



Walter Scott 1771-1832

Who was Walter Scott?

Can you imagine what life was like before electricity? When houses were dark and cold? When you could not go online or play video games? That was what life was like in 1771, the year in which Walter Scott was born.

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When Walter Scott was only five years old, he got very sick. But medicine was not as good as it is now, so everyone was very worried. To help him get better, his parents sent him to live with his grandparents in the Scottish Borders. It must have been difficult to be away from his parents but, as every cloud has its silver lining, there were some good things too.

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From his grandparents and their friends, Scott heard all sorts of old stories. He loved stories of magic, adventure, mystery, and war. When he finally returned to Edinburgh and went to school he read, 'the usual, or rather ten times the usual, quantity of fairy tales, Eastern stories, [and] romances.' (Romances in those days were adventure stories, not love stories). When he was older, he wrote poems and novels full of these things!

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When he was a young man, he went on 'border raids' to the countryside, where he would collect old stories and songs. His first published works were translations of German ballads. He followed these in 1802 with a collection of traditional Scottish songs, which he called *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*. He published his first book-length poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, just three years later in 1805. It had lots of exciting characters, a magic book, rides under moonlight, and love. People could not get enough of it, and it made Scott very famous. Because it was set in Scotland, people from elsewhere fell in love with the

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DID YOU KNOW...?

Walter Scott was known by lots of different names in his life.

In his poem, 'Law versus Love,' Scott's friend calls him Wattie.

Because he wrote about the history and beauty of Scotland, some people called him The Wizard of the North.

He did not put his name on his novels so lots of people called him The Great Unknown, or The Author of Waverley (*Waverley* was his first novel).

In 1820, he was given a title, which means he became Sir Walter Scott.

Do you have any other names?

What do your friends call you?

What about the adults in your life?



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country through this poem. Even today, people like to visit the places featured in Scott's poems.

35 Novels were next. Scott's first novel, *Waverley*, was an instant success in 1814. Soon the names of Scott's larger-than-life heroes, heroines, and villains were in everyone's mouths: Ivanhoe, Rebecca, Madge Wildfire, and Waverley were soon household names in and outside of Scotland. Sometimes Scott wrote about
40 real historical people, such as Rob Roy and Mary Queen of Scots, but his real talent was bringing fictional people to life.

Scott was famous for more than just his writing, though. He also organised a special ceremony when King George came to Edinburgh. For the first time, people from the capital found
45 themselves wearing kilts and listening to bagpipes – things that had only been part of Highland culture before. He also helped save the Scottish banking system, wrote nonfiction pieces of work, and built an impressive estate in the Borders – Abbotsford – which you can still visit today.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Walter Scott liked animals. He had cats and dogs that he loved. If you look at his statue in Edinburgh, you'll see that there is also a statue of one of his dogs, Maida.

Scott created a character called Dandie Dinmont. This character had lots of dogs, and he called them all Pepper and Mustard! There is now an entire breed of dogs called Dandie Dinmonts.

Walter Scott's home, Abbotsford, has a Dandie Dinmont parade, where people bring their dogs!

Do you have any animal friends?

Have you seen a Dandie Dinmont dog. What did it look like? If not, can you guess what it would look like by its name?

Have you seen any statues of animals? Where were they and what did they look like?



Questions

True or false:

1. Scott was ill when he was a child.
2. Scott first became famous because of his novels.
3. Scott never wrote about real historical people.
4. Kilts were popular in Edinburgh before Scott organised the king's visit.
5. Scott wrote poetry, novels, and non-fiction.

Look and Answer:

1. Look at lines 1-5. When was Walter Scott born?
2. Look at lines 21-32. What language did Scott translate from at the beginning of his career?
3. Look at lines 21-32. What was the name of Walter Scott's first poem?
4. Look at lines 34-40. What is the name of Walter Scott's first novel?
5. Look at lines 42-49. What is the name of the house that Scott built?

Think and Discuss:

1. Why do you think people liked Scott's poetry?
2. What do you think Scott did on his 'border raids'?
3. Why do you think Scott is on some bank notes?
4. What are your favourite fictional characters? Why do you like them?
5. Do you know of any places named after Walter Scott or any other writer?



Answers

True or false:

1. True.
2. False.
3. False.
4. False.
5. True.

Look and answer:

1. 1771.
2. German.
3. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.
4. *Waverley*.
5. Abbotsford.

Think and discuss:

Pupils' own answers but keep the following in mind:

1. His poems 'had lots of exciting characters, a magic book, rides under moonlight, and love.'
2. He heard stories and songs.
3. He helped save the Scottish banking system.
4. Pupils' own answers.
5. Pupils' own answers.