

## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: Virtual Visit Lessons

### Overview

In this lesson pupils explore the popularity of Burns and his work during his lifetime and after his death

### Background Information

- > Burns moved to a small house in Dumfries with his wife and children in 1791 after auctioning the stock and crops at Ellisland Farm
- > Whilst in Dumfries he was promoted in his excise work and received an increased salary
- > He also had a little more time to write many songs in this period of his life
- > In 1793 he moved to this house (Robert Burns House) with 3 bedrooms, a parlour, a kitchen and even a small study. The Burns family employed a maid servant here. The house was also well furnished and carpeted. Burns's wife Jean was well dressed and she was one of the first women in Dumfries to have a dress of gingham – a very expensive material at the time
- > Burns's health deteriorated while he lived here – his heart was under great strain, and he could no longer work. Eventually on July 21st 1796 he died aged 37
- > His popularity was such that his death brought great sorrow nationally
- > An enormous crowd gathered to watch his funeral procession and he was buried in St Michael's churchyard near his home. On that same day, his wife gave birth to a son.
- > It was believed that his simple grave was an insufficient memorial to the poet and so the building of a mausoleum for Burns was agreed.
- > In 1815 his body was exhumed and placed inside. When his wife, Jean, died in 1834 (38 years after the death of her husband) her body was also placed in the mausoleum
- > While the vault was opened for Jean's burial, the opportunity was taken to make a cast of Burns' skull
- > The cult of Burns rapidly rose to huge proportions and today his appeal is universal. People of all ages and nationalities continue to celebrate his life all over the world through Burns Nights, Festivals and Societies (Burns Clubs).

### Curricular Links

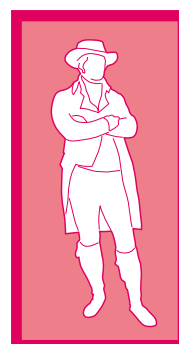
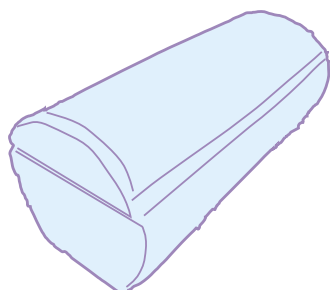
5-14 Environmental Studies (Levels C/D):

People in the Past – People events and societies of significance from the past

Change, continuity, cause and effect

Time and historical sequence

Nature of historical evidence



## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: Virtual Visit Lessons

### Learning outcomes

Pupils will recognise that:

- > Burns' lifestyle improved in his latter years but his health deteriorated
- > Healthcare was not as it is today and Burns died at the age of 37.
- > Burns' popularity is still as strong today and his life and work are celebrated around the world

### Skills

- > Plan a sequence of activities for tackling an enquiry
- > Suggest sources of information to assist in enquiry tasks
- > Select known enquiry methods/equipment to access, select and record information
- > Select and record specific information from a variety of sources
- > Select techniques to process/classify information
- > Present findings communicating key points clearly

### Resources Required

Robert Burns House, Dumfries Virtual Tour  
Planning a Burns Supper Sheet  
Healthy Menu Planner Sheet  
Paints/crayons/pencils  
Large sheets of drawing paper  
Blank A4 paper/card  
Selection of Scots song/poetry books (optional)  
Selection of Scots CDs (optional)  
Song - Auld Lang Syne  
Map of Scotland Sheet (found in the Actual Visits section)

## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: Pre Visit Activity Details

### Discussion Compare And Contrast Burns' early life with his life in Dumfries

Burns' lifestyle improved in his latter years. In 1793 he moved to this house with 3 bedrooms, a parlour, a kitchen and even a small study after a promotion in his excise work. The Burns family employed a maidservant here. The house was also well furnished and carpeted. Burns was keen Jean was well dressed and she was one of the first women in Dumfries to have a dress of gingham – a very expensive material at the time.

Ask pupils to compare and contrast this to Burns' early life in the cottage his father built in Alloway (see Burns Cottage, Alloway Virtual Tour and Notes).

### Discussion Compare And Contrast Healthcare

Healthcare in the 18th Century was not as it is today. Infant mortality was high and adults tended to die young also.

Burns did not keep well during his lifetime and suffered with rheumatic illnesses. Burns died at the age of 37 of heart disease induced by his rheumatic fever.

Discuss with pupils the basic nature of medical care in days gone by, where people relied on herbal or plant based medicines and basic medical techniques.

Discuss the food people ate (or did not as the case may be) and how this would affect their general health – lack of meat for proteins (healthy bones and teeth), lack of a balanced diet (vitamin deficiency) etc.

Compare healthcare in Burns' time to that of today. The NHS system, hospital care, accident and emergency, the GP system, immunisation programmes, herbal and homeopathic cures, latest scientific research and equipment.

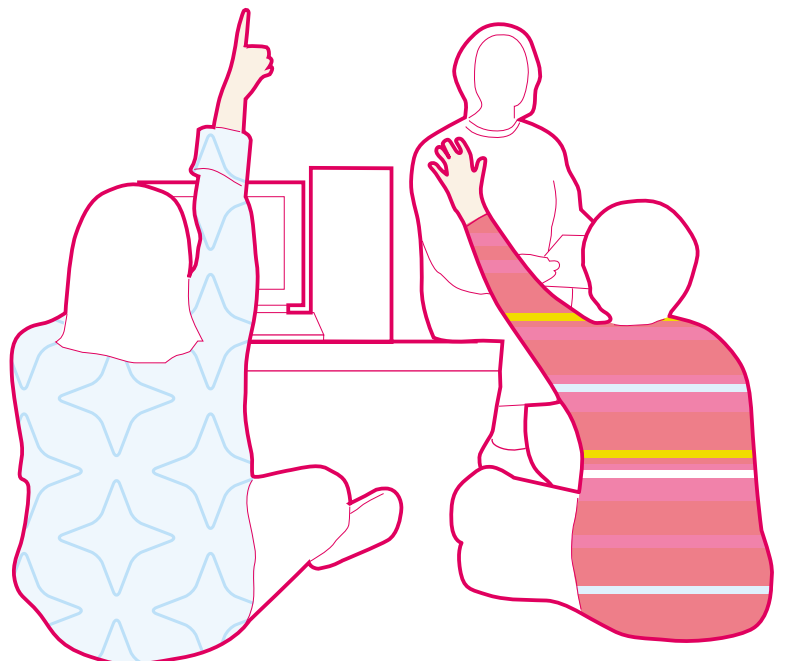
Compare life expectancy in the 21st Century with that of the 18th Century.

### Discussion Burns' Popularity Today

Discuss what pupils knew about Burns before starting their project (from what their families have told them, from TV, from newspapers, from visits etc) . This will allow them to gauge for themselves the popularity of 'the national bard'!

What do they know about Burns' Nights and Burns Suppers? Have they ever been to any? What is eaten, who is toasted, what poems are recited, what songs are sung?

Discuss the format of a Burns supper with your pupils using the Planning a Burns Supper Sheet.



## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: The Virtual Visit

### Virtual Tour

Now, use the virtual tour to explore the variety of historical objects situated in this venue. Click on Learning and then the Virtual Tours Button on the website [www.burnsscotland.com](http://www.burnsscotland.com) and selecting this venue.

Each object relates specifically to the learning outcomes above.

(This could be carried out with small groups at computers or as a class using an interactive whiteboard.)

### Portrait of Jean Armour

*Description:* This portrait shows Jean Armour as an older woman. She lived on for 38 years after her husband died

### Jean Armour's Spectacles

*Description:* The spectacles seen here belonged to Jean Armour

### Jean Armour's bible

*Description:* The church was strict about how people lived in the 18th Century, so religion was very important to the Burns family.

This bible belonged to Jean Armour and her signature can be seen on the title page. She would read it each day to herself or read it aloud to her family to help guide their daily life.

### Curved branch walking stick

*Description:* This curved branch walking stick belonged to Robert Burns. In his later years he had developed a stoop from his years working in the fields – perhaps this stick was used to help ease his stiff back while he walked!

### Scratching of name on window

*Description:* Burns scratched his name on the study window of this house with a diamond ring.

He was fond of doing this, and his inscriptions can be seen on many other panes of glass in places he visited (there are at least 14 examples of this in the National Burns Collection)!

### General View of Bedroom

*Description:* This is the bedroom where Burns died at the age of 37.

### Photograph of the Funeral of Burns

*Description:* This picture shows the funeral of Burns. The funeral route was lined with thousands of mourners showing just how talented and popular he had been in his lifetime.



## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: The Virtual Visit

<b>Newspaper account of Burns' death</b>	<i>Description:</i> This notice of Burns' death tells us about all that he achieved during his short, but very successful life.
<b>Dumfries Burns Club booklet</b>	<i>Description:</i> People were keen to celebrate Burns' talent and within ten years of his death, Burns Clubs were springing up everywhere.  Nowadays Burns Clubs have been set up all over the world and Burns Night (January 25th, Burns' birthday) is celebrated all over the world too.
<b>Photograph of Burns Centenary celebration 1896</b>	<i>Description:</i> This very old photograph shows huge celebrations taking place 100 years after Burns' death. His work is still as popular today all over the world over 200 years later!
<b>Burns Monument, Alloway (a painting from the collection at Burns Cottage, Alloway)</b>	<i>Description:</i> Burns Monument was built in Alloway to remember Scotland's most famous poet. It was opened in 1823.  It was built on a hill nearby because of its excellent view of the cottage where he was brought up. The views of Kirk Alloway and Brig o' Doon, described in his greatest poem Tam O' Shanter, were also superb from this hill.
<b>Site where Burns was originally buried</b>	<i>Description:</i> This is the site where Burns was first buried in 1796. His body was moved from this site in 1815 because it was decided he should have a much more grand resting place and a mausoleum (an ornate burial chamber) was built nearby. Take the Virtual Tour of Burns Mausoleum.
<b>Mausoleum</b>	<i>Description:</i> In 1815 Burns' remains were moved to a tomb under the mausoleum (a large and very grand burial place) built in his memory. His wife, Jean Armour and several of his sons are also buried here.
<b>Cast of Burns' Skull</b>	In 1834 while the vault of the mausoleum (the large, grand burial place of Burns) was opened to bury his wife Jean, a cast of Burns' skull was made. In the 19th Century, there was great interest in phrenology, a 'science' which claimed that the shape of the skull signified a person's character. This is a copy of that cast.

## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: Suggested Post Visit Activities

### Healthcare

The foods people ate in the 18th Century affected their health and life expectancy. Such was the lack of a balanced diet, people suffered all manner of illnesses.

### Menu Planner

Ask pupils to devise a healthy, well-balanced school lunch menu for a week. Each meal should consist of a main course, a dessert and a drink. What healthy alternatives are there to fried foods and sweet sugary snacks?

Use the Healthy Menu Planner Sheet to record work.

### Burns' Popularity Today Obituaries

Ask pupils to look at Burns' obituary from the London Herald by clicking on Virtual Tours, selecting this venue and finding this artefact

Do they think it is a fitting tribute to Burns? Ask pupils to write their own obituary to Burns, detailing the key parts of his life they are most interested in.

Are there any other famous people the pupils know of who have died, or maybe pupils have had a pet that has died? You may wish to get them to write obituaries for those people/pets too.

### The Wrinklies

Ask pupils to look at the portrait of Jean Armour as an older woman by clicking on Virtual Tours, selecting this venue and finding this painting. Compare this image of Jean with the statue of her as a young girl, by clicking on Learning and then Virtual Tours, selecting the Burns House Museum, Mauchline venue and finding the statue. See also the statue of Jean as a young woman outside St Michael's Kirkyard, Dumfries.

Examine her face. What signs of aging do pupils see - lines, wrinkles, grey hair, drooping skin?

Robert Burns died at the age of 37. What would he have looked like as an older man?

Examine a picture of a young Burns (you'll find several in the image gallery on [www.burnsscotland.com](http://www.burnsscotland.com)) and ask pupils to draw or paint a picture of him as an older man should he have lived as long as Jean.

### Let Me Entertain You!

Use the Planning a Burns Supper Sheet to give your pupils an overview of how a Burns Supper is run.

Divide pupils into groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to look at the entertainment sections of the supper (Piping in Guests / Music for Guests' Arrival AND Piping in the Haggis AND Entertainment after Dinner).

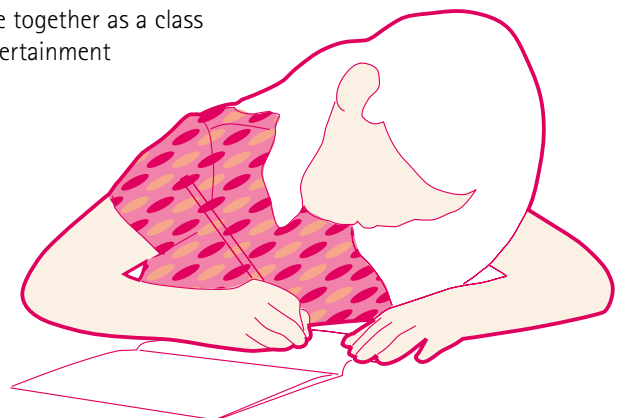
What music could be used or indeed created for the entry of the guests? It may be a choice from CDs or performed by pupils themselves or it may be that pupils know of someone they could ask to help out. Ask pupils to list their ideas.

Next, ask them to think about piping in the haggis. Who will do this? Is there an alternative to a piper? At the time of Burns fiddle music was also popular for instance and some Burns Suppers employ a fiddler to bring in the haggis. Will they use recorded music? Ask pupils to list their ideas.

Lastly, ask pupils to think about after dinner entertainment. What Burns / Scots poems or songs do they know that could be performed in this section? Can anyone play Scots music on an instrument?

Can anyone sing Scots Songs? Ask pupils to list their ideas.

When all groups have listed ideas, come together as a class and decide on the final selection of entertainment for your Burns Supper.



## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: Suggested Post Visit Activities

<p><b>Design a Programme</b></p>	<p>Ask pupils to design a programme for their Burns Supper. What image will they choose for the front cover? What colours best represent the occasion? What type of lettering will they use?</p> <p>Think about the running order of the evening. How long will each section last? Ask pupils to mark out time slots for each activity. Opposite each time slot, pupils should then write the activity and the performer(s).</p>
<p><b>Food, Glorious Food</b></p>	<p>The traditional meal for a Burns Supper is haggis, neeps and tatties, but deciding how much is needed for a Burns Supper is harder than planning for a small family!</p> <p>Ask pupils to think about the guest list for their supper. How many people will be invited?</p> <p>How will they work out how many haggis, turnips and potatoes they will require? How much will it cost? What budget do they have? Who could provide advice on amounts? How will the food be sourced? Where will it be cooked and by whom? What will guests drink? Will there be a dessert? And what alternative will there be for vegetarians?</p> <p>After this discussion, ask pupils to design the menu cover for the evening and detail the food that will be eaten.</p>
<p><b>Auld Lang Syne</b></p>	<p>Learn the words and actions to this traditional favourite. Click on Learning and then the Poetry and Songs section of the website for an abridged version.</p>
<p><b>Budding Architects</b></p>	<p>Ask pupils to look at Burns Monument in Alloway and the Mausoleum in Dumfries by clicking on Learning and then Virtual Tours, selecting both the Alloway and Dumfries monuments to Burns.</p> <p>Do pupils think that these are appropriate memorials to Burns? Why build something grand and prominent? What does this say about Burns?</p> <p>If they were architects, what design would they have created? Where would it be situated? What height/shape would it be? What would it be made of? What carvings/pictures would be integrated into the design? Would there be any wording on the monument? Would it have an alternative use? e.g. as a shelter for people</p> <p>Ask pupils to draw and annotate a design for an alternative monument/mausoleum.</p>
<p><b>Time Line Date-o-mania</b></p>	<p>Begin a class timeline on a long piece of paper or card. Mount this on the wall. Plot the year Burns went to live in Dumfries.</p> <p>Discuss with pupils any other important world events going on at the time. You may wish to have another long piece of paper or card situated below this one on the wall to enable pupils to compare relevant Burn-related dates with the other important dates you have noted.</p>
<p><b>Plot It</b></p>	<p>Ask pupils to plot Dumfries on the blank Map of Scotland Sheet. You may also wish to plot some other key venues in Burns' life on the map too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Mauchline (first met future wife Jean Armour here)</li> <li>&gt; Alloway (birthplace)</li> <li>&gt; Tarbolton (set up the Bachelors' Club here)</li> <li>&gt; Edinburgh (went here to promote his Kilmarnock Edition of poetry)</li> <li>&gt; Ellisland (farmed here and began his excise career here)</li> </ul> <p>Burns toured Scotland to both research and promote his work. Ask pupils to find out where Burns went on his tours of Scotland. Plot these on the map too.</p>

## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: Planning a Burns Supper

This running order covers everything you need to know in order to plan a Burns Supper and can be adapted accordingly for school-aged pupils.

### **Piping in the guests**

A piper usually welcomes the guests, but some piped music will do instead. The piper plays until the Top Table is ready to be seated. Alternatively, a fiddle is sometimes used at Burns Suppers.

### **Welcome**

An appointed person welcomes guests.

### **The Selkirk Grace**

A short prayer by Burns called the Selkirk Grace is read.

### **Piping in the Haggis**

Guests stand to welcome in the haggis – it is usually delivered on a silver plate by a procession consisting of the chef, the piper and the person who will 'address' the haggis. During the procession, guests clap in time to the music until the haggis reaches the table it will rest upon.

### **Address to the Haggis**

The music stops and everyone listens to the poem Address to a Haggis. The reader should have a knife in their hand ready to stab the haggis when he / she says "His knife see Rustic-labour dight" allowing its contents to burst out.

The poem ends with the reader raising the haggis at the final line "Gie her a Haggis!". The audience claps enthusiastically at the end of this.

### **Toast to the Haggis**

The audience joins in the toast to the haggis. The haggis is then served with neeps (turnips) and tatties (potatoes) after being taken back to the kitchen (usually) to be served up.

### **Dinner**

Dinner is served with some suitable background music. Usually cock-a leekie soup is the starter and clootie dumpling is served as pudding. Wine or ale should be served with dinner with whisky for afters!

### **After the meal**

Often a singer or musician will perform Burns' songs or someone will recite Burns' poems.

### **The Immortal Memory**

The main speaker takes the stage to tell of Burns' life – partly serious, partly fun. He finishes with a toast: "To the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns!"

### **Next...**

More Burns' poems or songs.

### **The Toast to the Lasses**

This toast should praise the role of women in the world today and should mention some relevant quotations from Burns' works. It should finish "To the Lassies!"

### **Next...**

More Burns' poems or songs.

### **The Reply to the Toast to the Lasses**

A lass has the right to reply to the previous toast. A chosen lass should thank the toast-master for his kind words first, then should mention some relevant quotations from Burns' works along with relevant aspects of his life to provide a reply to the previous toast.

### **Final entertainment**

A final entertainer entertains the audience.

### **Vote of thanks**

The host thanks everyone who has contributed to a wonderful evening.

### **Auld Lang Syne**

The host closes the evening by asking guests to sing Auld Lang Syne. The company joins hands and sings loudly.

## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: Poems

### Auld Lang Syne (Abridged)

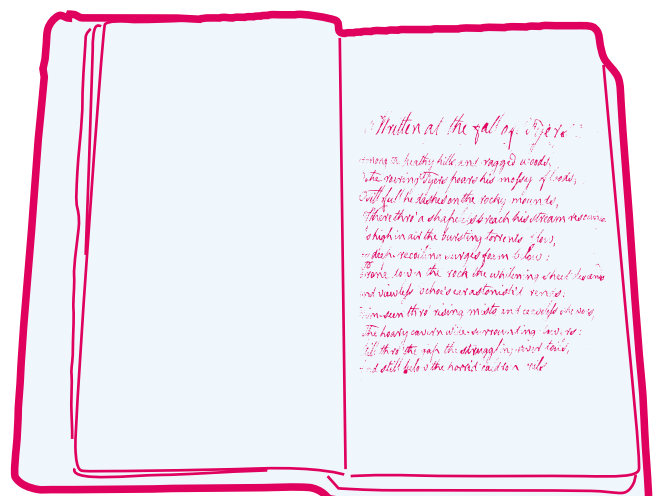
Chorus

For auld lang syne, my dear,  
For auld lang syne,  
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,  
For auld lang syne,

Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
And auld lang syne?

We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,  
Frae mornin' sun till dine;  
But seas between us braid hae roar'd  
Sin' auld lang syne.

And there's a hand, my trusty fiere!  
And gie's a hand o' thine!  
And we'll tak a right gude-willie waught,  
For auld lang syne.





## Robert Burns House, Dumfries: Healthy Menu Planner Sheet

Plan a healthy main course, dessert and drink for each day of school lunches.

Day	Main Course	Dessert	Drink
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			