

# Burns Night

There are many festivals celebrated in different countries around the world. However, in Scotland, the most important one is the celebration of Burns Night. This annual celebration takes place on or around the 25<sup>th</sup> January and involves music, whisky and some rather unusual foods!

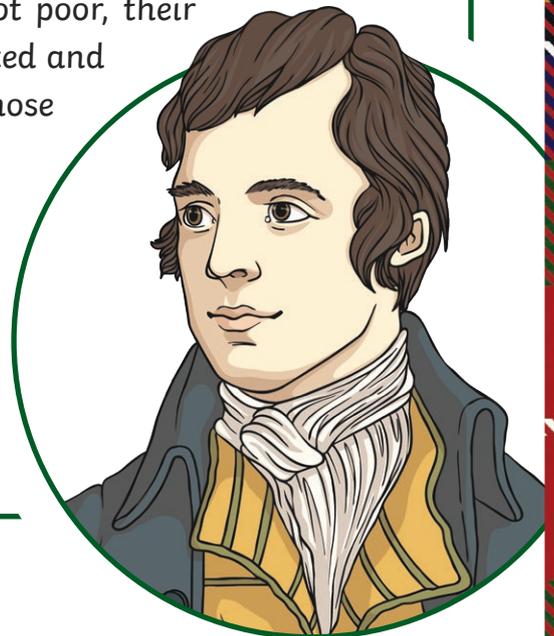
On Burns Night, people in Scotland remember the life and works of Robert Burns.



## Who was Robert Burns?

Robert Burns was a famous poet who wrote large numbers of songs and poems. He was born in Alloway, Scotland on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1759 to hard-working farmer parents and although not poor, their life was not easy. Much of Burns' work celebrated and praised his country and its people, especially those who worked hard like his parents.

Burns died on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1796, aged just 37. He was buried four days later on the same day that his wife gave birth to their son, Maxwell. He and his wife, Jean, had nine children in total. Sadly however, six of them died as children.



## Burns Supper

A Burns supper can be a small gathering of friends or a large organized event. At more formal gatherings, guests may be 'piped' in by someone playing the bagpipes and will be welcomed by the Chair or host of the event. Once seated, the Selkirk Grace is said. This is a poem written by Burns to be said before eating.

At this point, guests will stand as the haggis is presented on a silver platter and laid at the main table.

## Did You Know...?

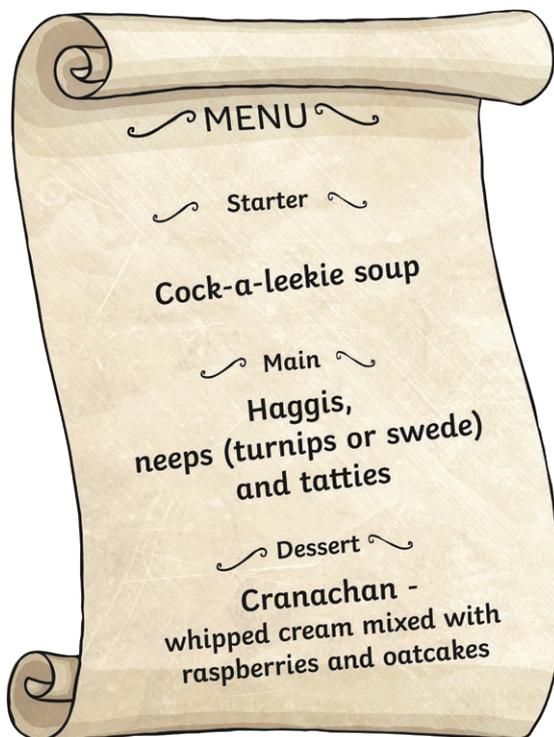
Haggis is made up of a variety of meats, spices and oatmeal that is traditionally cooked inside a sheep's stomach. Today however, the casing tends to be artificial, much like a sausage.



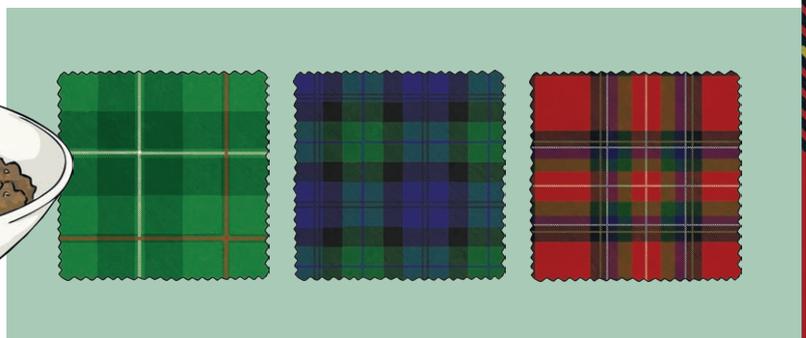
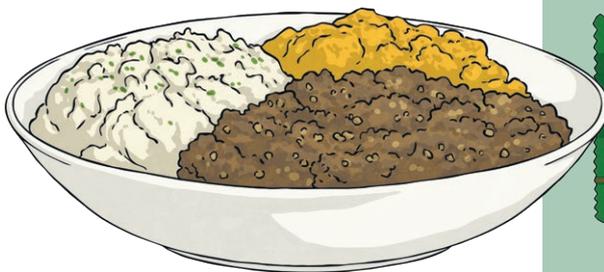
Guests take to their seats and a chosen reader reads 'Address to a Haggis', another of Burns' poems. During the recital, the reader plunges a knife into the outer-casing of the haggis and reveals the insides as they pour out. Guests then stand and toast the haggis, usually with a glass of whisky, before enjoying their meal.



Once the meal has finished, the entertainment begins. Guests enjoy Scottish dancing, poetry readings and performances from musicians and bands.



The evening will usually end with one of Burns' most famous songs, 'Auld Lang Syne'. This is traditionally sung around the world on New Year's Eve to say goodbye to the old year and to welcome in the new one. Other Burns Night traditions include the hanging of the Scottish flag (the Saltire) and the wearing of tartan in the form of kilts or shawls. Tartans each have different colours and patterns, all of which represent a different part of Scotland or a different family or clan. Whatever traditions may or may not be followed, a Burns Night will also be a joyous occasion when Scottish people celebrate their most famous cultural icon.



# Questions

1. Who was Robert Burns? Tick **one**.

- a Scottish musician
- a Scottish poet
- a Scottish farmer
- a Scottish politician

2. Where was Burns born?

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3. Why do you think Robert Burns wrote about and celebrated people who worked hard in his works? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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4. Why was the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1796 a very emotional day for Burns' wife? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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5. What are 'neeps'? Tick **one**.

- sausage
- oatcakes
- turnips or swede
- potatoes

6. How has haggis changed in recent years? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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7. Which of Burns' songs is traditionally sung at New Year's Eve?

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8. **Find** and **copy** a word that shows that Robert Burns is an important historical figure in Scotland.

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# Answers

1. Who was Robert Burns? Tick **one**.

- a Scottish musician
- a Scottish poet**
- a Scottish farmer
- a Scottish politician

2. Where was Burns born?

**Alloway, Scotland**

3. Why do you think Robert Burns wrote about and celebrated people who worked hard in his works? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: I think that Robert Burns celebrated the poor because he it says in the text that his parents were hard-working farmers and that life was not easy for them. Therefore, Burns understood what it was like for people who are not rich and who have to work hard to survive.**

4. Why was the 25<sup>th</sup> July 1796 a very emotional day for Burns' wife? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: 25<sup>th</sup> July was a very emotional day for Burns' wife because it was the day of her husband's funeral so she would have been extremely sad but also, it says in the text that their son was born on the same day. Therefore, she would have been happy to have a new baby but sad that her husband was not there to meet him.**

5. What are 'neeps'? Tick **one**.

- sausage
- oatcakes
- turnips or swede**
- potatoes

6. How has haggis changed in recent years? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: Haggis has changed because the insides used to be encased inside a sheep's stomach whereas now, the insides are inside an artificial casing.**

7. Which of Burns' songs is traditionally sung at New Year's Eve?

**Auld Lang Syne**

8. **Find** and **copy** a word that shows that Robert Burns is an important historical figure in Scotland.

**icon**

# Burns Night

Different festivals are celebrated in different countries around the world. However, there is one festival that is particularly important in Scotland and that is the celebration of Burns Night. This annual celebration takes place on or around the 25<sup>th</sup> January and involves music, lots of whisky and some rather unusual foods!

On Burns Night, people in Scotland remember the life and works of Robert Burns.



## Who was Robert Burns?

Robert Burns, who is often referred to as Rabbie Burns, was a famous poet who wrote large numbers of songs and poems about cultural and political issues that were important to him. He was born in Alloway, Scotland on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1759 to hard-working farmer parents. The difficulties that his family faced as farmers encouraged Burns ill-feelings against authority which he wrote about in his poetry in later life. Much of Burns' work celebrated and praised his country and its people, especially the poor whom he admired.



Burns died on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1796, aged just 37. The funeral took place four days later, on which his wife Jean gave birth to their son, Maxwell.

Jean and Robert had nine children in total however sadly, only three of them lived into adulthood. The first Burns supper was held on the anniversary of Burns death but was later changed to 25<sup>th</sup> January, his birthday.



**Did You Know...?**

Robert Burns is also known as 'Scotland's Favourite Son' and 'The Bard'. The word 'bard' means 'story-teller' or 'poet'.

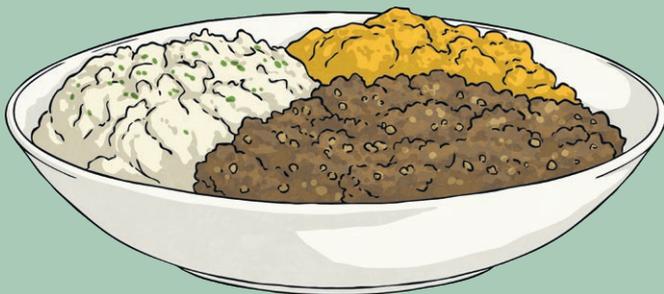
**Burns Supper**

A Burns supper (the meal eaten on Burns Night) can be a small gathering of friends or a large organized event. No matter the size, a few key elements will occur. At more formal gatherings, guests may be 'piped' in by someone playing the bagpipes and will be welcomed by the Chair or host of the event. Once seated, the Selkirk Grace is said; a poem written by Burns to be recited before eating.

At this point, guests will stand as the haggis is presented on a silver platter and laid at the main table. Guests take to their seats and an honoured reader delivers another of Burns' poems called 'Address to a Haggis', which they say to the haggis itself. During the presentation, the reader plunges a knife into the outer-casing of the haggis (traditionally a sheep's stomach) and reveals the insides as they pour out.

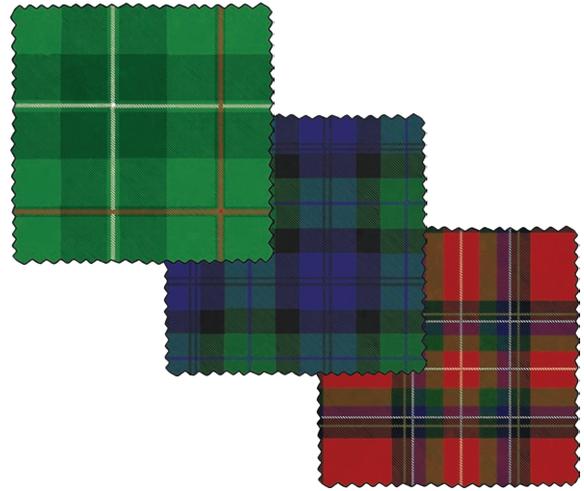
The insides are a mixture of meats mixed with oatmeal and spices. Guests now stand and toast the haggis, usually with a glass of whisky, before enjoying a meal of haggis, neeps (turnips or swede) and tatties. Dessert may differ slightly from event to event but will most likely be a dish called Cranachan (whipped cream, raspberries and oat cakes) followed by even more whisky.

Once the meal has finished, the entertainment commences. Guests may be treated to Scottish dancing, poetry performances and recitals from musicians and bands. The evening will usually end with one of Burns' most famous songs, 'Auld Lang Syne'. This is traditionally sung around the world on New Year's Eve to say goodbye to the old year and to welcome in the new one. There are other traditions that may or may not be followed at a Burns supper.



Saltires (the Scottish flag) may be displayed, the diagonals of which represent the patron saint of Scotland, Saint Andrew.

Men may wear kilts and ladies often wear shawls or dresses, all of which will be made of their family tartan. Tartan is a heavy woollen cloth that is weaved to make a distinctive pattern of colours. The colours and patterns are associated with different areas, families or clans within Scotland. Whatever traditions are followed, the evening will always be one of merriment, music and celebration!



# Questions

1. How did Burns' parents influence his work? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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2. When did Burns funeral take place? Tick **one**.

- 21<sup>st</sup> July 1796
- 25<sup>th</sup> January 1759
- 25<sup>th</sup> July 1796
- 21<sup>st</sup> January 1796

3. Why do you think the date that Burns Night is celebrated was changed? Explain fully using evidence from the text.

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4. What is the name of the meal that is eaten at Burns Night?

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5. What happens to show that the haggis is an important part of the Burns supper? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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6. What is eaten with the haggis and neeps?

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7. What is the name of the Scottish flag? Tick **one**.

- Cranachan
- Bard
- Saltire
- Tartan

8. **Find** and **copy** a word that shows that each tartan is different and recognisable.

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9. Which aspect of Burns Night would you most enjoy and why? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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# Answers

1. How did Burns' parents influence his work? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: Burns' parents influenced his work because it says in the text that they had difficulties in life and that as a result, Burns had 'ill-feelings' towards authority which he wrote about in his poetry.**

2. When did Burns funeral take place? Tick **one**.

- 21<sup>st</sup> July 1796  
 25<sup>th</sup> January 1759  
 **25<sup>th</sup> July 1796**  
 21<sup>st</sup> January 1796

3. Why do you think the date that Burns Night is celebrated was changed? Explain fully using evidence from the text.

**Pupil's own response, such as: I think the date that Burns Night is celebrated changed because at first, it was celebrated on the anniversary of his death which was a sad thing. Burns Night is a celebration of his life and his works, not of his death so it was changed to the anniversary of his birth.**

4. What is the name of the meal that is eaten at Burns Night?

**Burns supper**

5. What happens to show that the haggis is an important part of the Burns supper? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Pupils own response, such as: It is clear that the haggis is an important part of the Burns supper because the guests stand up when it arrives, it is brought in on a silver platter and placed on the main table and then a poem called 'Address To a Haggis' is read.**

6. What is eaten with the haggis and neeps?

**tatties**

7. What is the name of the Scottish flag? Tick **one**.

- Cranachan  
 Bard  
 **Saltire**  
 Tartan

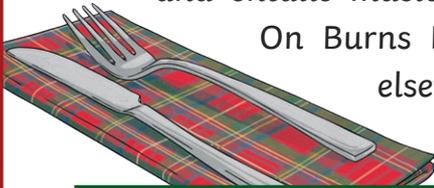
8. **Find** and **copy** a word that shows that each tartan is different and recognisable.  
**distinctive**
9. Which aspect of Burns Night would you most enjoy and why? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

**Pupil's own response, such as: I think that I would most enjoy eating the Cranachan because I love cream and raspberries. I would also enjoy singing 'Auld Lang Syne' because it is a song that I know and like.**

# Burns Night

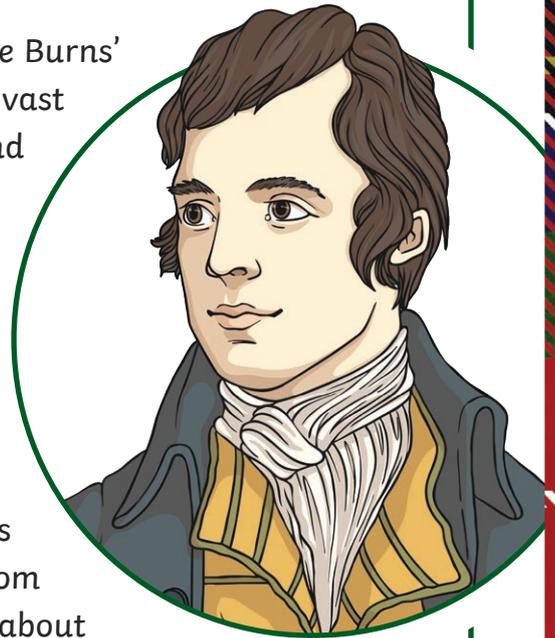
Countries around the world celebrate many different festivals for many different reasons. However, there is one festival that is particularly pertinent to Scotland and has become an important aspect of Scottish life. That is the celebration of Burns Night. This annual celebration takes place on or around the 25<sup>th</sup> January and entails music, lots of whisky and some rather unusual delicacies!

On Burns Night, people in Scotland (and Scottish people living elsewhere in the world) remember the life and works of a cultural icon; Robert Burns.



## Who was Robert Burns?

Robert Burns, who is often referred to as 'Rabbie Burns' or 'the Bard', was a famous poet who wrote vast numbers of lyrics and poems about cultural and political issues that were important to him. He was born in Alloway, Scotland on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1759 to hard-working farmer parents. The difficulties that his family faced as farmers fuelled Burns' rebellion against authority which became a common theme in his later poetry. As well as writing about politics, Burns' literary work celebrated and praised his country and its people; especially the poor whom he admired greatly. He also wrote critically about religion; particularly Calvinism, which had a strict belief in God's absolute will over the decisions and actions of humans.



Burns suffered from ill-health throughout his life and sadly, on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1796, aged just 37, he died. The funeral took place four days later, on which his wife, Jean Armour, gave birth to their son, Maxwell. Together, Jean and Robert had nine children however sadly, only three of whom survived into adulthood.



### The Selkirk Grace

Some hae meat and canna eat,  
And some wad eat that want it.  
But we hae meat and we can eat,  
And sae the Lord be thankit.



### Burns Supper

A Burns supper can be a small gathering of friends or a large organized event but whatever its size, a few key elements will occur. At more formal gatherings, guests may be welcomed in by a piper (someone playing the bagpipes) and will be welcomed by the Chair or host of the event. Once seated, the Selkirk Grace, a poem written by Burns to be recited before eating, is said.

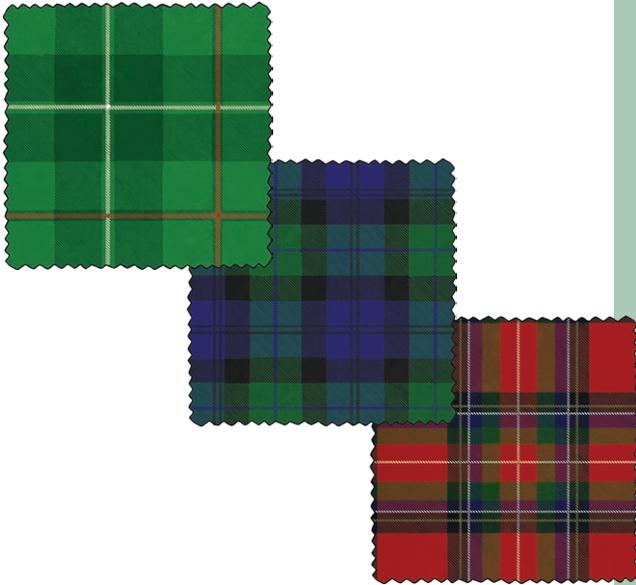
At this point, guests will stand as the haggis is presented on a silver platter and laid at the main table. Guests take to their seats and an honoured reader delivers another of Burns' poems called 'Address to a Haggis', which they say to the haggis itself.

During the rendition, the reader plunges a knife into the outer-casing of the haggis (traditionally a sheep's stomach) and reveals the insides as they pour out. The insides are a mixture of meats mixed with oatmeal and spices. Guests now stand and toast the haggis, usually with a glass of whisky, before enjoying a meal of haggis, neeps (turnips or swede) and tatties. Dessert may differ slightly from event to event but will most likely be a dish called Cranachan (whipped cream, raspberries and oat cakes) followed by even more whisky.



## Burns Night Entertainment

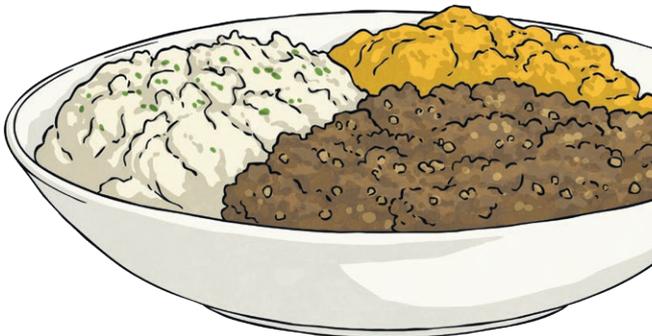
Once the meal has finished, the entertainment commences. Guests may be treated to Scottish dancing, poetry readings and performances from musicians and bands. The evening will usually end with one of Burns' most famous songs, 'Auld Lang Syne'. This is traditionally sung around the world on New Year's Eve in order to bid farewell to the old year and welcome in the new one. The lyrics are:



Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And auld lang syne.  
For auld lang syne, my jo,  
For auld lang syne.  
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
For auld lang syne.

'Lang syne', in modern English, means 'in the distant past' or 'in times gone by'.

There are other traditions that may or may not be followed at a Burns supper. Saltires (the Scottish flag) may be displayed, the diagonals of which represent the patron saint of Scotland, Saint Andrew. Men may wear kilts and ladies often wear shawls or dresses, all of which will be made of their family tartan. Tartan is a heavy woollen cloth that is weaved to make a distinctive pattern of colours. The colours and patterns are associated with different areas, families or clans within Scotland.



### Did You Know...?

The first Burns supper took place on 21<sup>st</sup> July, on the anniversary of Burns' death in the 1700s. However, the date was later changed to 25<sup>th</sup> January in remembrance of his birth.

# Questions

1. What word is used to describe the unusual food that is served at Burns Night?

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2. What religion did Burns criticise in his poetry? Tick **one**.

Catholicism

Hinduism

Calvinism

Islam

3. In what way is a formal Burns Night different from a less formal one? Give **two** examples.

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4. What do you think the word, 'hae' in the Selkirk Grace might mean? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

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5. Number the events to show the order in which they happen at a Burns supper.

'Address to a Haggis' is read

Guests sing 'Auld Lang Syne'

A piper plays whilst guests arrive

The Selkirk Grace is read

Guests eat haggis, neeps and tatties.

6. **Find** and **copy** a word that shows that the knife is thrust into the haggis.

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7. Fill in the missing words.

Should auld \_\_\_\_\_ be forgot,

And never brought to mind?

Should \_\_\_\_\_ acquaintance be forgot,

And auld lang \_\_\_\_\_.

8. Why do you think the Saltire may be displayed at Burns Night? Explain your answer.

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9. Burns Night is a celebration of Robert Burns' life. In what ways was his life not so happy? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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10. In Burns' lifetime, haggis was a cheap but nourishing meal. Why do you think it is eaten at Burns Night rather than something expensive and extravagant? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.

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# Answers

1. What word is used to describe the unusual food that is served at Burns Night?  
**delicacies**
2. What religion did Burns criticise in his poetry? Tick **one**.
  - Catholicism
  - Hinduism
  - Calvinism**
  - Islam
3. In what way is a formal Burns Night different from a less formal one? Give **two** examples.  
**Pupil's own response, such as: A formal Burns Night is different from a less formal one because guests may be piped in by a piper and they may be welcomed by the Chair or the host of the event.**
4. What do you think the word, 'hae' in the Selkirk Grace might mean? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.  
**Pupil's own response, such as: I think the word 'hae' means 'have' because in the line, 'Some hae meat and canna eat', the word 'have' would make sense. Also, the line 'Be we hae meat and we can eat' would mean, 'But we have meat and we can eat' which also makes sense.**
5. Number the events to show the order in which they happen at a Burns supper.
  - 3** 'Address to a Haggis' is read
  - 5** Guests sing 'Auld Lang Syne'
  - 1** A piper plays whilst guests arrive
  - 2** The Selkirk Grace is read
  - 4** Guests eat haggis, neeps and tatties.
6. **Find and copy** a word that shows that the knife is thrust into the haggis.  
**plunges**
7. Fill in the missing words.  
Should auld **acquaintance** be forgot,  
And never brought to mind?  
Should **auld** acquaintance be forgot,  
And auld lang **syne**.

8. Why do you think the Saltire may be displayed at Burns Night? Explain your answer.  
**Pupil's own response, such as: I think the Saltire is displayed at Burns Night because it is the Scottish flag and Burns Night is a Scottish celebration. The diagonals on the flag represent the patron saint of Scotland, Saint Andrew who is another important Scottish figure.**
9. Burns Night is a celebration of Robert Burns' life. In what ways was his life not so happy? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.  
**Pupil's own response, such as: Robert Burns' life was not so happy because it says that he suffered from ill-health most of his life and died at the young age of 37 as a result. It was also very sad that only three of his nine children survived to adulthood.**
10. In Burns' lifetime, haggis was a cheap but nourishing meal. Why do you think it is eaten at Burns Night rather than something expensive and extravagant? Explain fully using evidence from the text to support your answer.  
**Pupil's own response, such as: I think that Haggis is eaten at Burns Night because it says in the text that Burns admired the poor greatly and so it is a way of showing that he respected them and how they used to live and eat.**