

SOCIAL STUDIES / LANGUAGE · P5–P7

Raibeart Burns — Deeper Study

P5–P7

Burns — deeper knowledge

1 Early life (1759–1780)

Born in a two-room clay cottage in Alloway, Ayrshire. Father William Burns was a struggling tenant farmer. Robert was educated by a private tutor, John Murdoch, and by his own voracious reading. Left school at 12 to help on the farm.

2 The Kilmarnock Edition (1786)

Burns's first collection of poems, published in Kilmarnock. 612 copies at 3 shillings each. Immediate critical and popular success — Burns became famous overnight. He had planned to emigrate to Jamaica; the book changed his life.

3 Scots language champion

Burns wrote in Scots at a time when literary culture was increasingly English. He was controversial for this. His insistence that Scots was a valid literary language shaped how Scotland has thought about its vernacular language ever since.

4 Radical politics

Burns was a passionate supporter of the American Revolution and the French Revolution. He sympathised with the poor and oppressed. Wrote 'A Man's a Man for a' That' — a radical assertion of human equality regardless of rank.

5 Love poetry

Burns wrote some of the most celebrated love poems in any language. 'A Red Red Rose', 'My Luvie is Like a Red Red Rose'. Also notoriously had several children by different women.



6

Global legacy

Burns Suppers held in 180+ countries. Inspired independence movements from the American South to New Zealand. Russia: Pushkin translated Burns. India: Tagore admired him. 'Auld Lang Syne' sung worldwide at New Year.

