# Scots Language Award level 6: Understanding and Communication

## Outcome 1

### Kidspoem/Bairnsang by Liz Lochhead

it wis January
and a gey dreich day
the first day Ah went to the school
so my Mum happed me up in ma
good navy-blue napp coat wi the rid tartan hood
birled a scarf aroon ma neck
pu'ed oan ma pixie an' my pawkies
it wis that bitter
said noo ye'll no starve
gie'd me a wee kiss and a kid-oan skelp oan the bum
and sent me aff across the playground
tae the place Ah'd learn to say
it was January
and a really dismal day
the first day I went to school
so my mother wrapped me up in my
best navy-blue top coat with the red tartan hood,
twirled a scarf around my neck,
pulled on my bobble-hat and mittens
it was so bitterly cold
said now you won't freeze to death
gave me a little kiss and a pretend slap on the bottom
to the place I'd learn to forget to say
it wis January
and a gey dreich day
the first day Ah went to the school
so my Mum happed me up in ma
good navy-blue napp coat wi the rid tartan hood,
birled a scarf aroon ma neck,
pu'ed oan ma pixie an' ma pawkies
it wis that bitter.

Oh saying it was one thing
but when it came to writing it
in black and white
the way it had to be said
was as if you were posh, grown-up, male, English and dead.

### Activity 1: Audience and Purpose

Answer these questions to demonstrate an understanding of the purpose of, and audience for, this text.

1. Which type of audience is this text suitable for?

People interested in the school curriculum

People interested in corporal punishment

People interested in language and register

People interested in weather-appropriate clothing

1. What is the purpose of this text? Choose **two** answers.

To provoke thought about modern teaching methods

To provoke thought about childhood experiences

To provoke thought about language hierarchy

To provoke thought about retention of a first language in children

### Activity 2: Main Ideas

Answer these questions to demonstrate an understanding of the main ideas of this text.

1. Why does the writer give an account of this experience in two languages?

To ensure that non-Scots speakers are able to understand the poem

To contrast Scots and English

To give an impression of the difference between speech and writing

To ensure that the poem would be attractive to publishers.

1. What impression are we given of the relationship between the mother and child?

The child is frightened of her mother

The child feels cared for

The child resents her mother for sending her to school

The child feels that her mother had little influence on her

1. What points does the writer make about the acceptance of Scots, as she perceives it? Choose **two** answers.

Some think Scots can be used in speech but not in writing

Scots is not permitted in any way within schools

Scots is thought of as being lower in status than English

Scots is valued and encouraged in schools.

### Activity 3: Grammar

Answer these questions to demonstrate an understanding of the meaning and effect of the language used.

1. Look at the words ‘pu’ed’, ‘an’, and ‘gie’d. Why do these words have apostrophes?

To indicate possession

To show that some letters have been omitted

To demonstrate that the words are unique to Scots

To demonstrate that these are ‘loan words’ from another language.

1. Look at the word ‘Ah’d’ (‘… tae the place Ah’d learn tae say’)
2. Why is the word ‘Ah’d’ capitalised?

It is an adverb

It is a pronoun

It is a determiner

It is a contraction

1. Why is there an apostrophe within the word ‘Ah’d’?

It is an adverb

It is a pronoun

It is a determiner

It is a contraction

1. What does the word ‘that’ add to the phrase ‘that bitter’?

It acts as an intensifier

It acts as a determiner

It acts as a preposition

It acts as a pronoun

### Activity 4: Connotations and Inferences

Answer these questions to demonstrate you understand the connotations and inferences of the word choice used.

1. What are the connotations of the word ‘dreich’? Choose **three** answers.

comfort anxiety fear enthusiasm weariness

discomfort tedium anger bleakness hope

1. What are the connotations of the word ‘happed’? Choose **two** answers.

comfort defense immunity shelter freedom

## Outcome 2

Read over ‘Bairnsang’ again. In groups, discuss Lochhead’s assertion that:

the way it had to be said
was as if you were posh, grown-up, male, English and dead.

Points for discussion:

Think about Lochhead’s list of adjectives – posh, grown-up, male, English, and dead.

* Posh – To what extent is language, register, accent influenced by class? Are certain languages and accents accompanied by stereotypes?
* Grown-up – To what extent do you agree that speech and register are affected by age?
* Male – Is gender a factor in how people speak and the language that they use?
* English – Is English considered a superior language to other indigenous languages in the UK? If so, why?
* Dead – To what extent is the school curriculum focused on dead male writers?

## Option A

Creative: Write a poem, short story or excerpt from a novel featuring a person who struggles in society because of the language that they use. The piece can be reflective or imaginative.

## Option B

Discursive: Write a discursive essay about language hierarchy. The piece can be balanced or persuasive.

Your piece should be written in Scots, and you must ensure that you:

* select appropriate ideas;
* use a suitable format – for example, paragraphs and/or subheadings;
* demonstrate that you know Scots vocabulary and have an understanding of Scots grammar.