

LANGUAGE & LITERACY / THE WORLD AROUND US · P4–P7

Ulster-Scots — Leid an Dùchas

Language & Heritage — P4–P7

What is Ulster-Scots?

1

Ulster-Scots (Ullans)

A Germanic language (not a dialect of English — a separate language related to Lowland Scots) brought to Ulster by Scottish settlers during the Plantation. Spoken mainly in counties Antrim and Down, and parts of Donegal.

2

Lallans (Lowland Scots)

The related language spoken in the Scottish lowlands. Ulster-Scots and Lallans share a common ancestor — Northumbrian English — and are mutually intelligible with each other.

3

Where it is spoken

East Antrim (Causeway Coast, Glens), North Down, Ards Peninsula, parts of Co. Down. Also in the Laggan area of Donegal (the 'Planter's Route').

4

Robert Burns connection

Burns wrote in Lowland Scots (Lallans) — very similar to Ulster-Scots. Many Ulster-Scots families feel Burns speaks directly to their heritage.

5

Ulster-Scots Agency

The Boord o Ulstèr-Scotch (Ulster Scots Agency), established under the Good Friday Agreement, promotes Ulster-Scots language and heritage across the island of Ireland.

frae Ulster-Scots

Common Ulster-Scots vocab

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brae — hillside (Scottish) — 'up the brae' = up the hill



- burn — a stream — 'over the burn' = across the stream
- thole — to put up with / endure — 'A cannae thole it' = I can't endure it
- weans — children (from 'wee ones') — 'yer weans' = your children
- dander — a walk — 'take a wee dander' = go for a short walk
- bravely — fine, doing well — 'Yer bravely!' = You're doing well!
- fornenst — opposite / across from — 'fornenst the school' = across from the school
- yince — once — 'yince upon a time' = once upon a time
- **CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:** how many Ulster-Scots words do the children already use? Many NI children use these words without knowing their Scottish origin.

