

The Ballad of Janitor MacKay by Margaret Green

I wis playin keepie uppie
in the street outside the schule,
when Jock McCann's big brither
who's an idjit an a fule,

went an tuk ma fitba aff me
an he dunted it too hard
an it stated ower the railins
inty the janny's yard.

Aw, Mackay's a mean auld scunner.
He wis dossin in the sun,
an when ma fitba pit wan oan him
big McCann beganty run,

an Mackay picked up ma fitba
an he looked at me an glowered
but I stood ma ground, fur naebody
will say that I'm a coward.

But when he lowped the palins
an he fell an skint his nose
I tukty ma heels an beltit
right up ma granny's close.

I could feel the sterrwell shakin
as efter me he tore,
an he nearly cracked his wallies
as he cursed at me an swore.

'O save me gran,' I stuttered
as I reached ma granny's hoose,
fur Mackay wis getting nearer
an his face wis turnin puce.

Noo, my gran wis hivin tea
wi Effie Bruce and Mrs Scobie,
an when she heard the stushie
she cam beltin through the loaby.

Ma gran is only fower fit ten
but she kens whit she's aboot,
'Yev hud it noo, Mackay,' I cried,
'Ma gran will sort ye oot!'

See the janny? See ma granny?
Ma granny hit um wi a sanny
then she timmed the bucket owerum
an he tummelt doon the sterr
an he landed in the dunny
wi the baikie in his herr.

Fortune changes awfy sudden –
imagine he cried me a midden!

(I goat ma ba back but.)

Learning Resources

Reading

Read the poem and listen to the audio file.

If there are unfamiliar words, try to work out what they mean according to their context, or look them up using a Scots dictionary – you can use an online Scots dictionary at www.dsl.ac.uk.

Task

Think about the connotations of some of the words in the poem.

1. 'an he **dunted** it too hard'. 'Dunted' means 'hit', but what does it tell us about the way the ball was hit?
2. 'an he looked at me an **glowered**'. What does the word 'glowered' tell us about the way that Mackay felt?
3. 'I tukty ma heels an **beltit** right up ma granny's close.'

What does the word 'beltit' tell us about the way that the speaker in the poem was moving?

4. 'O save me gran,' I **stuttered**'. What does the word 'stuttered' tell us about how the speaker in the poem felt?

Listening/Talking

Discuss the following statements:

Children should not play in the street

Children should be allowed to play where they like

Adults have no right to take children's toys away from them

The janitor should not have given the ball back

Granny should have spoken to the janitor in a reasonable manner

Granny had every right to hit the janitor

Jock McCann's big brother should have been punished

Modern children are misunderstood

1. Have you been blamed at some time for something that you did not do? What happened? How did you feel? Was justice done eventually or not?
2. Granny had two ladies to tea, one called Effie Bruce and the other called Mrs Scobie. Why do you think that only one of the ladies is given the title Mrs?

Writing

Write a poem or story about this incident from the perspective of another character:

Jock McCann's big brither

Janitor Mackay

Granny