

SOCIAL STUDIES / LANGUAGES · P1–P7

Burns Night — 25 January

Classroom Activity Pack — P1–P7

Robert Burns — the key facts

1

Robert Burns (1759–1796)

Scotland's national poet, known as 'The Bard'. Born in Alloway, Ayrshire. Wrote in Scots English — a celebration of ordinary Scottish life.

2

Auld Lang Syne

'Old Long Since' (old times). Burns collected and adapted an old Scottish folk song into the poem/song sung at New Year worldwide. The most widely sung song in the world on a single night.

3

To a Mouse (1785)

Written after Burns accidentally turned up a mouse's nest with his plough. 'The best-laid schemes o' Mice an' Men / Gang aft agley' is one of the most quoted lines in English literature.

4

Address to a Haggis

A comic ode to the haggis — recited at Burns suppers before eating the traditional dish. Full of mock-heroic language praising Scottish food over French cuisine.

5

Burns Night (25 January)

An annual celebration of Burns's birthday. Celebrations worldwide — Burns Night suppers (haggis, neeps, tatties), recitation of poems, speeches, and Scottish country dancing.

Classroom ideas — CfE linked

Cross-curricular activities P1–P7



- LITERACY: read *To a Mouse* (P4+) — what is Burns saying about plans and unexpected change? Discuss the Scots English vocabulary.
- MUSIC: learn *Auld Lang Syne* — discuss where it's sung worldwide. Scotland's gift to New Year celebrations everywhere.
- ART: illustrate a scene from one of Burns's poems — the ploughing of the mouse's nest, the witch Nannie in *Tam o' Shanter*.
- SOCIAL STUDIES: map Scotland's global connections — where do people celebrate Burns Night?
- SCOTTISH WORDS: collect Scots English words. 'Braw' (fine), 'wee' (small), 'loch' (lake), 'bairn' (child), 'dreich' (grey and miserable weather). How many do the children already know?
- FOOD: if appropriate — discuss what haggis, neeps, and tatties are. Haggis is sheep's offal, turnip, and potatoes. The formality of reciting a poem before eating is a distinctly Scottish tradition.

