



Scots Language Award

History and Development: Linguistic features of the Scots language
(Outcomes 2.4 and 2.5)
(SCQF levels 5 and 6)

Aim:

- To demonstrate that you can explain linguistic features of Scots; and
- provide examples of these features to support your explanation.

Activity 1: Read

Read through Morna Young's short story, '[The Twa Chrisses](#)' or listen to it being read aloud.

Activity 2: Focus on wh-labiodentalization

Look at the following quotation:

It stairted wi a buik. It stairted **fan** the teacher said the wirds, those unknowinst beluivit wirds. And it stairted **fan** I repeatit thaim tae ma granny –

This is an example of a language feature called 'wh-labiodentalization'.

A) What is the English translation of the word, 'fan'?



Answer: when

B) In your own words, explain what wh-labiodentalization is.

Answer: It is when people merge the 'f' sound with the 'th' sound in speech.

This feature is commonly associated with Doric / North East Scots.

C) Look through the story and provide two other examples of words that demonstrate wh-labiodentalization.

Answers: fit / far

Activity 3: Focus on forming negatives

Look at the following quotation:

An granny **didna** need tae tell me, for I kent that this wis the treisur I didna even ken I wis luikin for.

The auxiliary (helper) verb, 'didna' has been changed from 'did', to make it negative.

A) In Scots, which suffix (ending) is normally added to an auxiliary verb to make it negative?

Possible answers: -na or -nae

B) From the story, find another two examples of words that demonstrate this feature.

Possible answers: (hinna / dinna / disna / hivna

C) From outwith the story, give an example of a word that demonstrates this feature.

*Possible answers: cannae/canna; cudnae/cudna; michtnae/michtna;
shudnae/shudna; wullnae/wullna/winnae/winna.*



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D) What would we do to make an auxiliary verb negative in English? Provide two examples to support your explanation.

Possible answer: not would be added to or used with the verb, e.g. cannot, will not, do not / can't, won't, don't

Activity 4: Focus on present participles

Look at the following quotation:

Aye. Chris I wis. Niver Christine. And I ay likit that aa'na. Liked **bein** a quine wi a name that could be baithe or aither.

A) Which word class does the word 'be' belong to? Verb, adverb, noun, adjective?
Give a reason for your answer.

Answer: verb, as it describes/represents an action

B) What did the writer do to the verb 'be' to indicate that they are using the present participle, and how does this differ to what happens in English?

Answer: added -in, whereas as -ing would be added in English

C) From the story, find two other examples of verbs in their present participle form.

Answer: luikin / seein / pittin / guttin. Do not accept naethin / aathin



D) Complete the following table to demonstrate your understanding of how to form the present participle of the Scots words:

Word	Present participle
bide	<i>bidin</i>
birl	<i>birlin</i>
blether	<i>bletherin</i>
greet	<i>greetin</i>
mind	<i>mindin</i>
speir	<i>speirin</i>

Activity 5: Focus on past tense of weak verbs

Look at the following quotation:

I **breithit** in the stourie scent, the sweet musk o a story, **passit** haun tae haun, an layered wi life.

Let's focus on the verbs in bold – '**breithit**' and '**passit**'.

A) What have we done to these verbs to indicate that they are past tense, and how does this differ from what happens in English?

*Answer: added '-it'. * In English, '-ed' would be added.*

Teachers' Note: In Scots, weak verbs that end in -b, -d, -g, -k, -p, -t usually have -it added to them to indicate that they are being used in the past tense.

However, -t is used for verbs that end in -il, -en, -er, -ch, -tch, -sh, -ss, -f (for example, laucht). Furthermore, -elt is added where words would end with -le, for example 'trauchelt'. Also, some verbs have -(e)d added, such as (breenge(d)).



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So we cannot say that Scots *always* used the -it' suffix to indicate that a weak verb is being used in past tense. It is more accurate to say that English used the -ed suffix but Scots has various options.

B) From the story, find five more examples of verbs that follow the same grammatical structure to indicate that they are past tense.

Possible answers include: beluvit / lichtit / haudit / likit / savit / seemit / makkit / maskit / affrontit / askit / needit / borrit / harkit / learntit / turnit. Do not accept forrit.

C) Consider the verbs, 'bide' and 'greet'.

a. What is the past tense of 'bide'?

Answer: bade

b. What is the past tense of 'greet'?

Answer: gret / grat

c. Why do the words 'bide' and 'greet' not follow the same rule as 'breithe - breithit' and 'pass – passit'?

Answer: 'bide' and 'greet' are strong verbs, so we change their vowels to show that they are being used to indicate past tense.