

SOCIAL STUDIES — SCOTTISH CULTURE · P3–P6

Geamaichean Gàidhealach — Highland Games

Scottish Culture — P3–P6

Highland Games — key facts

1

Origins

Highland games have ancient roots — competitions of strength, speed, and skill traditionally associated with clan gatherings. The current form was formalised in the early 19th century, partly through royal patronage — Queen Victoria and Prince Albert attended Braemar in 1848.

2

The Braemar Gathering

The most famous Highland Games, held annually in Braemar, Aberdeenshire. The British Royal Family traditionally attends. Up to 16,000 spectators.

3

Caber toss

The iconic Highland Games event. A caber is a large tree trunk (up to 6m long, 80kg+). The competitor lifts the caber and runs forward, then tosses it so it turns end-over-end. Points for how straight it falls (12 o'clock = perfect).

4

Other traditional events

Hammer throw (a metal ball on a wooden handle); shot put (heavy stone rather than metal ball); tug of war; hill racing; Scottish country dancing; piping competitions; athletic races.

5

Tartan

The distinctive checked wool pattern associated with Scottish identity. Each clan has traditionally distinctive patterns. The concept of clan tartan was largely invented/formalised in the early 19th century — especially for the visit of King George IV to Scotland in 1822.



6

Global spread

Scottish emigrants took Highland Games traditions worldwide. Highland Games are held in North America, Australia, New Zealand, and many other countries — often larger than those in Scotland.

