



Walter Scott's Short Poems: Notes for Teachers

Often people assume Walter Scott only wrote long narrative poems, but he also wrote shorter poems throughout his life and short pieces of verse also appear in his novels. This pack includes eight poems, which have been taken from *The Shorter Poems* and *Poetry from the Waverley Novels and Other Works*. Some of them are part of longer poems, but these activities are standalone and do not require this wider context.

These poems can be used in a variety of ways including:

- To introduce Walter Scott and his work
- In preparation for a unit on Walter Scott
- In preparation for a visit to Abbotsford
- To follow on from a visit to Abbotsford
- As stand-alone work for pupils
- As group work that leads to discussion, presentations, or a follow-on writing task
- As comparative poetry to be used alongside work from other poets

In the 'Short Poems Activity' worksheet (which can be printed and given out to pupils), each poem has three comprehension questions and a question that can be used as a springboard for further thought or an additional activity. In addition, several 'Thematic questions' which ask the students to find and discuss two or more of the poems can be found at the end of this document, along with a Word Bank. Both pages can be printed or shown on a screen in the classroom.



Walter Scott 1771-1832

The editions used in this resource are: Scott, Walter, *The Shorter Poetry*, ed. by P. D. Garside and Gillian Hughes, The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry 7 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), and Scott, Walter, *Poetry from the Waverley Novels and Other Works*, ed. by David Hewitt, The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry 8 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024).





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Walter Scott's Short Poems: Answers

First lines	Answers
Birds of omen dark and foul	1. Night-crow, raven, bat, owl 2. A sick man (or sick people) 3. They go back to their homes (caves, towers, clumps of ivy, old ruins)
Look not thou on Beauty's charming	1. You should not enjoy them (not look at beauty, not stand up and fight when kings get ready for war, not drink the wine, not speak when people are listening, not listen to songs, not take/spend money). 2. It means to be empty, to not be occupied with anything. 3. The speaker thinks that you should live a simple, quiet life OR The speaker is being sarcastic and thinks living a simple, quiet life is boring.
Of yore, in Old England, it was not thought good	1. Twenty 2. Choose from: man, woman, child, dog, mouse, saw, chisel, screw 3. Answers include: the use of exaggeration (e.g. reading the Riot Act); frequent exclamation marks; referring to Alexandre's 'wonders'
The western breezes fan the brook	1. He is watching his fishing hook on the water. 2. There is light wind (the wind is strong enough to be noticeable but the words 'float' and 'dancing' suggest that the wind is not strong enough to toss the hook about). 3. Wily means cunning (pupils can look this up in the word bank). It is likely that something bad will happen to the angler/the mermaid will trick him.
Soldier, wake—the day is peeping	1. He needs to fight and win honour. 2. Honour (in this case) is the respect and admiration someone can gain from fighting well; the soldier needs to fight to get this honour.



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	3. The shields are the morning's mirror. The morning is reflected in them.
Anna-Marie, love, up is the sun,	1. He wants her to wake up (it's implied to spend time with him). 2. Answers include: 'singing free,' 'blythe horn,' 'merry from rock and from tree,' 3. Sleeping is better.
My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here	1. Pupils' own choices. 2. There are deer and roe to chase (hunt). 3. There's nothing there but vegetables and poor young men.
Fortune, you say, flies from us—She but circles	1. A sea-bird 2. A small boat which has a fowler (bird hunter) on it 3. People's luck changes; sometimes they are lucky, and sometimes they are unlucky.

Thematic Questions

Choose one of the four questions below and answer the questions.

1. Find two or more poems in which something unexpected happens.
 - a. What unexpected thing happens in each poem?
 - b. What similarities and differences are there between the poems?
 - c. What do you think will happen next?
2. Find two or more poems about morning.
 - a. Do the poems or the people in the poems like the morning?



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- b. How do the poems describe night time and morning time?
 - c. Do you prefer night or morning? How would you explain your answer to the poet or one of the characters in the poem?
3. Find two or more poems that are positive about life.
 - a. What positive things do these poems suggest about life?
 - b. What lessons could be learned from these poems?
 - c. What things do you think are positive about life?
4. Find two or more poems about an interesting meeting.
 - a. Who meets whom in each poem?
 - b. Do you think the meetings are going to go well?
 - c. Out of the poems you have chosen, which one do you think will have the best outcome after the meeting?

Word Bank

Word	Definition
Angler	A fisherman
Assemblage	Things or people gathered together
Blythe	Nice, pleasant
Breeks	Trousers
Callans	Boys, young men [also callants]
Dingled-bower	A cosy woodland place



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Foeman	Enemy
Fowler	A person who hunts wild birds
Hark	Listen
Hose	Old-fashioned trousers
Ivy-tod	Covered in ivy
Riot Act	A law that was read out to large groups of people, telling them to go home
Roe	A type of deer
Shoon	Shoes
Skiff	A small boat
Syboes	A type of spring onion
Troop	A large group (usually of soldiers)
Vacant	Empty
Wily	Cunning



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