

# Robert Burns

Robert Burns was a Scottish poet and lyricist. He is regarded as the national poet of Scotland and his poems and songs, written in both Scots language and standard English, are known worldwide. Burns Night is celebrated in honour of him every year on 25th January, Robert Burns' birthday.



Robert Burns, also known as Robbie or Rabbie, was born on 25th January 1759 in the village of Alloway in Ayrshire, Scotland. Burns had a very humble start to life. He was the eldest of seven children and his father, William Burness, was a tenant farmer so the family often struggled for money.

## Did You Know...?

Burns was born in a house built by his father; he referred to his home as the 'auld cley biggin'. It is now the Robert Burns' Birthplace Museum and it attracts over 100,000 visitors every year. The museum is home to hundreds of artefacts belonging to Burns such as the quills he used to write his famous pieces of work.



Burns began his working life as a farmer but his father knew education was important so he taught his children how to read and write. Some of Burns most notable poems were based on the things he saw whilst he was out ploughing the fields. For example, he wrote 'To a Mouse' after he turned over a field mouse's nest with his plough.

Burns' inspiration for most of his poems and ballads came from falling in love. He wrote his first love song at the age of 15 but it wasn't until the age of 27 that his poems were published. One of his most famous love poems is 'A Red, Red, Rose.'

In 1788, the year Robert married Jean Armour, he travelled around Scotland collecting local songs and writing poems about his travels. Although Burns is regarded as a national treasure, his political views often made people question his loyalty to the Scottish crown.

Burns died on 21st July 1796 at the age of 37. His funeral took place on 25<sup>th</sup> July. This was also the day his twelfth child, Maxwell, was born.

### **Burns Legacy**

After Queen Victoria and Christopher Columbus, there are more statues of Robert Burns around the world than any other non-religious person. To date, there are over 600; 15 of which are in Scotland.

One of Burns' most famous poems is 'Auld Lang Syne'. It is sung all over the world on 31st December (Hogmanay). It is even in the Guinness Book of World Records because it is one of the three most popular songs in the English language.

### **Burns Night**

The first Burns suppers were arranged by Robert's friends, a few years after his death. They wanted to celebrate his life and his poems. Today, Burns Night is celebrated all around the world.

A traditional Burns supper includes a serving of haggis, neeps (turnip) and tatties (potatoes).

Haggis is a savoury pudding traditionally made from the lining of a sheep's stomach. The stomach is stuffed with minced sheep's liver, heart, lungs, oatmeal, onion and suet. A dram of Scotch whisky is sometimes poured over the haggis before it is served.



# Questions

1. When and where was Robert Burns born?

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2. Name three Robert Burns' poems.

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3. What do you think 'auld, cley biggin' means?

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4. Why do you think Robert's father wanted him to read and write?

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5. Find and copy a word from the text that means modest.

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6. Draw lines to match the date with the event.

25th January 1759
25th July 1796
21st July 1796
31st December
April 1788

Hogmany is celebrated around the world.
Robert's son Maxwell is born.
Robert Burns was born.
Robert died at the age of 37.
Robert married Jean Armour.

7. Why do you think there are statues of Robert Burns all over the world, not just in Scotland?

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8. What phrase in the text tells the reader Robert Burns is special to Scotland?

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9. If you could ask Robert Burns a question what would it be?

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10. Write three facts you have learnt about Robert Burns.

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