye let us share  
 Yer freshness, yer excitement  
 Tae see, lake ye, life lie afore ye –  
 A untouched page.

An noo, weefla, ye'll niver scribe upon thon page  
 The teemin thochts, the stumblin tongue  
 The speeder sprachlin on thon page haes gaen  
 An wi him gaes oor love  
 Ye'll niver be the man yer mither dreamed  
 Nor suffer nor know pain nor lauch agane.

Sonsie faa ye, David.

L M Stirling





# Alang Tha Shore

In this poem, Philip Robinson is remembering when he was younger. He lived by the coast and he reminisces about how he and his friends spent their time.

How is their experience different to yours?

A hae mind when we wur weans,  
A guid nicht's spoart wus cloddin  
stanes.  
Oor playgrun wus alang tha shore,  
Wat roaks tae clim an sprachle owre.

Tha batthrie waa, whun tides wur in,  
Oor changing place afore we swum.  
Tha roaks an saun whun tides wur oot,  
Wae wreck an willicks skail'd about.

We'd fish fur blockan mang tha wreck,  
Or coup a boulder on its bak.  
Thon sudden licht gart hoochin stairt,  
Or whiles a crubbin's claas wud pairt.

But then we growed intae oor teens,  
Wae chasin hizzies mair tha scene.  
We left tha shore tae hunt inlann,  
Roon Toon-Haw daunce an chippie  
van.

An sae tae ast yin oot a date,  
In pictur-hoose, boys! Bak-raa sate!  
Sich tangl't bakes lake limpets  
clamp't,  
Til lumberin twa's tha torchie damp't.



An then afore we knowed tha score,  
Gaun steadie tuk iz far frae shore;  
Tha mair we'd whiles waak han-in-han  
Alang some ither stretch o lan.

It's jist in later years, A doot,  
Whun oul an daen, an niver oot,  
Tha thocht o willick-hoakin weans  
Wull tak me tae tha shore mae lane.

An even whun A'm rannerin,  
Jist in ma heid gaun dannerin  
Among tha roaks whaur we wud hide,  
A'll watch tha last, laich even-tide.



*Picking or gathering potatoes was a major event in the countryside. Here Charlie Gillen reflects on his experiences as a boy.*

Did ye gether tae a spinner,  
Whun the deys wus shoart an coul?  
Did the digger man keep kempin',  
Tae ye cur'st his verra sowl?

Did ye iver poo the prata taps,  
An pile them in the feil',  
An burn them a' geen quattin time,  
Whun oot the moon did steal?

Did ye iver in the ashes  
Roast a prata ye had dug?  
Did ye ate it lake a banquet?  
Wur ye blak fae ear tae lug?

Did ye iver in the moonlicht  
Bing up a prata pit,  
Lake I dane fifty year ago -  
An heth I min' it yit?

Did ye iver watch yer Fether  
Wae rashes thatch the pit,  
Wae yer bak turn't tae the greeshagh,  
O' the fire ye had lit?

If ye niver sa' or dane these things,  
Them I'm feart ye miss't a lot,  
Ach! I know its haes a bearin'  
On the aches an pains I've got.

But the fermer then, wae whut he had,  
He wrocht fae dey tae dey,  
An him an nature, dooble yok't,  
Gane on their simple way.

They sae I'm oul an dotin',  
An in the past I'm loast,  
But tae the men o' yesteryear  
I'd lake tae drink a toast.

Here's tae the men whut know't the lan,  
The saysons an the craps,  
For half the youbg yins o' the dey  
Thinks prates gruw in shaps.

Charlie Gillen



There's a place they call Dunmullan  
 Where my own folk used to be  
 There's a farm down in Dunmullan  
 That was Paradise to me;  
 For the Lord Who set His heaven  
 In the clouds that hide His throne,  
 It was He that made Dunmullan  
 In the County of Tyrone.

*The Lord He made the Sperrin,  
 The heather hills of Sperrin,  
 The Lord He wrought in Sperrin  
 Till He tired of hearth and stone;  
 So then He came to Gortin,  
 Came up the road from Gortin,  
 And through the Gap of Gortin,  
 To Dunmullan in Tyrone.*

It was the He made Dunmullan  
 In a pleasant fold of ground,  
 Oh! The hills—He made them homely,  
 And He set them all around;  
 It was then He made a valley  
 Where the hazels bloom in May,  
 And He filled it with the music  
 Of the burn below the brae.

Then He made for it a people,  
 But for me He kept the best,  
 Kin of mine who sought His pleasure,  
 Waiting for His promised rest.  
 So their sundown had no sadness,  
 And no other place I've known  
 Held so many hearts as merry  
 As Dunmullan in Tyrone.

*A cart in harvest weather  
 And three of us together,  
 We rode upon the tether  
 Where the yellow corn was mown:  
 Rebuke—'twas idle dreaming,  
 And threats were only seeming,  
 For a pair of old folk, beaming,  
 Absolved us in Tyrone.*

When the fields were white at  
 Christmas  
 And the sun forsook the sky,  
 We went padding to Dunmullan  
 By the Low Road or the High:  
 There's a burn across the Hihg Road,  
 Back to see it I must go  
 Some December when it bubbles  
 Down between its banks of snow.

On the Low Road fields of Farrest  
 Border still the honeyed moor;  
 Farrest winds are heather-scented,  
 Unforgotten their allure.  
 Ah! But sweetly—soft and sweetly,  
 Calling back the years out-grown  
 Blow the winds across Binyoran  
 At Dunmullan in Tyrone.

*The sun has sunk behind me,  
 The darkness comes to find me  
 In search of spells that bind me  
 With a charm that's deeper grown;  
 I see the lights of Sperrin,  
 The lonely lights of Sperrin,  
 They're all I see of Sperrin  
 From that hill-top in Tyrone.*





Sure I know that just a stranger  
Sees no beauty there at all;  
Sure I know it and forgive him  
That his rapture is but small:  
For the song my heart is singing  
Strangers never heard it sung,  
And the secret of Dunmullan,  
You must find it when you're young.

If you want to see Dunmullan,  
Stranger, lift your book of days,  
Somewhere near its clean beginning  
There's a picture surely stays -  
Home and kin, a dear old roof-tree,  
Stream and field and mountain lone,  
Can't you see it? It's Dunmullan  
As I see it in Tyrone.

*So set the pages spinning,  
And, past the days of sinning,  
If you turn to the beginning  
And your heart is not of stone,  
The vision—you will see it,  
Be thankful you can see it,  
The same as I can see it,*

William Forbes Marshall was born in 1888 at Drumragh, Omagh. He went to school in Sixmilecross and then the Royal School, Dungannon before attending Queen's College, Galway and then the Presbyterian College, Belfast, where he trained as a minister. In 1916, he was appointed minister in Aughnacloy and in 1928 he moved to the Presbyterian Church in Castlerock, County Londonderry.

Marshall wrote poetry, a novel entitled "Planted By A River", a book about emigration from Ulster to America called "Ulster Sails West" and even an Ulster translation of Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" which was broadcast on BBC radio. His most famous poem is probably "Me An' Me Da".

Marshall is buried at Tullyneil, Co. Tyrone

# A Bricht February Mournin

We cairryt her  
Doon tha brae by tha fiel whaur we kepp tha bees  
Dizens o fowk ahin us forbye,  
An tears wallin up in ma een.  
Past tha enn o Skelly's road an by Sam Begg's loanen  
Tha wan wus coul on Ballyfrench  
Thon bricht February mournin  
A when o fiels an a dizen o hens  
She spent her days leukin efter  
It gaen her hauns something tae dae  
Amang tha tears and tha lauchter  
A hae mymn o tha day she wus bakin  
Her shortbread wus burnt  
A filled ma pokits  
Wi black shortbread  
Feart  
Ma granny nicht greet  
We taen her tae Ballyhalbert  
An laid her alongside her man  
Whaur he wus waitin foarty echt yair  
Leukin ower tha Sheugh tae Scotlann  
A miss her  
Whiles  
A quair wee wummin she wus  
But A'll see her yin day  
An ma granda forbye  
A'll tell her o aa tha fuss  
She gaien us whun she left,  
As intil tha grun she wus lowerin  
An we happed her ower wi floors an tears  
Yin bricht February  
Mournin.



Mark Thompson



# Niver Loass Hairt

Mae fether dee't whun I wus ten, I dinnae unnerstan',  
It wus young tae be a wain nae mair, an hard tae be a man  
I dinnae know hoo much I loast, I mebbae dinnae still,  
But life for me for mony years, gane steady doon the hill.

Fae mad tae sane a wheen o' years a totter't on the brink,  
At fifteen years I got a job an' loast maesel tae drink,  
Aw! Naw nae social drunker me, I hid maesel away  
An in the courage drink afford't I got by day by day.



Sae I drunk tae dull mae senses, an I drunk tae bring me roon,  
An' whut I coodnae see aff coorse, it wus maesael that I lut doon,  
An whuniver I wus drunk eneuch, I cud nether see nor feel  
An whun iver I wus sober, the wurl wus hard an real.

I feel't the hale thing closing' in I had loast anither fight  
My wurl wus lake a tunnel; but at the en' there wus nae light,  
Then yin nicht as I lay stupid drunk, bereft o' even hope,  
Naw a threed tae cling tae as al'roon I grope't.

Some'dy caught mae slidin' as I near't the gates o' hell,  
I think it wus mae fether, but I coodnae really tell,  
That vision shuk mae, waken't me an' an tuk me by the han,  
"Come on an mak mae proud o' ye, come on an be a man".

Fae that tae this I tried mae best, aye, mony times I slip't,  
But that erm that lead mae bak tae life, wud catch mae whun I tripp't,  
An' I someway know when I go wrang, he'll be there tae put mae richt  
An if I'm in the tunnel noo, at the en' o't is a licht.

Sae I write mae rhymes o' ouler times, whun he left mae here at ten,  
An whiles I think mae fether is steerin' thon oul pen,  
An whether I mak ye lach or greet, I want tae mak ye think,  
That some'dy oot there loves ye, nae odds hoo low ye sink.

Charlie Gillen

Here are three poems on the theme of love. The first is by a twentieth century poet , Alec McAllister, who wrote in Ulster-Scots; the second is one of the Scottish poet, Robert Burns' best known poems and the third is by the Anglo-Irish poet, William Butler Yeats.



Were ye ever in love? Well it's funny to feel,  
 You are no to say bad, and you're no very weel;  
 Ye hae wild funny feelins up roon by your chest,  
 An your heid be's all wansered, like turkeys in mist.  
 If you neber were you neednae care  
 For I was yince an I want nae mair.

Alec McAllister

O, my luv'e's like a red, red rose,  
 That's newly sprung in June.  
 O, my luv'e's like the melodie,  
 That's sweetly play'd in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonie lass,  
 So deep in luv'e am I,  
 And I will luv'e thee still, my Dear,  
 Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my Dear,  
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun!  
 O I will luv'e thee still, my Dear,  
 While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only Luv'e,  
 And fare thee weel a while!  
 And I will come again, my Luv'e,  
 Tho' it were ten thousand mile!

Robert Burns

He wishes for the cloths of heaven

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
 Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
 The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
 Of night and light and the half light,  
 I would spread the cloths under your  
 feet:  
 But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
 I have spread my dreams under your  
 feet;  
 Tread softly because you tread on my  
 dreams.

W B Yeats



# I Love My Love In Secret



My Sandy gied to me a ring,  
Was a' beset wi' diamonds fine;  
But I gied him a far better thing,  
I gied my heart in pledge o' his ring.

## CHORUS

*My Sandy, O, my Sandy O,  
My bonie, bonie Sandy, O;  
Tho' the love that I owe  
To thee I dare na show,  
Yet I love my love in secret, my Sandy O.*

My Sandy brak a piece o' gowd,  
While down his cheeks the saut tears row'd;  
He took a hauf, and gied it to me,  
And I'll keep it till the hour I die.

## CHORUS

*My Sandy, O, my Sandy O,  
My bonie, bonie Sandy, O;  
Tho' the love that I owe  
To thee I dare na show,  
Yet I love my love in secret, my Sandy O.*

Robert Burns

# The Lass of the Misty Burn



This is a poem recalling memories of a young woman whom the poet loved dearly.

It is written from the point of view of a older man whose love has now died and he recalling the happy times he spent by the river courting his lover.

The river is the Misty Burn so he refersto her as The Lass of the Misty Burn.

## ABOUT THE POET

Harry T. Browne lived from 1887-1973. He was born in England but came to live and work in Larne as a young man. He worked as a freelance journalist using the pen name 'John o' the North'. He wrote regularly for the Larne Times and also had a weekly column in the Belfast Telegraph.

You can find a plaque on the wall of Larne Town Hall commemorating Browne's life and writing.

Is it me that knows Glenwherry?  
Aye, every twist and turn;  
For there I courted when I was young,  
The lass of the Misty Burn.

Her eyes were as blue as the shining lint,  
Her step was light and free;  
And of all the lads that sought her  
smiles,  
She kept her heart for me.

Is it me that knows Glenwherry?  
Aye, every bush on the brae;  
For there we'd wander by stream and  
stone,  
The lee lang summer's day.

The flowers that bloomed in the  
laneways,  
They blossomed for her and me;  
O, merry the world when the heart is  
young,  
And the blackbird sings in the tree.

Is it me that knows Glenwherry?  
Aye, every blade o' grass;  
That decks the grave on Collin side.  
Where sleeps my ane true lass.

As the bird wings home to its mate,  
As the river runs to the sea;  
So I'll meet her again in God's good  
time,  
In the place where she waits for me.

Harry T. Browne



## Inconstancy In Love

Let not Woman e'er complain  
Of inconstancy in love;  
Let not woman e'er complain  
Fickle Man is apt to rove:  
Look abroad thro' Nature's range,  
Nature's mighty Law is change,  
Ladies, would it not seem strange  
Man should then a monster prove!

Mark the winds, and mark the skies,  
Ocean's ebb, and ocean's flow,  
Sun and moon but set to rise,  
Round and round the seasons go.  
Why then ask of silly Man  
To oppose great Nature's plan?  
We'll be constant while we can -  
You can be no more, you know.

Robert Burns



## Sonnet 116

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O no! It is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never  
shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his  
height be  
taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and  
cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come:  
Love alters not with his brief hours and  
weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

William Shakespeare

# A Song On Marriage

The day is come, my bonny bride,  
That ye're my ain, and a' that,  
Till death, we maun thegither bide:  
They say, it is the law that,  
The law that, the law that -  
It is an unco law that,  
The knot that tyes for life, it is  
A knot that winna draw, that.

Weel, since it's sae, we'll n'er  
complain,  
Nor ban our stars, an' a' that,  
When love and friendship form the  
chain,  
It never gies a ga' that,  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Our kin'red sauls, an' a' that,  
Are baith now souther'd up in ane -  
It's love without a flaw, that.

There are o' ilka ae degree,  
Would curse our state, an' a' that,  
Wha wadna toil to plant the tree,  
Would pou the fruit for a; that,  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
They're like the Cat, an' a' that,  
"That wadna wat her fit" for fish,  
But yet wad eat, for a' that.

They'll swear wi' love, they're like to  
dee,  
But wait a wee, for a' that;  
Gie them their will, they'll may be see,  
They're no' as ill as a' that,  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
They'll deel, an damn, an' a' that,  
To ruin some poor orphan thing  
That's no' awar o' a' that.

They'll grunt, an' grane, an' greet, an'  
glower,  
An' plot, an' scheme, a' a' that,  
Their chastity to riot owre,  
Then fare ye weel, for a' that,  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
It's lang owre late, for a' that,  
To speak about a wadin' day,  
Guide faith, they'll keep awa' that.

But let them keek their heart within,  
When life's weel worn, an' a' that  
An' there they'll find a sting behin,  
Will wound their peace for a' that,  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Tho' they repent, an' a' that,  
Wi' bitter tears, an' sorry hearts,  
It winna sair for a' that.



# A Song On Marriage

But we, each ither's hearts shall keep  
Frae care, an' woe, an' a' that -  
Tho' some may think we're ty'd like  
sheep,  
They're far mista'en, for a' that,  
For a' that, an' a' that;  
We're no' sae bun' as a' that:  
The ban's are sweet—when love's  
the law  
It's no' like ban's ava, that.

We'll steal thro' life, unknown to time,  
In innocence, an' a' that,  
An' if we live without a crime,  
'Twill mak' us dee right braw, that,  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Prepar'd for sic aboon the life -  
The realms of bliss, they ca' that.

Sud death, each ither part us frae,  
There's comfort here an' a' that;  
Full on the verge of perfect day,  
We'll meet again, for a' that,  
For a' that, an' a' that; -  
If ye maun flit, an' a' that,  
Ye Mammonites, an' quat your cash,  
'Twill drive your wits awa, that.

Hugh Porter  
The Bard of Moneyslane

Hugh Porter was one of the Weaver Poets who actually was a weaver. He came from Moneyslane in the parish of Drumballyrone and Drumgooland. Very little is known about his life. He was born sometime around 1780 and would probably have received little education—perhaps only attending a hedge school.

In 1799 he presented a poem which he had written to the Rev. Thomas Tighe, the local minister, who became his patron, and at the beginning of the 19th century he published some of his poems in local newspapers. At this time he used the pen name of 'A County Down Weaver' and later became 'Tisander'. Tighe edited and published a collection of Porter's poems in 1813.

Tighe included a glossary in his edition of Porter's poems. He used a glossary based on those used in Burns' books of poems.





*About 200,000 men from all over Ireland volunteered to fight in the British army during the First World War. Most of them served in either the 10th (Irish) Division, the 36th (Ulster) Division or the 16th (Irish) Division.*

*The Ulster Division is especially remembered for its involvement in the Battle of the Somme which began on 1st July 1916. In just 2 days they lost 5,500 men — killed, wounded or missing in action. In total it is estimated that at least 27,000 soldiers from Ireland died during the First World War.*

*The experience of war has led many men to write poetry. Here is one of the most famous poems of the First World War—'Dulce et Decorum est' - by Wilfred Owen, an English officer, who died just a few days before the war ended. It is followed by a poem written about this same time in Ulster-Scots. Unfortunately it is not known who wrote this poem or whether he returned safely to Ulster.*

## DULCE ET DECORUM EST

Bent double, like old beggars under  
sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we  
cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our  
backs  
And towards our distant rest began to  
trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their  
boots  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame;  
all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of tired, outstripped Five-Nines that  
dropped behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick boys! - An ecstasy of  
fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and  
stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime...  
Dim, through the misty panes and thick  
green light,  
An under a green sea, I saw him  
drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless  
sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking,  
drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too  
could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his  
face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted  
lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent  
tongues, -  
My friend, you would not tell with such  
high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate  
glory,  
The old lie: Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.



There's a broken battered village  
Somewhar up ahint the line  
There's a dugoot an' a bunk there  
That A ustae sae wus mine.

I remember hoo I reached them  
Drippin' wat an a' forlorn  
In the dim an' dreary twilight  
Of a weepin' summer morn.

Al' that week I'd birried brithers  
In wan bitter battle slain  
In yin grave I laid twa hunner  
God, what sorr an' what pain!

An' that nicht I'd been in trenches  
Seekin' oot the sodden dead  
An' jest drappin' them in shell holes  
Wi' a Service swiftly said.

For the bullets rattled roon me  
But I cudnae lae them there  
Watther soaked in flooded shell holes  
Reft o' common Christain prayer.

Sae I cralled roon on mae belly  
An' I liestened tae the roar  
O' the guns that hemmered Thiepval  
Lake big breakers on the shore.

Then there spake a drill' Sergent  
Whun the time wus growin' late  
Wud ye please bury this yin  
Cause he ustae be mae mate.

Sae we groped oor wiy in darkness  
Tae the body lyin' there  
Jest a blakit lump o' blakness  
Wi' a rid splotch on his hair

Though we turned him gently ower  
Even noo I hear the thud  
As the body fell face foritt  
An then settled in the mud.

We went doon upon oor faces  
An I said the Service through  
Frae I am the Resurrection  
Tae the last grate Adieu.

We stud up tae gie the blessin'  
And commend him tae the Lord  
Whun a sudden licht shot soarin'  
Silver swift and lake a sword.

At a stroke it slew the darkness  
Flashed its glory on the mud  
An I sa' the Sergent starin'  
At a crimson clot o' blood.

There ir mony kin's o' sorro  
In this warl o' love an' hate  
But there is nae sterner sorro  
Than a Soldier for his mate.



*Three Somme veterans from the Ulster Division  
visiting Thiepval*

# The Oul Whin Bush



## IN STANDARD ENGLISH

The Whin grows on a scraggy hill among coarse clay and stones  
How does it grow in such a place, I cannot hardly say,  
With bonny blossoms of yellow gold shimmering in the summer sun,  
With fragrance sweeter than any rose, its wonderful this old whin,  
It thrives by roads and motorways by fields and at lay-bys  
And often provides good shelter when growing green and high  
With jags worse than barbed wire and I'm not joking now I say,  
The jags would deter both man and beast and send them on their way,  
Of the jaggiest bush you ever seen indeed everyone will say,  
But the yellow blooms on the old whin will brighten the dullest day.

## IN ULSTER-SCOTS

The whun gruys on a scraggy hill amang coorse cly an stanes  
Hoo daes it gruy in sich a place, I cannae hardly say  
Wi bonny blossoms a yellow gold, shimmerin in the summer sun  
Wae fragrance sweeter than uny rose, its wunnerful this oul whin  
It thrives by roads and motorways by fiels an at lay-bys  
An aften gees gid shelter when gruyin green and high  
Wi jags wrose than barbed wire an I'm not coddin noo I say,  
These jags wud deter beth man an beast an sen them on their way  
Oh the jaggiest bush ye iver seen deed ivery uin will say,  
But the yellow blooms on the oul whin bush will brighten  
the dullest day.

James McIlhatton

# TO a MOUSE,



## on Turning her up in her nest with a Plough

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,  
O what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi' bickering brattle!  
I wad be laith to rin an chase thee,  
Wi murdering pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion,  
Has broken nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion,  
Which makes thee startle  
At me. Thy poor. Earth-born  
companion,  
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may  
thieve;  
What then? Poor beastie, thou maun  
live!

A daimen icker in a thrave  
'S a sma' request;  
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,  
An' never miss't.

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!  
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!  
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,  
O' foggage green!  
An' bleak December's winds ensuing,  
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an'  
waste,  
An' weary winter comin fast,  
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,  
Thou thought to dwell -  
Till crash! The cruel coulter past  
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an'  
stibble,  
Has cost thee mony a waery nibble!  
Now, thou's turn'd out, for a' thy  
trouble,  
But house or hald,  
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,  
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,  
In proving foresight may be vain;  
The best-laid schemes o' mice an'  
men  
Gang aft agley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,  
For promis'd joy!

Still thou art blest, compare'd wi' me  
The present only toucheth thee:  
But, och! I backward cast my e'e,  
On prospects drear!  
An' forward, tho' I canna see,  
I guess an' fear!

Robert Burns

# To a Hedge-Hog



While youthful poets, thro' the grove,  
Chaunt saft their canny lays o' love,  
And a' their skill exert to move  
The darling object;  
I chuse, as ye may shortly prove,  
A rougher subject.

What fairs to bother us in sonnet,  
'Bout chin an' cheek, an' brow an'  
bonnet?  
Just chirlin like a widow'd linnet;  
Thro' bushes lurchin;

Love's stangs are ill to thole, I own it,  
But to my hurchin.  
Thou grimest far o' gruesome tykes,  
Grubbing thy food by thorny dykes,  
Gudefaith thou disna want for pikes,  
Baith sharp an' rauckle;  
Thou looks (L\_\_d save's) array'd in spkes,  
A creepin heckle!

Some say thou'rt sib kin to the sow,  
But sibber to the deil, I trow;  
An' what they use can be, there's few  
That can explain;  
But naithing, as the learn'd allow,  
Was made in vain.

Sure Nick begat thee, at the first,  
On some auld whin or thorn accurst;  
An' some horn-finger'd harpie nurst  
The ugly urchin;  
Then Belszie, laughin, like to burst  
First ca'd thee Hurchin

Fok tell how thou, sae far frae daft,  
Whar wind fa'n fruit lie scatter'd saft,  
Will row thyself, wi' cunning craft,  
An' bear awa  
Upon thy back, what fairs thee aft  
A day or twa.

But whether this account be true,  
Is mair than I will here avow;  
If that thou stribs the outer cow,  
As some assert,  
A pretty milkmaid, I allow,  
Forsooth thou art.

I've heard the superstitious say,  
To meet thee on our morning way,  
Portends some dire misluck that day -  
Some black mischance;  
Sic fools, howe'er, are far astray  
Frae common sense.

Right monie a hurchin I hae seen,  
At early morn, and eke at e'en,  
Baith setting off, an' whan I've been  
Returning hame;  
But Fate, indifferent, I ween,  
Was much the same.

How lang will mortals nonsense blether,  
And sauls to superstition tether!  
For witch-craft, omens, altogether,  
Are damn'd hotch-potch mock,  
That now obtain sam credit ether  
Frae us or Scotch fok.

Now creep awa the way ye came,  
And tend your squeakin pups at hame;  
Gin Colley should o'erhear the same,  
It might be fatal,  
For you, wi' a' the pikes ye claim,  
Wi' him to battle.

by Samuel Thomson  
The Bard of Carnranny



Hard by this rock, bedecked wi' fog,  
There lies, a past the common dog,  
For reptiles foul, a feast;  
Ye'll soon conclude, he wasna bad,  
Whon this was a' the fault he had,  
That he was born a beast.

9th November 1809  
by  
Hugh Porter  
The Bard of Moneyslane

*Hugh Porter also wrote a poem entitled "On the Accidental Death of a Favourite Pointer" about his dog called Grouse.*



# Mrs McIntyre Goes To Kirk

In a country village long ago  
'Way north of Ballystone  
There lived a Mrs McIntyre  
And John her little son.

One Sunday she desired to be  
Amongst the goodly few  
To hear the truths that pass between  
The pulpit and the pew.

So John agreed to stay at home  
And do the household work,  
And mind the broth, while mother  
went  
To worship in the Kirk.

With huge supplies of sticks and peats  
He kept the fire aflame  
'Till finally he could scarcely see  
The pot for reek and steam.

Here Johnnie thought 'twas mebbe  
time  
To gie the stuff a stir  
But what he saw inside near changed  
The colour of his hair.

The sheep's head circling round  
the pot  
With jaws set wide ajar  
The cloth had also been released  
And left the dumpling bare.

In horror Johnnie dropped the lid  
His face at once grew pale  
And off he scampers to the church  
As hard as he could whail.



With breathless haste he passed the  
door  
And hurried down the aisle  
Observing not the sexton's scowl  
Nor the parson's vacant smile.

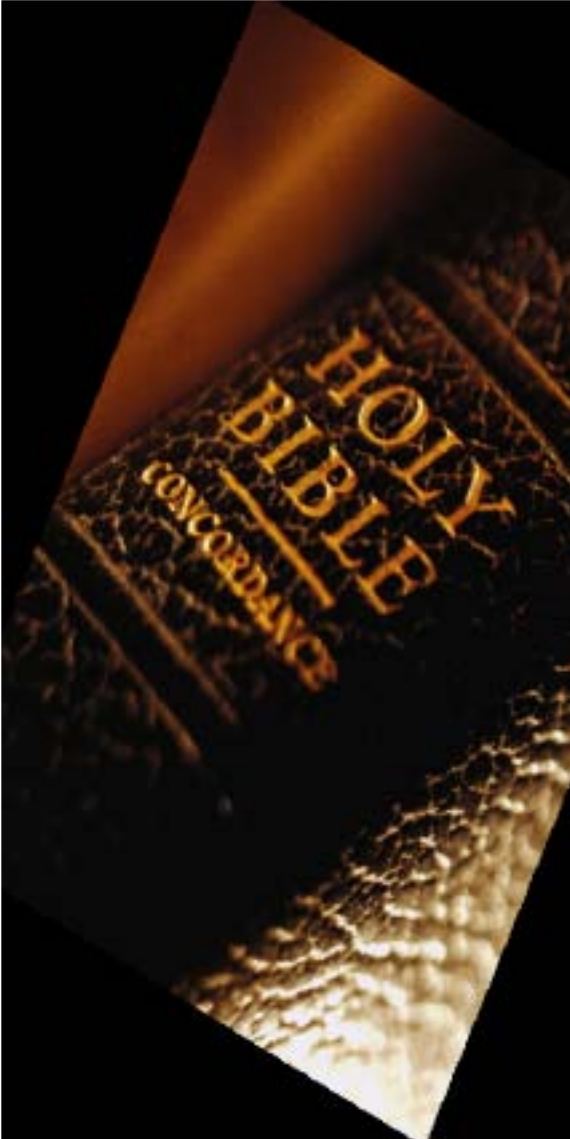
"Oh, Mother, Mother, come at once"  
Was all that he could say  
The mother made a facial sign  
For him to go away.

"The oul ewe's head," he shouts again  
"It must be off its dot  
It's chasing turnips, spuds and peas  
Like vengeance through the pot.

"In fact its murderous onslaught  
Has everything excited  
And the dear old apple dumpling'  
Has aff her shirt to fight it."

Sandy Robinson from  
"Collection of Poetry by Sandy Robinson,  
The Bard of Ballyalbanagh"

# Paraphrase of The First Psalm



The man, in life wherever plac'd,  
Hath happiness in store,  
Who walks not in the wicked's way,  
Nor learns their guilty lore!

Nor from the seat of scornful pride  
Casts forth his eyes abroad,  
But with humility and awe  
Still walks before his God.

That man shall flourish like the trees,  
Which by the streamlets grow;  
The fruitful top is spread on high,  
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossom buds in guilt  
Shall to the ground be cast,  
And, like the rootless stubble, tost  
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? That God the good adore,  
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,  
But hath decreed that wicked men  
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

Robert Burns

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night And he shall be like a tree, planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

*Psalm 1*



# 1 Corinthians 13 1-8

**Below is a Bible passage written in Ulster-Scots.**

**Try reading it aloud.**

Gin A spak wi the tongues av men an av angels but hae nae love in ma hairt A'm nane better nor dunnerin bress nor a dinnlin cymble. Gin A hae the gift av prophesie an can unnerstaun a' mysteries an a' things; gin A hae a' faith for till move muntains, but hae nae love, A'm naethin. Gin A gie a A hae till poor boadies an gie ma ain body till the fleams, but hae nae love, sure A get naethin. Love aye houls on an bes kindly. It

disnae want the things that belongs till ither boadies. It disnae mak mickle stur wae the tongue. It isnae proud. It isnae iggerant nor aye lukin ocht fer itsel, it isnae engersome, it disnae houl on tae wrang. Love taks nae pleasure oot av evil, but bes fair plased wae the truth. Love tholes a' things, believes a' things, hopes a' things, an aye sodgers on. Love gaes on an on wi'oot en'.





# Mae Ma's Spoon

T'ither nicht A wuz in mae bed wunnerin what A cud write fur the Ullans, an' then it cum tae mae. A cud write aboot mae ma's mixin' spoon. A wuz that axcited it was fower in the mornin' afore A went tae sleep efter thurnin ower in mae heid what A shud say and tha wye A shuid say it.

When A was a waen, sawenty yeir ago, there wur a lot of fowk that trevelled roon the country goin frae dure tae dure; wans wur jist beggars, askin fur a slice of breed, or lake big Mery, for a gopin of oatmale which she kerried in a poke tied roon hir waist; ithers ye micht ca pedlars, and yin of these wuz P.Q.

He cum frae Striban, about five miles awa, an unner his airm he had a wee wudden box fu o needles an pins, an spools of threed an the lake.

Wan day Paddy cum jist as mae ma wuz reddin up efter bakin, an she still had in hir han the oul spoon that had bin used tae mix the dough fur a lifetime. Seein Paddy eye the spoon mae ma said:

“Och Paddy, A wish yea cud get mae a guid big spoon: this wan's worn tae a skiver.”

Weel, twa-three weeks efter, Paddy waekt in wae the grannest big table spon year iver sa. Mae ma, who wuz a bit leary, thinking maybe he had nyucht it frae anither hoose (tho' shae had niver known him tae dae the lake), said:

“Sure Paddy that's jist what A'm needin; whar did ye get it?”

“Well, Ma'am,” sez Paddy, “it was issued tae mae the day A joint the Fuslieers in 1914.”

Mae ma used that spoon fur the rest o hir life and when she died in 1987 mae sister tuk it taehir placed, and she is mixin hir dough wae it yit.

Margaret Rowe



# Memries o' oul Newtownairds



Noo, Ah suppose iveryboady haes a hame-toon A hame-toon or village, or sim wee place at in their hairts they ca hame. The place we wur boarn in, the place o sweet chilehuid memries, the freens we grew up wi, an the schuils we gaed tae.

Fer me, thon place is Newtownairds, Newton we ca'd it, in the sweet Coonty Doon. Ah wus boarn here. Sae wus ma faither, an ma ain weans, an their weans. Yin belovit dauchter, Donna, lies in the cemetary at the oul Movilla Abbey. Ay. There's mony things at binds ma hairt tae this place.

As wus boarn in Greenwell Street. Ah wunner whit history lies in thon name. Whit daes the Greenwell mean? Tae me it paints a picture o a cool clear well o spring watter, a leafy loaned, an a clatter o wee hooses scattered aboot. Noo, maybe it wusnae really like that. But it micht hae been. Hitler's war o mass-murder an extermination wus still ragin in Europe whun Ah wus boarn in greenwell Street. Ma faither, frank, like mony ither brave men o the toon, pit oan a uniform an went tae fecht fer liberty an peace. Like mony ithers, he didnae come bek. His name, an theirs, can be fun oan the War Memorial at the oul Bowlin Green in Castle Street. Whun ma mither Ivy deed fower year later ma sister Ann an masel wus taen tae leeve wi oor granparents John an Annie McLaughlin in Ballyhay, a toonlan at is gye dear tae me yit. But hoo we lukked forrit yae Setterday moarnins whun oor granparents tuk us up tae Newton oan the bus. Whiles Ah went roon the shops wi ma granny an Ann, an specially the grocers shop rin by Joe Kerr an his oul faither in High Street.

Even noo, aa these years later, Ah can smell the reek o the loose tay in the siller-lined tay-kist yit. A hunner- wecht beg o shuggar sut at the enn o the coonter, an, like the tay, wus scooped oot an packaged accairdin tae yer ain requirements. The loose biscuits wus picked oot an fae a brow gless-framed mahogany cabinet an ivery soart o bisuit hud its ain wee compairment. The sweet smell o American aipples, each as big as a man's nieve an as bricht as a billiard baa, added tae the heady aroma o the oul-farrant wee shop. Grocers' shops dinnae smell like thon onymair.

Ma granny aye bocht her suasages fae Mawhinney's buttcher shop in the Square. Ah can still see the creamy-rid carcasses o the slauchtered bastes hingin up ootside, an Mr Mawhinney, a stoot wee man wi a blue an white striped apern an a peaked kep haulin them intae the shop tae be cut up as needit. In them days the guid wifies jist pointed tae the piece o the baste they waantit an Mr Mawhinney wus obleeged tae set tae wark wi a meat-cleaver an hammer an hack-saw tae secure it oan the spot. A bit o greaseproof paper wus pit oan the scales an the meat tossed oan tae it. The price eus ca'd an if agreed the joint wus lapped up in a piece o broon paper an tied wi string. Aa afore yer very een!

# Memries o Oul Newtownairds

But ma main interest in Newton oan a Setterday moarnin wus tae gae wi ma granda tae the pig an kettle mairket in the sale-yaird alongside Jefferson's pub jist fornent the Oul Cross—whaur the "Lectric" Showrooms noo stauns. Entry tae the yaird wus through a big gatewye at apened up tae accommodate a square o whire-washed ram-shackle biggins, maistly pig- san cattle-pens. The bastes in the yaird wur mony an varied, an them at cam tae dale fer them wur nae less so.

Gentlemen fairmers, wi tweed dunchers an yella waistcoats, an speakin wi sich cultivated voices Ah wunnered whit sich gran fowk wur daein here in the stench an stour an clabber o the sale-yaird. Cattle-drovers, clarty an un-kept, glar tae the ee-broos an kerryin stoot bleckthoarn sticks tae drive the bastes tae their ultimate destination an jist as much at hame in the muck an gutters as the bastes theirsels. An there wus real fairmers, dressed jist like ma granda in a reuch heavy overcoat, stoot boon buits, a duncher, an a regged muffler roon the neck.

But the star o the moarnin wi'oot a doot wus the auctioneer. There wus a bizz o excitement as he left his wee oaffice at the bek o the yaird an pushed his wye tae the middle o the sale-ring. Noo, he belanged tae the tweed duncher an yella waistcoat brigade an wore a heavy canvas overcoat an a pair o knee-length watterbuits.

The auctioneer strode up quick tae his high desk at the centre o the ring, leanin slightly oan his ain bleckthoarn at wud serve the dual purpose o pokin sim life intae ony baste o a lethargic disposition, an as a means o defence agin an owre-aggressive bull or boar forby. He shuffled sim papers oan his desk. Then he lukked roon the assembled gatherin, much as a cleargyman micht survey his congregation, no sae mich tae see wha wus there, but wha wusnae.

Satisfied, he nodded solemn-like tae a skinny wee drover at the bek o the crood. The man apened a gate an ushered a Lanrace soo, near ready tae pig, intae the ring.

The auctioneer proceeded tae enumerate the mony attributes o this fine pig, An wus that successfu Ah wunnered why the man at belanged tae the splendid baste cud possibly bear tae be pairted fae it. But this didnae deter the bids comin in thick an fast. The auctioneer's eagle ee swep the ring, notin ivery touch o the neb, ivery raise o the eebroo, ivery caught, ivery nod o the heid. Tae a seasoned campaigner like him ivery yin wus a bid, jist as shair as it wus writ doon an signed at the bottom. But the signs wur sae discreet Ah caught gye few o them, an fer a while Ah thocht the auctioneer wus biddin agin himsel as his wus the ainly voice tae be heard, rattlin awa in a machine-gun like stacatto.

"Twenty five pun Ah'm oaffered—thiry pun—come oan noo men—forty—thank ye sir—forty five pun gentlemen— fifty—fifty five, dae Ah hear saxty—thank ye sir, saxty, saxty pun noo gentlemen, saxty pun Ah'moaffered. Saxty pun noo gentlemen—it's no eneuch—saxty six pun—saxty seven—saxty echt pun gentlemen. Dae Ah hear ony mair at saxty echt pun? Ir ye aa daen at saxty echt pun? Fer the last time o askin thengentlemen? Ir ye aa finished at saxty echt pun?"

They wur. The auctioneer banged his wudden mallet doon haire an declared at the finest pig in Ireland hud been soul tae a gentleman at the front o the ring, wha as far as Ah cud see hud tuk nae pairt in the proceedins whitsaeiver.



# Memries o oul Newtownairds

Whun it wus aa owre, an especially if he'd goat a guid price fer his ain litter o pigs, ma granda nicht hae repaired wi pig-daler Herbie Beattie an his sinn Sylvan tae the Rid Hairt Bar at the coarner o Conway Square an Frances Street oan the site at rins up tae Meetinhouse Lane.



While the men wur doonin their pints ma granny an Ann an masel fun oor pleesure in a big sax penny slider o ice-cream fae The Orchard, better kent as Charlotte Heron's, richt nixt dure tae the pub. Charlotte wus a toaty wee wumman at wore a black beret an a lang black overall at reached simwhaur near tae her ankles. Charlotte's shop wus famous amang Newton folk as a fish n chip emporium. But she soul ither stuff as weel, includin piles o fresh fruit an vegetables at ye hud tae literally climb owre jist tae get intae the shop.

Maggie Berry wus anither chairacter aye tae be seen about the toon in them days. Maggie aye pushed an oul ramshackle pram roon the streets. Ah dinnae ken whit wus in the pram, but it sartinly wasnae a babby. Maggie wus best kent fer her love an care she lavished oan the pigeons in Conway Square. Maist efternins and evenins ye wud see her sut oan a sate ootside the Toon Haw feedin her feathered freens. Ah dinnae suppose Maggie wus owre-fed hersel. But her pigeons niver went hungry. Ah whun Maggie deed there wusnae owre many floral tributes. But there wus yin at sayed it aa. The caird rid, simply but eloquently: *FROM THE PIGEONS.*

Anither oul chairacter at scarred the life oot o me, though no oan purpose, wus Joe Blake. Joe wus a hairmless sowl, but in protest agin the fashion the weemin hud tuk tae wearin slacks an men's breeks, Joe donned skirts an blooses an broad-brimmed ladies hats. Wi his lang matted rid hair, swirlin skirts an men's buits he wus a strange lukkin sicht danderin roon the toon wi his shoppin beg filled wi groceries. By aa accoants Joe wus a larned man an he swum affen up at the High Dam. No safe place tae sweem! Anither oul-timer fae them days wus the weel-kent William James McCauley. Fer waant o a better hame William James resided in an air-raid shelter oan the tide-bank at the edge o Strangford Lough. Tae earn a copper or twa he gien impromptu performances o singin an dancin roon the streets. At the stairt o ivery performance he doffed his duncher an introduced himsel as "the famous William James McCauley fae Northern Ireland" an at the feenish he wus the first tae lead aff in a roon o applause fer himsel. His audience o street urchins at sut along the edge o the cribben-stanes tae see the yin-man show rarely hud a penny tae their name. But oor parents made shair William James aye hud tae pick up a few coppers fae his hat afore he pit it bek oan his heid.

Meetinhouse Lane affords a guid clue as tae whit originally stood there. But Ah min it best as the hame o the Ritz Cinema at fronted oan tae Frances Street. Whiles oan a Setterday efternin Ah'd be alood tae gae tae the matinee at the Ritz, or maybe the Regent at the coarner o Regent Street an Gibsons Lane.

Ah think Ah liked the Ritz best. Maybe that wus acause o the splendid rid an blue ABC neon sign whase colours intermingled an seemed tae flow in rivers along the shiny black road oan a dairk rainy nicht. Or maybe it wus acause the Manager, Mr Campbell Morrison, wus aye sae immaculately attired in fu evenin-dress, complete wi bow-tie an tails, even fer the matinee performance we went tae.



# Memries o oul Newtownairds

There aye seemed tae be hunners o us waitin tae get intae the Ritz oan a Setterday efternin an the queue trailed doon Meetinhouse Lane near as faur as High Street. Aa Ages wus representit, aa shapes, aa sizes, aa clesses, lauchin, gigglin, gulderin, duntin an shovin, graspin paper pokes o dolly-mixtures an mooths stuffed wi brandy-baas an gub-stappers. Great days! Great fun!

As a gye young wean Ah went tae Castle Gairdens Primary Schuil, named efter the castle at hud stood close by centuries afor. The late Dora Baxter an a Miss Savage taucht me there. But Ah feenished ma education at Newtownairds Technical College, the “oul” Tech as stood in Sooth Street an at is the Airds Arena noo. Conditions wur reuch eneuch, an Ah sartinly didnae set ma min tae dae gye an mich in the wye o larnin. But whit a wunnerfu array o chairacters there wus at made a valiant attemp tae knoack sim larnin knowledge intae oor thick skulls. Mr “Spud” Murphy taucht Mechanical Drawin, a subject fer which Ah hud nae apitude whitsaeiver. Spud’s penalty fer an uncompleted hamework wus an oan the spot fine o 3d (yin an a hauf pence) an an invitation tae join him in “the morgue” (detention). Ah haunit owre mony a three-d-bit an received mony sich invitations. The immaculate bow-tied Mr burrowes wus a Scotchman at wus aye impressin oan us the beauties o Shakespeare, the writin skills o his fellow country-man John Buchan, an recitin his favourite poem “ Sit Patrick Spens”. The poem wusnae bad an Ah can still min the apenin lines.



*The King sits in Dunfermline town,  
Drinkin his build-rid wine  
I whaur will Ah get a skeely skipper  
Tae sail this new ship o mine?*

Mr Wallace “Bouncer” Broon wus probably the maist teuch maister in the hale schuil, but weel respectit by aa wee fellas at enjoyed his caustic wit, if no the dunt oan the heid he administered tae us gye an affen. The cloot oan the heid didnae dae us a button o hairm. But it larnt us a loat in the wye o discipline an respeck. Mr Albert McIlroy larnt us English. Like Mr Broon, he leaved in Newton. He wus a fu-time teacher, pairt-time church meenister, whiles a candidate fer the Liberal Pairty, an whun they wurnae daein owre weel, a candidate fer the Labour Pairty. But Ah hae min o him best fer the whussles an roars o approval he drew whun he giv oot he wus gam tae read us a romance.

“Nae THAT sort of romance, you silly boys!” he roared, rid-faced an wavin his book in the air. “A SCOTTISH romance! John Buchan! The Thirty Nine Steps!” Ah niver saw a schuil wi sae mony Scotchmen, an ivery yin o them a disciple o John Buchan.

But Ah cudnae get left schuil quick eneuch. Whun Ah wus fifteen Ah gien up the tech an went tae wark in Walkers Flax Mill at stood oan the canal bank at Canal Raa an gien wark tae aboot hauf the Airds Peninsula. Ah wrocht oan nummer fower machine wi Eddie Mullan, nephew o the wee blin fiddler at leaved simwhaur aboot Aist Street. But acause o the deavenin noise o the machinery the ainly time we cud share a wurd o conversation wus at dinner time. Efter aboot sax weeks Ah gien up the mill.

Thon wus heady days fer Airds Fitbaa Club an Castlereagh Park wus the place tae be as the team liftit the Irish League title unner manager George Eastham fer the ainly time in the club’s history. Ah can still min sim o the team: Smyth, Moffat, Hunter, McGuiken, Forde, Humphries, Lawther, Richardson, Boyd.....



# Memries o our Newtownairds



Efter the match oan Setterday evenin it wus bek tae the Ritz ir the Regent. But no tae see ma our heroes at yaised tae ride the range in them lang gan days o innocence an lauchter. Roy Rogers an Gabby Hayes an Trigger hud lang syne rid aff intae the sunset, an Ah nae langer sut in the front stalls. Noo it wus the best sate in the hoose fer me. Ah whun the pictures wur owre it wus jist a wee dander doon tae the big Cafollas in the Square fer a fish supper an a bottle o Iron Brew. Thon wus a big nicht oot an we wur maistly hame by eleeven o'clock.

Anither favourite café wus Nancy Cafolla's at the coarner o Mary Street an Frances Street. Nancy wus a tall guid-lukkin lady wi jet bleck hair, usually tied bek in a pony-tail. She wore lang danglin ear-rings an whiles the ither sort at lukked like curtain rings. But they wur aye gowd, an Nancy's expressive een aye flashed an sparkled abain the ready smile at aye played aboot her finely featured face. There wus a brave sadness in the toon whun Nancy, then an our lady, passed awa a wheen o years bek.

But in them days Nancy had a juke-box in her wee café, an Ah think at's whit drew us boys tae it. Ye cud while awa an hoor or twa owre a bottle o Iron Brew while listenin tae the hit songs o Frankie Laine an Guy Mitchell an the newcomer Elvis Presley. An Nancy even hud a tellyvision stuck up oan a shelf jist abain the dure sae ye cud enjoy Lonnie Donnegan oan Six Five Special in glorious black and white oan the 14 inch screen.



Aroon thon time Ah can min o the ouler generation comin aff wi a wee ditty Ah niver hear noo:

*Donaghadee's a dirty wee hole, an Bangor's fu o clashes,  
But when ye come tae Newtownairds toon ye'll see the bonny wee lasses.*

No great poetry, an Ah wudnae hae been in agreement wi the first twa sentiments. But Ah hale-hairedly endorsed the third an tuk a Newton girl, Betty Magowan, fer ma wife. We set up hame in a wee hoose in Robert Street. The rent? Ten bob, if ye like, fifty pence a week.

Whit a great wee toon Newton is, an still gan strang efter echt or nine hunner year o history. John Wesley, the great Methodist preacher, declared the Gospel o Christ in oor beautifu Toon Haw, at wus yince the mairkey hoose. Twa hunner year later Bill Haley, the King o Rock n Roll, rocked the nicht awa in the Queens Haw. World War Twa hero Blair Mayne wus a Newtown man. Royalty haes walked oor streets. The toon haes spawned sportsmen, artists, writers an musicians like Ottalie patterson, the world famous jazz an blues singer. Ay, an they're jist a sample o them wha haes brung fame an honour tae the toon.

An whiles, maist o aa in the quiet o an evinin, Ah dander roon the our Raas an the our loaneds. Minin, jist minin. Ah then, as the sun begins tae set ahin Scrabo Hill Ah wend ma wye hame we a gratefu hairt fer aa that this place means tae me. An Ah ken Ah belang here. In Newtownairds. Ma hame toon.

Hugh Robinson

The story you have just read was written in Ulster-Scots. You probably had not seen some of the words before although you might have heard them spoken.

Below are some of the words which might be new to you.

Working with a partner try to fill in the chart below. You should be able to work out the meaning from the context of the story.

ULSTER-SCOTS WORD	ENGLISH WORD
hairt	
weans	
reek	
apern	
fornent	
duncher	
shair	
whitsaeiver	
slider	
ken	
danderin	
feenish	
hunners	
larnin	
schuil	
yaised	
bek	
wheen	
echt	
minin	

# Memries o ool Newtownairds

## AN EXTRACT

Maggie Berry was anither chairacter aye tae be seen about the toon in them days. Maggie aye pushed an ool ramshackle pram roon the streets. Ah dinnae ken whit wus in the pram, but it sartinly wasnae a babby. Maggie wus best kent fer her love an care she lavished oan the pigeons in Conway Square. Maist efternins and evenins ye wud see her sut oan a sate outside the Toon Haw feedin her feathered freens. Ah dinnae suppose Maggie wus owre-fed hersel. But her pigeons niver went hungry. Ah whun Maggie deed there wusnae owre many floral tributes. But there wus yin at sayed it aa. The caird rid, simply but eloquently: **FROM THE PIGEONS.**



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# Now It's Your Turn

Now that you have read about Maggie Berry, Joe Blake and William James McCauley it is your turn to describe an interesting person.

## STEP 1

- With a partner talk about any interesting or unusual people you know or have ever seen.
- Describe them to each other.
- Try to 'paint' as vivid a picture of the person as you can by giving details  
e.g. what they looked like; how they spoke; how they walked.



## STEP 2

- Decide with your partner on just one person—if you really cannot think of a real person you might imagine an interesting person to describe.
- Work together to write a description of this person.

## STEP 3

- Swap what you have written with another pair in the class.
- Read each other's work and try to make 3 suggestions on how they could improve their description e.g. what more you would have liked to read to help you understand what this person was like.
- Write your 3 suggestions at the end of the description and pass the work back.

## STEP 4

- Redraft your description when you have read the suggestions.

# A Heirskip Loast

A dinnae believe tha guid buik, A hard a boady sae.  
Heaven, Hell, tha Man abain, it cannae bae richt—nae way  
Miracles, an' parables, an' wa'kin' on tha sea -  
The'r naethin mair nor fairy tales, tae a clivir boy lake me.

A dinnae ga' near tha kirk nae mair, A hard a boady sae.  
A hae better hings tae dae bae far, upon tha Sabbath deh -  
Tha shappin' spree, the DIY, ir maebae joost clean tha kar,  
Ir watch tha match on telly, doon in tha local bar.

A dinnae lake tha pipin', A hard a boady sae,  
Ir fiddle tunes, ir plaein spoons—thae're frae anither deh.  
Tha tartan kilt wud mak ye wilt; it's naw for tha lake o' me.  
Computer Games, surfin' tha net, ir there tae set is free.

A dinnae lake tha aul' battles, A hard a boady sae,  
Ir hear o' things brav sojers dane in mony a bloody fray.  
A'l naw fecht for onything, unless owercome wae greed:  
Al' keep mae heid doon richt an' low, ignore mae brither's need.

A dinnae lake tha aul' sangs, A hard a boady sae.  
Aul sangs o' lang ago joost pit mae aff mae tay.  
Rabbie Burns—wha's he? - a poet frae the past?  
Poems lake his, an' sangs sae sweet—A cannae see them last.

A dinnae lake oor ain tunge, A hard a boady sae.  
Mich betther wae larn English—it's for tha present deh.  
Sure its ony a gutter tunge, ye ken, an' shud bae pit tae rest,  
If oor weans thae niver hard it, sure it's lakely for tha best.

But a these things ir pairt o' mae, A tae that boady sae.  
Frae tha mists o' Scotlan' thae wur brocht, in a noo lang distant deh:  
Sae let is cherish tha Guid Book, Rabbie Burns an' a tha best,  
An' tha Man abaib will surely tak' care o' a tha rest.

Charlie Reynolds



## WHAT IS AN ACROSTIC?

It is a poem where the first letter of the first word in each line spell out a word. This word is the subject or topic of the poem.

Here is an example of an acrostic poem:

*Friends are so important  
Really want a special friend  
I'd love to spend time with them  
Every day we'd have good fun  
Never want to argue  
Don't want to make them sad*

Or here is one about a place:

*Newry town where I was born  
Every street familiar  
When I leave I miss it all  
Roads and streets and parks  
Yes it's my hometown*

## NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Try writing an acrostic poem about some of the following Ulster-Scots words:

**WUNTER**  
**SCHUIL**  
**MITHER**  
**MOARNIN**  
**TELLYVISION**



# Scots Proverbs



## HERE ARE SOME SCOTS PROVERBS.

Ye ca' hardest at the nail that drives fastest

Ye canny gather berries aff a whinbush

Ye canna mak a silk purse out o' a sow's lig

Ye canna put an oauld head upon young shouthers

Ye didna lick your lips since ye leed last

Ye glower like a cat o' a'whinbush

Ye hae nae mair sense than a sooking turkey

Ye hae sew'd that seam wi' a het needle and a burning thread

Ye'll get your head in your hands and your lugs to play wi'

Ye'll no mend a broken nest by dabbing at it

Ye look as if butter wadna melt in your mou' but cheese will no choke ye

Ye're a queer fish no to hae fins



# Scots Proverbs



## TASKS



Design a poster for one of the proverbs. Illustrate it appropriately.

OR

In a group select one of the proverbs and act out a scene which illustrates what it means.



OR



Take one of the proverbs and make up a story which illustrates it. Tell this story to your group or the class.

## TEACHER NOTES

# Scots Poetry in Ulster

## AN INTRODUCTION FOR TEACHERS

Strong links have existed between Scotland and Ulster since prehistoric times due to the narrowness of the North Channel, which in the past acted not as a barrier, but as a corridor of communication. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the counties of Antrim and Down in particular experienced a particularly large influx of migrants as Plantation settlers and fleeing Covenanters left the Scottish lowlands and put down permanent roots in the north of Ireland.

These migrants brought with them their Scots language, their Presbyterian faith, their literary heritage and reading habits, with the result that the folk culture of north-east Ulster had many similarities with that of south Ayrshire and the Scottish lowlands generally. It is hardly surprising, then, that when a poetic movement developed in Ulster during the eighteenth century, it was influenced by the Scots Literary Revival of the same period.

The Ulster poets were from many levels of society, but prominent among them were the so-called “Rhyming Weavers”, often radical in their politics, who followed the example of the Scots poets Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns, by frequently writing in their vernacular tongue. In Ulster, this form of Lowland Scots was, naturally, subject to influences from Irish and from the English of other Plantation settlers. Ulster poets often chose to write in typically Scots verse forms such as the Christis Kirk stanza or Standard Habbie, examples of which are to be found in the anthology.

Prominent among the Ulster Scots poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are:

James Orr – the Bard of Ballycarry (Antrim)  
Samuel Thomson – Bard of Carngranny (Antrim)  
Hugh Porter – the Bard of Moneyslane (Down)

Selections from the works of these three poets were re-published during the 1990s. Their original period of publication coincides with a time in Ulster when the works of Robert Burns achieved exceptional popularity, but the history of Scots poetry in Ulster pre-dates Burns by several generations. In these words Samuel Thomson, the Bard of Carngranny, identified the two central features of 18th and 19th century folk poetry in north-east Ulster.

*As you may easily remark,  
When looking thro' these rustic lays,  
In costume Scotch, o'er bog and park,  
My hame bred muse delighted plays.*

(Thomson 1992: 62)

It is “hame bred” (1), based in the Province of Ulster, while its forms and language give it a Scots appearance or “costume”

# Scots Poetry in Ulster

The title “Bard” was a courtesy one, bestowed by the local community on its most admired poet. He would speak on behalf of his community in verse, and record details of local life, but the village bard might also inform local people about events at national and even international level. The late John Hewitt in the 1970’s brought to the attention of the literary world the remarkable poetic movement to which Samuel Thomson and his contemporary, James Orr belonged. Hewitt describes “a period of surprising poetic activity on many levels”, from “landed gentry [...] schoolmasters [...] peasants and craftsmen” (Hewitt 1974:1). By the eighteenth century English was the official language of education, the law and of government, so the choice of “braid Scotch” for poetic writing has been described as “a Literary declaration of independence” (Herbison 1989: 6).

Hewitt coined the term “Rhyming Weavers” for these poets, since many were engaged in the North’s textile trade. Their output and the status which the population granted them are indicative of an unusual degree of literacy in the local communities, indeed most of them achieved publication in the first instance by raising subscriptions from their friends and neighbours. As the writers of the Ordnance Survey Memoirs noted, “There has always been a desire for information and education among the people” (Antrim O.S.Memoirs, 10, 1830:87). While the poets’ use of vernacular language suggests links to an oral tradition, the works of Thomson and Orr are also both literate and sophisticated.

Intellectual life was keen in the localities to which the Antrim poets in particular belonged. Book clubs, centres of debate, were as popular as the local inns. Thus, the controversies of the Age of Enlightenment and the Age of Revolutions were thoroughly aired in Ballynure, Ballyclare and Ballycarry. “The awakening of men’s minds by the French Revolution, and the stirring political events of the period had much to do with this selfeducation” (Bigger 1902:126).

Local interest enabled the poets to raise funds for the publication of their collected editions. The list of subscribers for Thomson’s first volume (2) includes Henry J M’Cracken (3), the well-known United Irish leader, hanged for his part in the 1798 Rebellion. It is evident, therefore, that the folk poets’ work aroused the interest of those who were concerning themselves with the fate of the whole island of Ireland.

In his lifetime Thomson (1766-1816), a rural schoolmaster, was to publish three volumes of poetry. His first (4), which appeared in 1793, is the earliest collected edition from an Ulster-Scots poet. Orr (1770-1816), in contrast, was a handloom weaver, educated by his father and through his own reading (5). Both men were Presbyterians, and both had links with the Society of United Irishmen and with the Northern Star newspaper where they frequently published.

While Thomson had close acquaintances among the radical, intellectual leaders of the United Irish movement, it is difficult to determine what part he actually played in it. Nevertheless, he maintained a friendship with Orr across something of a class barrier. Orr’s commitment to the United Irishmen’s schemes is well-attested in local tradition, and in the poetry in which he records his experiences during 1798.

# Scots Poetry in Ulster

The two men shared an admiration for the great Scots vernacular poet Robert Burns whom Thomson visited in 1794. They have been called “Burns imitators”, but although they used the vernacular as Burns did and employed traditional Scots stanza forms, as he also did, they wrote with strong, independent voices, consciously addressing their own Ulster context.

The third poet whose works are represented in the anthology is from County Down: Hugh Porter (born c. 1780), the Bard of Moneyslane. Not much information exists about his life, but like James Orr he was a weaver, educated at a local “hedge” (unofficial) school, similar to the kind run by Samuel Thomson. He supplemented this basic teaching with reading and began to produce his own verses which, in the course of time, he showed to the local Church of Ireland rector, the Rev. Thomas Tighe. Tighe was part of a literary circle led by the Bishop of Dromore, Thomas Percy, and as a result of the encouragement of Percy’s set Porter published a volume of verse in 1813. The verse form he most frequently employs is standard habbie, while of the language of his verse he writes:

*And thirdly, in the style appears  
The accent o’ my early years,  
Which is nor Scotch nor English either,  
But part o’ baith mix’d up thegither...*

( Porter 1992: ix).

(1) “Home bred”

(2) The full list of subscribers is reproduced in *The Country Rhymes of James Orr: the Bard of Ballycarry*, Volume 2 in “The Folk Poets of Ulster”.

(3) The original spelling. In later references to McCracken we have used the more familiar spelling of the family’s surname.

(4) Called: *Poems on Various Subjects, Partly in the Scotch Dialect*.

(5) We have gathered biographical information on both Thomson and Orr from many of the sources listed in the bibliography. The introductions by Dr Philip Robinson and Ernest Scott to Orr (1991) and Thomson (1992) were particularly helpful.



# Scots Poetry in Ulster

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