

S2 English: Discursive Writing and Scots Language Unit

Unit plan. Third level. Roughly 16 lessons (5 to 6 weeks).

Overview

This unit uses Scots language as the context for teaching discursive writing. The end point is an essay on the question: *Should Scots language be compulsory within the Scottish curriculum?*

Along the way pupils look at language, dialect and idiolect, national identity, and the history of languages in Scotland and the UK. They build up evidence from research, the Rebel Tongue documentary and an interview with someone in their family. Lesson numbers are a rough guide only.

Aims

The S2 Discursive Writing Unit aims to:

- Ø Introduce the key elements of discursive writing
- Ø Encourage engagement in controversial and current topics that could be the focus of discursive writing
- Ø Encourage the practice of discursive writing
- Ø Encourage listening and interviewing skills
- Ø Encourage the use of evidence, partly based on research, to support ideas

Learning objectives

By the end of the unit, pupils will be able to:

1. Explain the difference between persuasive writing and discursive (argumentative) writing.
2. Define language, dialect and idiolect, and describe features of their own idiolect.
3. Explain why the language/dialect distinction is contested
4. Recognise, understand and use a range of Scots words.
5. Describe key events in the history of Scots and the arguments about its status.
6. Find and evaluate information from reliable sources, including census data.
7. Plan, conduct and record an interview, and judge the credibility of the interviewee.
8. Plan and write a discursive essay with a clear introduction, arguments for and against supported by evidence, and a balanced conclusion.

Curriculum for Excellence links

Third level Experiences and Outcomes from Literacy and English and Social Studies. The right-hand column is a short note on where each one comes up. .

Code	Organiser	Where it comes up
LIT 3-02a	Listening and talking	Contributing to group and class discussion; respecting others' right to a different opinion on Scots.
ENG 3-03a	Listening and talking	Analysing features of spoken language: dialect, idiolect and register.
LIT 3-04a	Listening and talking	Identifying purpose and main concerns of <i>Rebel Tongue</i> and the Tom Scott video.
LIT 3-05a	Listening and talking	Making notes while watching and during the family interview.
LIT 3-06a	Listening and talking	Selecting and organising questions for the interview.
LIT 3-08a	Listening and talking	Assessing the value of sources, including interviewee credibility.
LIT 3-09a	Listening and talking	Communicating opinions and summarising points in discussion.
ENG 3-19a	Reading	Discussing theme and style in anthems, poems and ballads.
LIT 3-14a	Reading	Finding, sorting and summarising information from census data and websites.
LIT 3-15a	Reading	Making and organising research notes.
LIT 3-16a	Reading	Comparing persuasive and discursive texts.
LIT 3-18a	Reading	Recognising persuasion and judging the reliability of sources.
LIT 3-20a	Writing	Creating texts of choice: anthem draft, poster.
LIT 3-22a	Writing	Accurate sentence and paragraph structure in the essay.
LIT 3-23a	Writing	Reviewing and editing the draft essay.
LIT 3-24a	Writing	Layout and presentation of the favourite-word poster.
LIT 3-25a	Writing	Using notes to plan; acknowledging sources and choosing when to quote.
LIT 3-26a	Writing	Selecting and ordering arguments and evidence in a plan.
ENG 3-27a	Writing	Using language, style and tone suited to discursive writing.
LIT 3-28a	Writing	Explaining ideas: idiolect profile, UK languages reflection.
LIT 3-29a	Writing	Main outcome for the unit, assessed through the final essay.
SOC 3-02a	Social studies	How people and events have shaped the Scottish nation: history of Scots and national songs.

Unit at a glance

Lesson	Focus	Suggested outcomes	E&Os
1	What is discursive writing?	A colour-coded, annotated example text; a for/against T-chart on one light topic; a one-sentence definition of discursive writing in their own words	LIT 3-16a, LIT 3-18a
2	Choosing a good discursive topic	A group topic list sorted into "works" and "doesn't work", each with a reason	LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-09a
3	Language and dialect	A Scots glossary in jotters: word, meaning, and whether they or their family use it; a scale line from "same language" to "different language", with Scots placed on it and a one-sentence justification	LIT 3-02a, ENG 3-03a
4	Dialect and idiolect	A "My idiolect" profile: a short written piece or labelled diagram; paired comparison notes	ENG 3-03a, LIT 3-28a
5	Language and national identity	Notes on the origins of both songs; ideas for their own national anthem, finished as homework	SOC 3-02a, ENG 3-19a, LIT 3-20a
6	Introducing the essay question	A post-it with their initial view and one reason (kept on display for Lesson 14); a class for/against chart on compulsory chess at Cargilfield	LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-09a
7	Researching Scots	A research notes sheet with at least three facts or statistics, each with its source; a reliability rating for each source used	LIT 3-14a, LIT 3-15a, LIT 3-18a
8	Interview preparation	An interview question sheet; a recorded interview and summary notes, including two or three useful quotes	LIT 3-05a, LIT 3-06a, LIT 3-08a
9–10	Rebel Tongue	A completed worksheet; a running list of arguments for and against, taken from the documentary	LIT 3-04a, LIT 3-05a, SOC 3-02a
11	Scots in a world context	An annotated map showing where Scots and the Gaelic languages are spoken; short comparison notes on Scots and the Gaelic varieties	LIT 3-04a, LIT 3-14a
12	Languages of the UK	A UK languages fact file or map; a short paragraph: "English has never been the only language of the UK because..."	SOC 3-02a, LIT 3-14a, LIT 3-28a
13	Favourite Scots words	A wall poster: the word, its meaning, an illustration and an example sentence	LIT 3-20a, LIT 3-24a

Lesson	Focus	Suggested outcomes	E&Os
14	Planning the essay	A completed planning frame: introduction, arguments for, arguments against, conclusion, with evidence for each point	LIT 3-25a, LIT 3-26a
15–16	Writing the essay	A draft with peer feedback; the final discursive essay	LIT 3-29a, ENG 3-27a, LIT 3-22a, LIT 3-23a

Lesson-by-lesson plan

Lesson 1 - What is discursive writing?

Learning intention: Understand the difference between persuasive and discursive (argumentative) writing.

Activities

- Discuss when people argue one side versus weigh up both sides.
- Read short example texts on social media and plastic packaging, highlighting arguments for and against in different colours.
- Quick-fire for-and-against rounds on light topics: bananas, Netflix, Minecraft.

Suggested outcomes

- A colour-coded, annotated example text.
- A for/against T-chart on one light topic.
- A one-sentence definition of discursive writing in their own words.

E&Os: LIT 3-16a, LIT 3-18a

Lesson 2 - Choosing a good discursive topic

Learning intention: Recognise what makes an issue genuinely two-sided.

Activities

- Brainstorm possible topics in small groups.
- Test each one: are there sensible arguments on both sides?
- Share back and vote on the strongest topics.

Suggested outcomes

- A group topic list sorted into "works" and "doesn't work", each with a reason.

E&Os: LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-09a

Lesson 3 - Language and dialect

Learning intention: Explain different ways of deciding whether something is a language or a dialect.

Activities

- Meet the starter Scots words: guess meanings and say which they hear at home.
- Discuss whether Scots is a dialect of English or a language.
- Explore mutual intelligibility, the sliding-scale idea and Weinreich's "army and navy" quote.

Suggested outcomes

- A Scots glossary in jotters: word, meaning, and whether they or their family use it.
- A scale line from "same language" to "different language", with Scots placed on it and a one-sentence justification.

Teacher notes

Starter words: wee, blether, braw, fitba, scran, peely-wally, aye right, dreich, bampot, hame, laddie, lassie, loch, cannae, ben, stramash, drookit. For the scale, contrast clearly separate languages (e.g. Swahili and Japanese) with closely related varieties.

E&Os: LIT 3-02a, ENG 3-03a

Lesson 4 - Dialect and idiolect

Learning intention: Define idiolect and see the language/dialect line as often political rather than linguistic.

Activities

- List words and phrases particular to the school community.
- Discuss who decides what counts as a language.
- Investigate their own idiolect: favourite words, phrases, pronunciations, things they say that others don't.
- Compare idiolects with a partner.

Suggested outcomes

- A "My idiolect" profile: a short written piece or labelled diagram.
- Paired comparison notes.

Teacher notes

Use your own pupils' school words (in the first run: "punny", "reggie", "bulletin").

E&Os: ENG 3-03a, LIT 3-28a

Lesson 5 - Language and national identity

Learning intention: Understand how songs and language express national identity.

Activities

- Listen to *Flower of Scotland* and Burns's *Scots Wha Hae*.
- Learn the origins of each song.
- Discuss what an anthem says about a nation, and why its language matters.

Suggested outcomes

- Notes on the origins of both songs.
- Ideas for their own national anthem, finished as homework.

Homework

- Write your own Scottish national anthem. Think about which language or languages you use and why.

Teacher notes

Pupils are often surprised that *Flower of Scotland* dates only from the 1960s, yet has become central to national identity; *Scots Wha Hae* dates from 1793.

E&Os: SOC 3-02a, ENG 3-19a, LIT 3-20a

Lesson 6 - Introducing the essay question

Learning intention: Understand the question and record an initial view.

Activities

- Unpack "compulsory" and "curriculum": what is compulsory in their school now?
- Look at Cargilfield School in Edinburgh, which made chess compulsory, and argue for and against as a class.
- Give a first instinct on whether Scots should be compulsory.

Suggested outcomes

- A post-it with their initial view and one reason (kept on display for Lesson 14).

- A class for/against chart on compulsory chess at Cargilfield.

E&Os: LIT 3-02a, LIT 3-09a

Lesson 7 - Researching Scots

Learning intention: Find and evaluate reliable information about Scots.

Activities

- Explore Scots language results from the 2011 and 2022 censuses.
- Use Education Scotland and the Scots Language Centre websites.
- Judge how reliable each source is, and why.

Suggested outcomes

- A research notes sheet with at least three facts or statistics, each with its source.
- A reliability rating for each source used.

E&Os: LIT 3-14a, LIT 3-15a, LIT 3-18a

Lesson 8 - Interview preparation

Learning intention: Plan and conduct an interview as a source of evidence.

Activities

- Discuss what makes an interviewee credible.
- Draft six to eight open questions about experiences of Scots.
- Practise interviewing in pairs.

Suggested outcomes

- An interview question sheet.
- A recorded interview and summary notes, including two or three useful quotes.

Homework

- Interview a relative, ideally a grandparent (a parent is fine), about their views on and experiences of Scots. Record it and take notes to include in your essay.

E&Os: LIT 3-05a, LIT 3-06a, LIT 3-08a

Lesson 9–10 - Rebel Tongue

Learning intention: Understand the history of Scots and the political arguments about it.

Activities

- Watch Alistair Heather's BBC documentary in sections.
- Complete the viewing worksheet.
- Pause to discuss key historical moments and arguments.

Suggested outcomes

- A completed worksheet.
- A running list of arguments for and against, taken from the documentary.

E&Os: LIT 3-04a, LIT 3-05a, SOC 3-02a

Lesson 11 - Scots in a world context

Learning intention: Place Scots among the world's languages and its related varieties.

Activities

- Guess how many languages exist, then watch Tom Scott's video.
- Trace the spread of English and of Scots, including Ulster Scots in Northern Ireland.
- Look at Ulster Scots road and community-centre signs.
- Compare the Gaelic family: Irish, Scottish and Manx.

Suggested outcomes

- An annotated map showing where Scots and the Gaelic languages are spoken.
- Short comparison notes on Scots and the Gaelic varieties.

E&Os: LIT 3-04a, LIT 3-14a

Lesson 12 - Languages of the UK

Learning intention: Recognise that English has never been the UK's only language.

Activities

- Learn about Cornish, Welsh and Norman French in the Channel Islands.
- Put the arrival of the UK's languages in rough order.
- Discuss what it means that English was a relatively late arrival.

Suggested outcomes

- A UK languages fact file or map.
- A short paragraph: "English has never been the only language of the UK because..."

E&Os: SOC 3-02a, LIT 3-14a, LIT 3-28a

Lesson 13 - Favourite Scots words

Learning intention: Celebrate Scots vocabulary and present it effectively.

Activities

- Read The Scotsman's 2022 article on the nation's favourite Scots words.
- Choose a favourite word; research its meaning and an example of it in use.

Suggested outcomes

- A wall poster: the word, its meaning, an illustration and an example sentence.

Homework

- Design a wall poster about your favourite Scots word or words.

E&Os: LIT 3-20a, LIT 3-24a

Lesson 14 - Planning the essay

Learning intention: Select and organise the strongest arguments and evidence.

Activities

- Revisit their Lesson 6 post-it: has their view changed?
- Gather evidence from research notes, interview, worksheet and posters.
- Sort evidence into for and against; choose the strongest two or three on each side.

Suggested outcomes

- A completed planning frame: introduction, arguments for, arguments against, conclusion, with evidence for each point.

E&Os: LIT 3-25a, LIT 3-26a

Lesson 15–16 - Writing the essay

Learning intention: Write a balanced discursive essay.

Activities

- Write a first draft from the plan.
- Peer-assess a partner's draft against the success criteria.
- Redraft, proofread and complete a final version.

Suggested outcomes

- A draft with peer feedback.

- The final discursive essay.

E&Os: LIT 3-29a, ENG 3-27a, LIT 3-22a, LIT 3-23a

Homework tasks

Three homework tasks run alongside the unit. Each one feeds into the final essay or the classroom display.

Task	Details	Set in
Interview a relative	Interview a relative about their views on Scots and take notes to include in your essay. Grandparents are ideal where possible. Pupils record the interview and bring in their notes.	Lesson 8, due before Lesson 14
Favourite Scots words poster	Design a wall poster about your favourite Scots words: meaning, illustration and an example sentence. Posters go up on the classroom wall.	Lesson 13
National anthem	Write your own Scottish national anthem, thinking about the language choices you make.	Lesson 5

Scots culture strand (throughout)

Weave short Scots culture pieces into starters and plenaries across the unit, so pupils meet the language in use rather than only as a debate topic. Links to ENG 3-19a and LIT 3-11a.

- **Poetry:** Hugh MacDiarmid's poem *The Watergaw*. Pupils read aloud and pick out Scots words for their glossary.
- **Ballads:** *The Twa Corbies*, as both song and poem. Pupils retell the story in their own words.
- **Music:** contemporary Scottish traditional music, such as Shooglenifty.
- **Favourite words wall:** display posters from Lesson 13 for reference during essay writing. Words chosen in the first run included beastie, wheesht, bampot, coalie-backie, baltic, mingin, wee, shoogle, corbie and watergaw.

Evidence folder

Pupils can keep these in a folder to use when planning the essay:

- Scots glossary and language/dialect scale line (Lesson 3)
- "My idiolect" profile (Lesson 4)
- Anthem draft (Lesson 5)
- Initial-view post-it (Lesson 6)
- Research notes with sources (Lesson 7)
- Interview questions, recording and notes (Lesson 8)
- *Rebel Tongue* worksheet (Lessons 9–10)
- Annotated map and UK languages fact file (Lessons 11–12)
- Favourite Scots word poster (Lesson 13)
- Essay plan (Lesson 14)
- Draft with peer feedback, and final discursive essay (Lessons 15–16)

Assessment

Formative: post-it initial views (revisited at planning), idiolect profile, *Rebel Tongue* worksheet, interview notes, essay plan and peer feedback.

Summative: the final discursive essay, assessed against LIT 3-29a. Pupils may argue for or against; they are judged on balance, evidence and structure, not on which side they take.

Essay success criteria: I can...

- introduce the topic and explain why it is debated;
- present arguments for compulsory Scots, each supported by evidence;
- present arguments against, each supported by evidence;
- use evidence from at least three sources: research, documentary and my interview;
- use discursive linking words (however, on the other hand, furthermore);
- write a conclusion that weighs both sides and gives my own view.

Resources

- Scotland's Census 2011 and 2022: Scots language results
- Education Scotland: Scots language resources
- Scots Language Centre website
- *Rebel Tongue* (Alistair Heather, BBC Scotland) and a viewing worksheet
- Tom Scott, *How Many Languages Are There?* (YouTube)
- Images of Ulster Scots signage from Northern Ireland
- Recordings of *Flower of Scotland* and *Scots Wha Hae*
- The Scotsman (2022), article on favourite Scots words
- News coverage of Cargilfield School making chess compulsory
- Planning frame, interview template and idiolect task sheet
- Poster materials, post-it notes