

Key Info ulster



**A Key Stage 3  
Citizenship Resource**  
**PART 1**

## KEY INTO ULSTER

Welcome to 'Key into Ulster' — a taster course to help you explore Ulster-Scots language, history and culture and the role the Ulster-Scots have played in Ireland and around the world.

- Module 1**      Meet the Ulster Scots-  
*Signs, Symbols and Myths*
  
- Module 2**      Fair Faa Ye Tae Tha Leid -  
*Raising awareness of Language and Literature*
  
- Module 3**      The American Connection -  
*How the Ulster-Scots became the Scots-Irish*
  
- Module 4**      Climb the Liberty Tree -  
*How some Ulster-Scots tried to make life more fair in 1798*
  
- Module 5**      Fiddles, Pipes and Drums -  
*Musical traditions*
  
- Module 6**      Birlin' roon the Flure -  
*Your chance to try some Scottish Country Dancing*



**Meet the Ulster-Scots:  
Signs, Symbols  
and Myths**

# cultural Identity

Our cultural identity is made up of a number of factors. Our family background, our parents, where we were born, our religion, the language we speak—all these factors help to determine our cultural identity.

Northern Ireland is now a multicultural society with people from all over the world living here. They may follow different religions or even speak a different language as their first language at home.

This cultural diversity is a good thing as it helps us to appreciate just how small our world really is and how we must all work together to help make it a better place.



## Task

Carry out a class survey to see how many different countries in the world people from your class have visited.

Individually make a histogram/bar chart or pie chart (or other visual representation) to show the different nationalities represented.

OR

Research a different nationality or different religion.

Present your findings in a 2-minute talk to the class or a written project for display.

# True or False?

In groups discuss the following statements.

Decide which you think are true and which are false.

Before the twelfth century Gaelic was the main language spoken on the island of Ireland

In the seventeenth century hundreds of Scots came over to settle in Antrim and other parts of Ulster

They brought English with them so people began to use both Gaelic and English

Ullans is another name for the Ulster Scots language

Words like sleekit, sheuch, skitter and gulder are Ulster Scots words

All Ulster Scots speakers are Protestants



The Ulster-Scots settled in each of the nine counties of the province of Ulster, though today they are to be found mainly in Antrim, Down, north-west Derry and east Donegal.

People often feel very close to the landscape of the area they live in. We say that they identify with it, because some of their own personal identity seems to be linked to the familiar countryside or buildings in the place where they grew up. The picture below is of the Giant's Causeway. Most people from Northern Ireland would recognise this instantly and feel a sense of ownership of this famous landmark.



## Task

- Think about the whole of Ulster.
- List as many features of the landscape, whether natural or man-made, that you would associate with different parts of it. Try to get at least two for each county. An example for County Down might be Scrabo Tower near Newtownards.
- Compare your list with a partner's.
- Choose six landmarks that you both feel best represent Ulster. They should remind people who live here of home. They should also be places that you would like people abroad to be aware of.
- Create a poster which includes pictures of these six landmarks with a brief caption for each one.



# Life for Scottish Migrants in Antrim and Down

## How did the arrival of the Scots affect the landscape ?

Before the Plantation livestock, mainly cattle, were the most important part of farming. Corn was grown in some areas, including north Antrim. The population was low and the workforce small, so where land was wooded or boggy, little was done to make it suitable for farming. Irish houses, apart from the great castles and monasteries, were fairly simple, with poor chimney systems.

The Plantation settlers changed the landscape in a number of ways:

- Forests were cleared and exported as timber for barrels.
- Wood was also used for building new homes, although stone was still used when available. The Scots liked the castellated tower house style.
- Farmers began enclosing the land around their homes, giving the fields a patchwork appearance, where there had once been open countryside.
- New breeds of cattle and sheep were introduced from Scotland and England.
- More corn was grown
- Industries began to develop in the countryside, eg. tanning and linen making.
- Towns were built with central squares and long straight streets

## Map illustrating farming practices in 17th century Ulster.



### Task

#### Changing Times

Imagine you are an old man or woman who belongs to an Irish family that lived in Co Antrim before the Plantation. You have watched the settlers arrive and observed all the changes they have made over many years.

Write an entry for your journal describing how life and the landscape have changed. Include some of your thoughts and feelings about the changes.

Can you say what the following words mean?  
Have you ever used any of them?

Word	Meaning	Use it?
<i>thran</i>		
<i>thole</i>		
<i>thaimmens</i>		
<i>skitter</i>		
<i>frae</i>		
<i>heid</i>		
<i>gunk</i>		
<i>na</i>		
<i>gulder</i>		
<i>sleekit</i>		

Even if you never use any of these words yourself, you are likely to have heard at least some of them used, perhaps by older relatives or friends. They are all words from the Ulster-Scots language that is still spoken in parts of Ulster today and which influences language throughout Ulster.

**Aren't they just 'bad' English?**

No. Read on to find out more about Ulster-Scots.



# Language Travels.....



This map shows how close Ulster is to south-west Scotland. People have crossed and re-crossed the North Channel continually since prehistoric times, but huge numbers migrated from Scotland to Ulster during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They brought their language with them. It was **Lowland Scots** and had developed from an ancient language, **Northumbrian Anglo-Saxon**. It is closely related to English which developed from Mercian (Midlands) Anglo-Saxon.

## .....and changes

Once Scots had arrived in Ulster, it began to change and develop a character of its own. The people who spoke it were influenced by the language of English speakers and Irish speakers who lived nearby, and “borrowed” some of their words. These include:

**Proota** (potato) - Irish “prata”

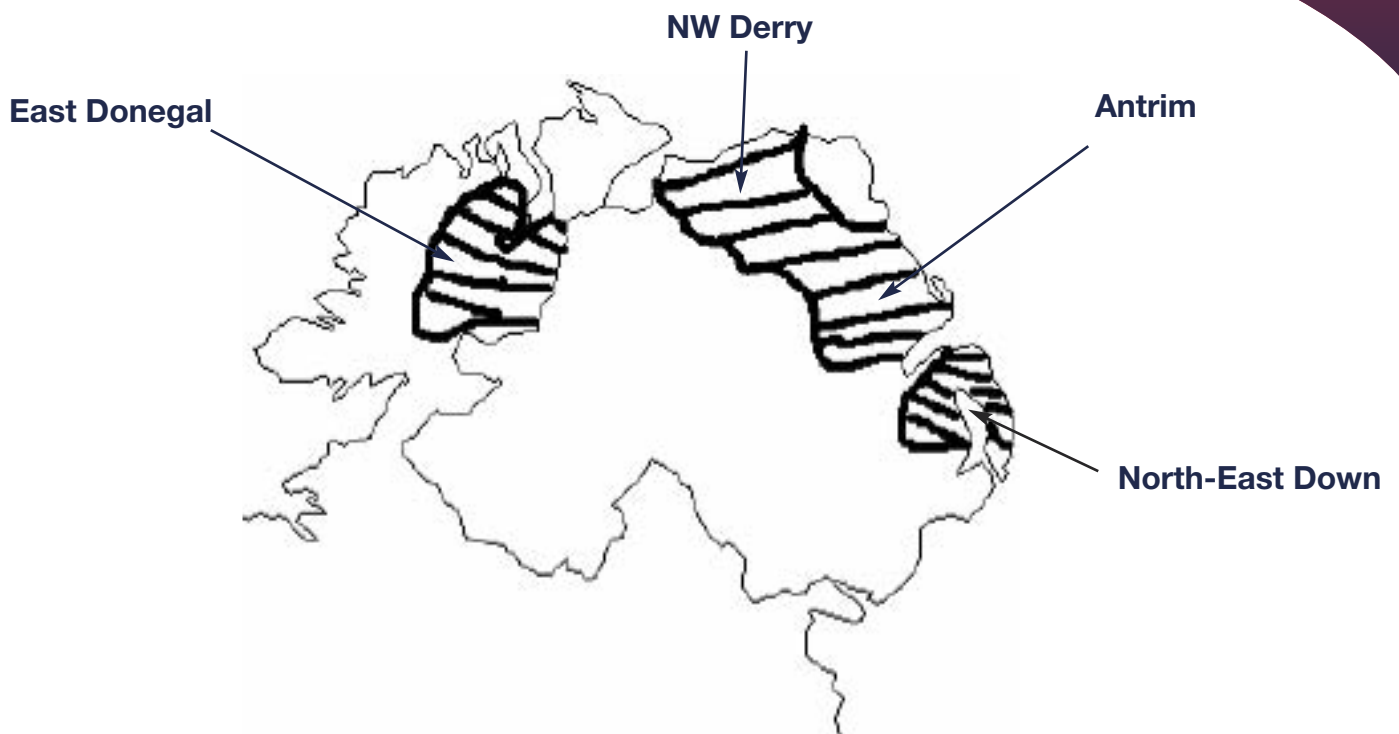
**Clabbar** (mud) - Irish “clabar”

**Margymore** (disorder) - Irish “margadh mor”

For this reason, the Scots spoken in Ulster today is not exactly the same as Scots spoken in Scotland.

# Ulster-Scots Language

## Ulster-Scots Language Areas Today



### Task

The Ulster-Scots language has been described as very **onomatopoeic**. Words and phrases often sound like the thing they mean or are describing. Often it is easier to understand if you read it aloud.

Try reading the following short passage aloud and then work out what it means:

*“What’s that ye’re dae’n Betty? Ye’ll be destroyin yersel entirely, so ye will. If ye hauch any mair on that bit o glass ye’ll be stairtin tae skelly.”*

*“I’ve got a shilcorn an I’m trying tae dig it oot.”*

*“Ye’ll mak a quare midden o yer face, for ye’ll end up wi a beelin couter.”*

**Now try writing a translation.**



**Fair Faa Ye Tae The Leid:  
Raising Awareness of  
Language and Literature**

# Who Was Robert Burns?



Robert Burns, or Rabbie Burns as he is sometimes called, is the most famous poet Scotland has ever produced. He is still remembered all over the world even though he has been dead for over 200 years. His life and poetry are celebrated every year on Burn's Night , 25th January.

Burns was associated with the Weaver Poets of County Antrim who wrote in Ulster– Scots. They admired his poetry and it is thought Burns may even have visited Ulster.

Use your **internet detective skills** to find out the answers to these questions about Burns:



1. When was Robert Burns born?
2. Where was he born?
3. What were the names of his parents?
4. Robert had 3 brothers and 3 sisters. Can you find their names?
5. What was the name of Burns' first teacher?
6. Where did the family move to after the death of Burns' father in 1784?
7. Whom did Burns plan to marry in 1785?
8. What was the real name of his love 'Clarinda'?
9. When did Burns die?
10. What was the name of his son who was born 4 days after Robert died?



## WEBSITES TO HELP YOU

<http://www.robertburns.plus.com/Chronology.htm>

<http://www.rabbie-burns.com/theman/index.htm>

<http://www.rabbie-burns.com/index.cfm>





## Creating a PowerPoint Presentation

In this part of the module you are asked to:

1. Research and design your own presentation about Robert Burns
2. Use PowerPoint to present your findings to the class.

Before you start, think about these four points:

- A good title for your presentation
- The amount of information you place on each slide—too much is distracting.
- Make sure everything is short and to the point
- Use sound, graphics and animation—BUT not too much. Again it can distract from what you are trying to tell your audience.

**Keep the attention of your audience.  
Do not send them to sleep**



# Extension Activity



Each year all around the world people celebrate the life and poetry of Robert Burns at Burn's Suppers.

Your task is to research how Burns Night is celebrated.

**You will need to find out:**

- The date of Burns Night
- What food is traditionally served at a Burns Supper
- What other poetry or speeches are traditional on this occasion

**WHY NOT?**

In groups plan a celebration for Burns Night in your class? You could have some traditional Scottish food and recite some of the poems.

Here are some websites to help you get started:

[www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/history/burnsnight/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/history/burnsnight/)

[www.rabbie-burns.com/burnssupper/](http://www.rabbie-burns.com/burnssupper/)

[www.britainusa.com/faq/showfaq.asp?SID=267](http://www.britainusa.com/faq/showfaq.asp?SID=267)

[www.geocities.com/traditions\\_uk/burnsnight.html](http://www.geocities.com/traditions_uk/burnsnight.html)

[www.bbc.co.uk/food/news\\_and\\_events/events\\_burnsnight.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/news_and_events/events_burnsnight.shtml)



# Pre-Reading Activities



## Swan Song by Hugh Robinson

### Whole class discussion:

1. Read the first two paragraphs of Swan Song 1.  
In whole class discussion predict what is going to happen.

2. How does the author say:      I could not  
   They did not  
   We did have

How do you think he would say: I would not?

3. What pastimes does the author say he and his friends enjoyed?

4. What was the “eccer” he had to do every night?



Here is the opening of a short story about school days in the 1940's. It was written by Hugh Robinson from Co. Down.

## Swan Song 1

A niver liked schuil. An Ah couldnae be boathered wi them oul fellas that yaised tae tell us that schuil-days wur the best days o oor lives. It wus aa richt fer them tae taak. They didnae hae eccers tae dae ivery nicht o the week. But noo, lukkin bek owre the years, maybe they wur richt. We did hae sim guid times at the oul place, scunnin fer marlies and swopin ciggie-cards and raidin Wullie McKelvey's orchard oan oor wye hame fae schuil efter fishin fer spricks in the

wee burn that trinkled aside the road. Ah wunner if the wee burn is still there? And if the sticklebeks and tadpoles ir as big as they yaised tae be? An Ah wunner if the scholars nooadays get intae the scrapes an boather we did?

The teachers wur comin an gan at oor schuil sae thick an fast it wus haird tae min o them aa. But there's yin oul character Ah'll niver forget. Mr Ferguson wus his name.

But we jist ca'd him "oul Fergie" .....



As the story goes on we learn that Oul Fergie is a cruel man who beats the boys hard with a cane for very small offences. His son, a spoiled boy known as wee Cecil, is in the same class as Robinson, the narrator. Cecil enjoys getting the other boys into trouble and seeing them punished. In the next part of the story that is exactly what he does to Robinson.....

## Swan Song 2

Oul' Fergie had a son called Cecil an' he wus a sleekit wee glype. Yin coul January moarnin we wur kickin an oul fitbaa about the playgrun, killin time tae see if Fergie wus gan tae weigh in. Wee Cecil wus rakin aboot oan this bran new bike his da hud gien him fer Christmas. He wus the ainly yin in the schuil that iver hud a new bike, an richt eneuch, it wusnae bad. Och it hud brakes an a bell an iverythin ye cud think o, an wee Cecil wasnae hauf showin it aff tae us boys. He zoomed in an oot atween us, ringin the bell an makkin "vroom" "vroom" noises, lettin oan tae knoack us doon. He skimmed me twa-three times, an he near couped me mair nor yinst.

"Richt, Cecil ma boy," sez Ah tae masel. Yince mair. Jist come in oan me yince mair, an ye're for it." An he did. In he come again fae the far coarner o the playgrun, headin straucht fer me, an gan faster an faster as he goat nearer an nearer.

**What happens next?**



Here's what happened next.....

## Swan Song 3

Weel, Ah waited tae he wus very near oan tap o me so he wudnae hae time tae chynge coorse. Then Ah grabbed ma schuil-beg by the straps an swung it roon ma heid an caught him fair in the gub as he come flyin in. He hut the grun like a felled pig an lay in the muck scraighin somethin terrible wi the bike lyin owre the tap o him. Ah thocht Ah hud him kilt. But Ah gien him anither guid dunt onywee. Ah reckoned Ah owed him yin fer the leek.

An noo it wus wee Cecil's turn tae hae the hale schuil jeerin an lauchin at him, an him roulin aboot in the gutters, gettin his nice claes aa dirty an his bran new Hercules lyin wi the front foarks shoved intae the bek wheel. It wus the best bit o fun we hud fer a lang time.

But it didnae last lang. Of a suddent, oot o naewhaur, Fergie wus oan the scene. Ah wusnae shair if he hud seen me knockin wee Cecil aff the bike or no. But if luks cud kill, Ah wus a deed man.

Then Fergie did a gye strange thing. He jist picked wee Cecil up by the scruff o the neck wi yin haun an the remains o the Hercules wi the ither an dragged the pair o them through the hedge an awa intae the hoose. An we jist went oan playin fitbaa. If Ah hud kent Ah wus gan tae get awa wi it as aisy as that Ah wud hae clabbered wee Cecil lang syne.



## Swan Song 3 (*continued*)

Fergie cam bek in aboot five meenits. Oan his ain. An he niver even lukked at me. He rung the schuil bell an herded us intae the class-room an ca'd the roll.

Fergie made the last scratch wi the pen in the roll-book an screwed the tap oan tae his ain bottle o ink. Then he ris tae his feet an plunpered aboot in the coarner press tae he fun a big printed sheet wi the tonic sol-fa oan it. He slung it owre the bleck-board.

“Right now,” he smiled. We’re going to have some singing lessons.”



We lukked at him, wunnerin if he wus richt in the heid. We cudnae sing. Nane o us. But Fergie picked up the cane an pointed it at me.

“You, Robinson! Up to the front!”

Ah lukked at Fergie, wunnerin if the demon drink hud driv him clane mad. But the cane wus ainly an inch fae ma neb. Ah risfae ma sate an dandered up aside Fergie an the tonic sol-fa.

“Right, Robinson,” growled Fergie, tappin the tonic sol-fa wi his cane. “It’s all very easy. All you have to do is sing doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, tee, doh.”

Ah shuk ma heid. Ah wusnae gan tae sing an make an eejit o masel in front o the hale class. An oul Fergie kenned it.

“Sing, Robinson!” he roared as he tapped the tonic sol-fa wi the cane an hut me a creek oan the heid wi his free haun. “Sing! Doh, ray, me, fah, soh, lah, tee, doh!”

## Swan Song 3 (*continued*)

Ah clenched ma teeth an shuk ma heid, the while gettin ready fer the nixt dunt. “Ah’m no fer singin,” Ah toul him.

“So,” whuspered Fergie. “So. You’re not going to sing. Well, hold out your hand and we’ll let the cane sing for you!”

An Fergie let the cane sing oan ma haun. Ah can still hear the whumph o it as it raised welts across ma fing’rs. Sax time oan each haun. It wus the warst threshin Ah hud goat an Ah waanted tae cry. But Ah wudnae. Ah tholed it ivery moarnin fer three weeks. Ivery moarnin Fergie wud hae me up tae the front.

“Sing, Robinson!” he wud roar.

“Ah’m no singin!” Ah wud answer.

“Hold out your hand, Robinson! Bawled Fergie, an awa we’d gae again. An aa because Ah wudnae sing. Weel, that’s whit it wus supposed tae be fer. But Ah kenned whit it wus really fer. It wus fer knoackin wee Cecil oan his mooth an nose an wreckin his bran new Hercules. That’s whit it wus really fer.





## Issues Raised in the Story

### Bullying

Robinson, the narrator, is guilty of bullying.

Do you feel only sympathy for him, or would you criticise him for his treatment of Cecil?

How does your school deal with bullying, or problems in relationships between pupils?

#### Think About

Human Rights and national legislation which would make it impossible for Fergie today to get away with the sort of treatment he gives Robinson.

What is your school's policy on behaviour and discipline?

Discuss whether you think your school's policy could be improved

#### Task

#### Presenting ideas in a different format

Storyboard either:

- Hugh Robinson's story "Swan Song"
- Or
- Your own story about a bullying incident

# Extension Activities

## Speaking and Writing in Ulster-Scots

### 1. Paired Role Play

Work with a partner. One of you is Robinson, the other is his Mum or Dad. Role play the conversation they might have had when Robinson came home and complained about Fergie's attempt to force him to sing. Both should use as many Ulster-Scots words and phrases as possible.

### 2. Script—written work for pair

Robinson has applied for a job as a gardener at a large stately home, such as Mount Stewart on the Ards Peninsula. Write the script of his interview with the estate manager. He should be asked about his experience and his education. The manager should speak in English, while Robinson speaks in Ulster-Scots.

### 3. Individual Written Work

Oul Fergie has applied for a job at a new school. Write a reference covering his character and his ability. Write it in Ulster-Scots using the information, words and phrases in the story to help you.

### 4. Game

In pairs design a Word Search game using no fewer than 10 Ulster-Scots words from the story. Swap with another pair and try out each other's games. Also, translate the words you find into English.

Using **Word, Publisher or any other DTP software package** make a copy of your game for display.

