

Cànan tro Òrain

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Introduction to the Gaelic Song Education Project

HEATHER SPARLING

Introduction

We are pleased to present this collection of Scottish Gaelic language and culture lesson plans organized around songs. These lesson plans were developed by Gaelic language teachers — both licensed school teachers and community instructors — primarily from Nova Scotia but with representation from the US and Australia as well. They are freely available to use. We hope that teachers will adapt them to their own contexts and teaching styles. We are also hopeful that teachers of languages other than Gaelic will find them useful and inspiring. As these lessons get adapted in various ways, we look forward to seeing new ideas develop that will further inspire our pedagogical thinking, enrich our teaching toolboxes, and give impetus to language learning and revitalization efforts in a range of communities.

Project Overview

The Gaelic Song Education Project emerged at the intersection of several different projects and initiatives. To start, it is linked to the [Language in Lyrics](#) project. Among other goals, the Language in Lyrics project sought to document as many Gaelic songs known in Nova Scotia as possible, both those that came from Scotland and those that were newly composed. Far surpassing our expectations, the project team documented more than 6,000 songs in the [Nova Scotia Gaelic Song Index](#), fully searchable and freely available online. More than 1,000 transcriptions are available through the Index itself, and whenever possible, records link to transcriptions or recordings available online. Transcriptions of hundreds of song texts will be uploaded to the corpus of the [Digital Archive of Scottish Gaelic](#) where anyone will be able to access them.

The Language in Lyrics project is, in turn, part of my broader research into the role music can play in language revitalization efforts. Language revitalization efforts benefit from the documentation of language resources such as the Nova Scotia Gaelic Song Index and song transcriptions. But they can only benefit efforts if people know that they exist and actually use them. We developed the Gaelic Song Education Project as a means of increasing awareness and use of the Gaelic songs indexed through the Language in Lyrics project and to empower community members to make use of them in meaningful ways.

At the same time, [Colaisde na Gàidhlig](#) | The Gaelic College had begun efforts to provide teacher training and professional development for community language and music teachers, who often lack access to such opportunities. I worked with Kenneth MacKenzie, Director of Education, to design the Gaelic song education project, an educational development opportunity for community Gaelic teachers.

We knew that community teachers typically spend a lot of time creating learning resources. But previous efforts to build shared

repositories of learning materials hadn't succeeded, in part because community teachers were understandably reluctant to provide their resources to others for free. The income from community teaching is neither great nor dependable. On the other hand, access to teaching resources would not simply reduce the workload for teachers, it could also inspire their teaching by exposing them to different ideas about learning and to different teaching methods. Our solution was to pay teachers to develop lesson plans that would then become openly accessible to anyone, thereby recognizing and rewarding the teachers' labour and expertise, and to use [Pressbooks](#), this open access book platform, to make those lesson plans easily and widely available.

Kenneth MacKenzie and I were grateful to receive financial support, acknowledged below under "[Appreciation](#)." With this funding, we hired a project manager, Ed MacDonell, co-editor of this volume. Funding also enabled us to offer honoraria to teachers willing to develop lesson plans. We circulated a call for participants to the international Scottish Gaelic community and we held several professional development (PD) sessions free of charge to assist them. The first session introduced lesson planning and also solicited topic ideas for subsequent PD sessions. Two more PD sessions were organized on topics that emerged from this consultation: one on using songs in teaching when either the students or the teacher are uncomfortable singing; and one on digital Gaelic song resources.

We developed a lesson plan template and sample lesson plan and offered drop-in development sessions over the summer. The drop-in sessions allowed participants to get feedback from other participants and from me and Ed MacDonell on their lessons. We asked all participants to review two other lesson plans for every lesson plan they submitted. The peer review process had two complementary purposes: to improve the lessons under review, and to expose participants to other lesson plans with the expectation that this would inspire them to think about their own lesson plans differently. We hope that we will be able to run the Gaelic Song

Education Project again in the future in order to expand the collection of lessons here.

The Nova Scotia Gaelic Context

This project is timely given ongoing and urgent efforts to sustain Gaels as an ethnocultural group in the province of Nova Scotia via the revitalization of their unique Gaelic language and cultural arts and expression. Because Nova Scotia's Gaelic community is valued for having retained language and cultural arts and expressions once known in Scotland, Nova Scotia's Gaelic assets are important not only for Nova Scotians, of whom a third can trace their roots to Gaelic-speaking settlers, but for Gaels and Gaelic learners in Scotland, throughout North America, and beyond. Sustainability efforts will ensure that vibrant elements of Gaelic cultural expressions such as song, step-dancing, and musical styles will be maintained, fostering a sense of shared expression for Gaelic community members.

As language is foundational to both cultural heritage and identity, central to this project is the acknowledgement that Gaelic is an endangered language in its ancestral homeland, Scotland, as well as in historic Gaelic settlement areas like Nova Scotia. Sociolinguist Joshua Fishman developed a ground-breaking eight-stage scale to measure the extent to which a given language is threatened and to specify actions required to reverse decline (1991). Gaelic scholar Rob Dunbar suggests that Nova Scotia is somewhere between steps 8 and 7, stages at which a language is at major risk (2008). At stage 8, Fishman recommends that the focus be on collecting the spoken language and oral traditions, providing materials that can be used for teaching learners as well as for developing dictionaries and other language resources, to which this project contributes.

Canada received large numbers of Gaelic-speaking emigrants from Scotland, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Gaelic-speaking communities were once found across Canada and, indeed, throughout North America (see, for example, Newton 2015; MacDonell 1982). In fact, at the time of Confederation in 1867, Scottish Gaelic was the third most spoken language in Canada after English and French. In 1901, the earliest year for which we have figures, there were approximately 90,000 speakers in Canada (Dembling 2006). The majority – about 50,000 – were located in PEI and Nova Scotia. While the language is no longer spoken in most areas of the continent, descendants of Gaelic-speaking immigrants still speak Gaelic in the eastern counties of the Nova Scotia mainland and Cape Breton Island, some having learned Gaelic as their first language.

Although the number of Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia today is small when contrasted with earlier figures (about 1,200 according to the 2011 census; the Office of Gaelic Affairs reports about 4,000 people involved in Gaelic language learning provincially), Gaelic is an important heritage language in Nova Scotia. The provincial government established the Office of Gaelic Affairs (OGA) in 2007, paralleling existing Offices of Acadian Affairs and the Francophonie and African Nova Scotian Affairs, in order to support, promote, and revitalize the Gaelic language and culture provincially. The provincial Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DoEECD) has recognized Gaelic language and history as elementary and high school subjects off and on over the 20th and 21st centuries; both are currently offered in a small number of schools in the province. Gaelic studies and language curricula were updated in 2000 and updates to the Kindergarten-to-Grade 3 language curriculum are currently underway. The DoEECD stipulates that recognition of four key cultural groups in Nova Scotia – Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, and Gaels – be integrated throughout the curriculum. A number of institutions support the revitalization of the Gaelic language and culture provincially, including St Francis Xavier University and Cape Breton University, both of which offer Gaelic language courses and degree programs, Colaisde na Gàidhlig | the Gaelic College, Baile nan

Gàidheal | the Highland Village Museum, the Gaelic Council of Nova Scotia, and Sgoil Ghàidhlig an Àrd-Bhaile | The Gaelic Language Society of Halifax, among others. In other words, the history and legacy of Gaelic language and culture are widely recognized in Nova Scotia; they are considered important to the province's cultural heritage, identity, and future; and they are supported by an institutional infrastructure as well as by grassroots organizations and individuals.

Anyone who has spent time among Gaels knows how we love to sing, and songs are an incredibly important aspect of the Gaelic culture. The most fundamental form of Gaelic literature is *bàrdachd*, or poetry. Historically, all Gaelic poetry was meant to be sung. Extensive collections of Gaelic poetry and song from across all Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland and Nova Scotia, from several centuries, and of various genres, can be found in manuscript, published, and recorded form.¹ At one time, bards formed an elite and powerful class in Scottish Gaelic society, receiving extensive and rigorous training on a range of bardic forms and metres (see, for example, Newton 2009). Each clan chief patronized an official bard

1. A small sampling of published song collections from both Scotland and Nova Scotia includes MacDonald (1863); Sinclair (1879); McLellan (1891); Watson (1918); Shaw (1977 [1955]); Creighton and MacLeod (1964); Campbell and Collinson (1969-1981); Fergusson (1977); Meek (1977); Campbell (1990); Thomson (1993); Black (1999, 2001); Shaw (2000); Meek (2003); Gillis, Nicholson, and Gillis (2004); and Rankin (2004). For a sampling of recorded collections, see the following websites: [MacEdward Leach and the Songs of Atlantic Canada](#); [Sruth nan Gael / Gael Stream](#); and, in Scotland, [Tobar an Dualchais / Kist o Riches](#).

who served as genealogist and historian. Despite a diminishing need over time for official bards, poetry continued to be composed by itinerant bards. Vernacular poetry and song became an important channel through which to articulate community issues and debates as well as to honour respected community members, to verbalize a relationship to land and place, and to express humour. New Gaelic songs continue to be created up to the present, albeit in reduced numbers. In fact, Gaelic songwriting workshops and projects are working to rebuild songwriting skills and capacity among Gaelic learners. Poetry and song's important roles in Gaelic culture helps to explain why thousands of Gaelic songs were sung and documented in Nova Scotia.²

Music, Gaelic Cultural Revitalization, and Language Acquisition

A long history of Gaelic song creation means that there are many reasons to centre song in language revitalization, including

2. Although the co-editors of this volume and the lesson plan creators have tried to be careful about citing all relevant sources of information, song sources are not often cited formally. That's because, as a living, oral culture whose songs exist in and for community, it is often neither possible nor appropriate to cite a published or internet source. Gaelic speakers typically learn songs informally through interactions with others, in song workshops, or in language classes. For all these reasons, song sources are typically not cited formally.

language learning. First, because songs serve as one of the most fundamental forms of literature in Gaelic culture, there are literally thousands of songs in existence and they continue to be composed today. Songs are widely respected among Gaelic speakers and are already regularly integrated into language classes. They are a plentiful and accessible resource.

Second, a long history of Gaelic song means that song texts exist from many historical periods. Regional songs represent a range of dialects. And there are many song genres that encompass elite as well as vernacular language. The use of Gaelic songs for social commentary (see, for example, McKean 1992, 1997) means that they encompass a broad range of vocabulary relating to a variety of domains and topics from religion to politics, and from relationships to economics.

Third, there is a particularly strong and distinct connection between language and music in Gaelic culture (see, for example, Sparling 2000, 2003, 2007, 2014). For example, a number of Gaelic speakers believe that the distinctive Nova Scotia fiddle and piping style is linked to linguistic “flavour” or “accent” (Gaelic *blàs*) brought to instrumental playing by the musician’s awareness of a tune’s associated mouth music lyrics. This connection between language and music in Gaelic culture inspired me, together with colleagues in psycholinguistics, to publish on the ways in which traditional music can motivate people to learn Gaelic (MacIntyre et al, 2017; Sparling et al, 2022).

Language revitalization involves more than language for language is only meaningful when it is part of a broader cultural ecology. Language activist and scholar Teresa L. McCarty notes that “language planning is community planning” and that “language issues [are] always people issues” (2018: 31). Language, people, and community are inextricably linked. Revitalization has to centre on people and the community, not simply on a disembodied language. Song is so effective in revitalization because it builds and reinforces community not just through group singing, but through the recollection of Gaelic history and Gaelic ancestors in stories told

through song and about song. Songs are meaningful and authentic cultural expressions rooted in language. Songs make language meaningful.

To undertake language revitalization is to make “deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes” (Cooper 1989: 45). Scholars typically speak of language revitalization in terms of three broad areas: status planning (elevating the status of a language both among speakers and non-speakers); corpus planning (documenting the language and developing new vocabulary for new circumstances); and acquisition planning (teaching and learning the language). Each area supports the others. As a collection of lesson plans, this book contributes most directly to acquisition planning.

Because Gaelic songs are so fundamental to Gaelic culture, because they showcase language and grammar in a culturally relevant way, and because we are fortunate to have so many of them, it makes sense to give some dedicated thought to how they might be used in language learning.

There are many, many studies on the value of using songs in language learning. I have found Dwayne Engh's review of the literature on using music for English language learning to be particularly helpful (2013). Engh groups the literature into five categories, addressing: 1) sociological considerations; 2) cognitive science; 3) first language acquisition; 4) second language acquisition; and practical pedagogical resources. These are summarized in the sections that follow.

Sociological Considerations

Singing is beneficial in the classroom because it enhances social harmony, develops a safe space for learning collectively, and helps to build a cohesive community, something that many teachers strive to create.

Songs also help to break boundaries down and close gaps. It helps to reduce boundaries between the classroom and “real life” by bringing something pervasive from “the real world” into the classroom. Songs are also easily transferred outside of the classroom, into the home and elsewhere. They help to reduce the gaps between formal and informal learning, and between teachers and students. Youth are empowered when their music, language, and culture — often embodied in pop songs or contemporary arrangements — are used in a learning context.

Cognitive Science

Cognitive science analyzes the anatomic structure of the brain and its neural functions. It tells us that music and language appear to have significant overlap and points of convergence in the brain, which in turn suggests that strengthening musical processing will benefit linguistic processing and vice versa. However, it is still unclear whether musical and linguistic elements are dissociated in the brain (processed in different areas) but work together or whether aspects of language and music are managed by overlapping parts of the brain. For example, neuroimaging data shows that musical structure is processed in language areas of the brain, with the assumption being that other aspects of music and language may also be processed in this same area. It is possible that musical and linguistic syntax share common processes in one area of the brain and also share common structural representations processed elsewhere in the brain.

First Language Acquisition

A number of studies have investigated “baby babble” and “baby talk,”

recognizing their musical characteristics. If in no other way, an infant's babbling is similar to music in that it's a form of communication using sound but without syntax and it precedes language acquisition. Meanwhile, adults use a sing-songy form of speech when speaking to babies and also sing to them, simultaneously impacting a child's musical and linguistic development. Because musical sounds are fundamental to the ways in which we learn our first language, it makes sense to use music and song when learning a second (or subsequent) language.

Second Language Acquisition

Reviewing the literature, Engh identifies a number of ways in which song can support second language acquisition including: reducing affective barriers; increasing motivation; developing learning intelligences; improving learning and recall; and developing skills beneficial to language learning.

Research shows that the best learning happens in a context of low anxiety, strong self-confidence, and high motivation. Learners with a low affective filter are more confident, seek and receive more input, and respond more constructively to feedback.

Motivation pertains to affective states and attitudes that affect the amount of effort a learner expends in learning a language. Because music is an “authentic,” real-world activity — one that is practised by native speakers — it is generally motivating for learners. It is often possible to work with short, accessible songs rich in interpretable content.

Good learning will strengthen diverse intelligences such as verbal, spatial, numeric, musical, kinaesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences, all of which can be learned with music. Music improves cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, increases affective exploration, and makes students more receptive to learning.

A number of studies demonstrate that music helps with vocabulary recall, pronunciation, and oral proficiency. Lexical patterns are stored in long-term musical memory and can be easily retrieved later. Lyrics aren't simply good for recalling individual words, but also for recalling longer phrases and linguistic formulae. Rhythm, melody, and rhyme all help with retention.

Finally, music supports the development of language-specific skills, such as aural comprehension. The repetitive nature of songs helps learners to understand supra-segmental features of language in context (patterns of sounds in words, the divisions between words). Songs can help with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

Practical Pedagogical Resources

Engh observes that there is limited literature on how teachers are actually using music in the classroom. Most of the existing literature focuses on primary education, largely overlooking how music is used in adult and teen language classes. There are even fewer resources available for teachers to support any interest they may have in using music in language classes.

I am glad that this book is helping to reduce that gap.

Engh concludes that,

Overall, the results are clear in suggesting use of music and song in the language-learning classroom is both supported theoretically by practicing teachers and grounded in the empirical literature as a benefit to increase linguistic, sociocultural and communicative competencies. From an educational standpoint, music and language not only can, but should be studied together. (2013: 121)

Conclusions

My intention for this short introduction is to convincingly support a claim that language lesson plans organized around songs are a good idea. As an endangered language not just in Nova Scotia but globally, Gaelic needs creative and innovative approaches to its revitalization. Songs offer a rich means of developing language skills, not only in their infinitely varied lyrics but in their relevance as cultural expressions that articulate Gaelic values, beliefs, knowledge, and history. They build community inside the classroom as well as in the broader community. Not only does research demonstrate that music assists with vocabulary recall, grammar comprehension, and oral proficiency, music motivates language learners, builds their self-confidence, and encourages them to try using the language for themselves. It is not really a surprise that a significant number of Gaelic language learners trace their initial motivation to learn the language to a favourite Gaelic song.

For all these reasons, we want to encourage greater use of song and singing in Gaelic learning contexts. We are so fortunate that Gaelic culture has an abundance of songs, creating countless opportunities to use them in language teaching and learning. And that is why we were excited to provide an opportunity for teachers to produce lesson plans organized around Gaelic songs, and why we are excited to share the results with you here.

Appreciation

I so appreciate the funders who made this project possible: the [Change Lab Action Research Initiative](#), the [Gaelic Council](#), and the [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada](#).

I am grateful to Kenneth MacKenzie, who helped bring this project into being from the start, and to Ed MacDonell, who

managed all of the logistics. Ed also worked tirelessly with the lesson creators to support them, ensure consistency across the lesson plans, and edit the PressBooks manuscript.

It was an honour to work with all of the teachers who attended our professional development activities. It was powerful and moving to see how much knowledge was already available within the community, and to find ways to mobilize individual experiences to solve teaching and learning challenges.

Finally, my deepest gratitude to the lesson creators, who were willing to take a chance on this project and who gave their precious, often over-extended time to workshops, brainstorming, peer reviewing, and lesson planning. I am inspired by their depth of thinking and by the variety of innovative lesson plans that they produced.

This book is truly a co-creation by community, for community. Thank you so much to all who participated.

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About the Author



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Finding Lessons for Your Needs

Finding a Lesson in this Book

One of the challenges of compiling the lessons in a book is deciding how to organize the lessons. We realize that readers will have different interests and needs. So **we have “tagged” the lessons in three different ways, according to:**

1. **lesson objectives,**
2. **targeted learner age, and,**
3. **targeted Gaelic level.**

It is worth noting, nevertheless, that each lesson creator has suggested lesson variations that would make the lesson applicable to other categories. In other words, don't dismiss a lesson just because it's not tagged with something you're looking for. While these lessons have been designed so that they can be used “out of the box,” we also intend them to inspire variations or entirely new lessons. We hope that you will adapt the lessons for your own context, drawing on the lesson structures and principles as possibilities for your own teaching.

Within each tag category, there are three tags. For the sake of the organization of this book, we asked lesson creators to limit themselves to a single tag from each category, even though some of the lessons could be tagged with more than one.

Lesson Objectives

Tag I: Grammar and Vocabulary

Tag II: Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation

Tag III: Culture, Literature, and Poetry

Age

Tag I: Children

Tag II: Youth

Tag III: Adults

Gaelic Level

Tag I: Beginner

Tag II: Intermediate

Tag III: Advanced

Lessons by Objectives

Tag I: Grammar and Vocabulary

- [O, Siod an Taobh a Ghabhainn](#)
- [Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn](#)
- [Buill a' Chuirp](#)
- [Dathan](#)
- [Tàladh Chrìosda](#)
- [Goiridh Òg Ò: Activity Songs for Vocabulary](#)

- [Student-Directed Song Discussion](#)
- [Far am bi Sinn fhìn is ann a bhios na h-Òrain](#)

Tag II: Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation

- [Cadall Ciarach Mo Luran](#)
- [Dh'ith na Coin na Maragan](#)
- [Gura Mise fo Èislein](#)
- [Gaelic Rhyme Schemes](#)
- [Transcription Frolics](#)

Tag III: Culture, Literature, and Poetry

- [Òran nan Sealgairean](#)

Lessons by Age

Tag I: Children

- [Cadall Ciarach Mo Luran](#)
- [Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn](#)
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Tag II: Youth

- [Dathan](#)
- [Goiridh Òg Ò: Activity Songs for Vocabulary](#)
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Tag III: Adults

- [O, Siod an Taobh a Ghabhainn](#)
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Lessons by Gaelic Level

Tag I: Beginner

- [Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran](#)
- [Buill a' Chuirp](#)
- [Dathan](#)
- [Goiridh Òg Ò: Activity Songs for Vocabulary](#)

Tag II: Intermediate

- [Òran nan Sealgairean](#)
- [Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn](#)
- [Dh'ith na Coin na Maragan](#)
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- [Tàladh Chrìosda](#)
- [Gaelic Rhyme Schemes](#)
- [Student-Directed Song Discussion](#)

Tag III: Advanced

- [O, Siod an Taobh a Ghabhainn](#)
- [Far am bi Sinn fhìn is ann a bhios na h-Òrain](#)
- [Transcription Frolics](#)

Index by Lesson

[Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran](#): Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation; Children; Beginner

[O, Siod an Taobh a Ghabhainn](#): Grammar and Vocabulary; Adults; Advanced

[Òran nan Sealgairean](#): Culture, Literature, and Poetry; Adults; Intermediate

[Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn](#): Grammar and Vocabulary; Children; Intermediate

[Far am bi Sinn fhìn is ann a bhios na h-Òrain](#): Grammar and Vocabulary; Adults; Advanced

[Dh'ith na Coin na Maragan](#): Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation; Adults; Intermediate

[Gura Mise fo Èislein](#): Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation; Adults; Intermediate

[Buill a' Chuirp](#): Grammar and Vocabulary; Children; Beginner

[Dathan](#): Grammar and Vocabulary; Youth; Beginner

[Tàladh Chrìosda](#): Grammar and Vocabulary; Intermediate; Adults

[Goiridh Òg Ò: Activity Songs for Vocabulary](#): Grammar and Vocabulary; Youth; Beginner

[Gaelic Rhyme Schemes](#): Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation; Youth; Intermediate

[Student-Directed Song Discussion](#): Grammar and Vocabulary; Intermediate; Adults

[Transcription Frolics](#): Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation; Adults; Advanced

I. Student-Directed Song Discussion

RAGHNAID NICGARAI DH

Tags: [Grammar and Vocabulary](#); [Intermediate](#); [Adults](#)

Activity Summary Statement

In this activity, the teacher guides the students through a discussion of a Gaelic song. The teacher should choose the song based on the topics the song naturally promotes discussion of, and the level and ability of the students.

Learning Outcomes

Students will have a good familiarity with the song in question and especially several aspects of it, and have gained or improved their skills or awareness in at least one grammatical or cultural area.

Gaelic Level

This lesson can be suitable for Gaelic learners and speakers of all levels, from complete beginners to fluent speakers. The Gaelic level of the participants will inform the song choice.

Lesson Preparation

First, choose your song. Things to consider when choosing the song include:

- **Place** — Do you want to choose a song from the local area?
- **Ability of the students** — If they're beginners, they're not ready for twenty-five eight-line verses written by someone who refuses to use the same

word twice. Some mouth music or a waulking/milling song would be better.

- **Needs of the students** — Have you been working on the past tense recently? The conditional? Genitive structures? You might like to find a song that features a lot of those things.
- **Time** — Twenty-five eight-line verses will probably take you several months to get through, or at least several weeks. On the other hand, a single piece of mouth music with eight lines that are mostly repetitions probably isn't going to last a whole hour of discussion.

Next, write or type all the lyrics to the song — in a largish font and with lots of spacing if possible! Sit down and circle or highlight the rhyme scheme and various vocabulary or grammatical features. Think about the story of the song, the background or location of the author, etc, and make notes about it. Basically, think about everything the students might ask, and everything you would want them to ask (and those two things are not the same!). With your annotated notes, decide which direction(s) you would like the discussion to go, and which direction(s) it shouldn't.

Resources Required

- A recording (or multiple recordings) of the song being sung.
- A handout of the lyrics.

Lesson Structure

Begin by listening to the chosen song from whichever recording you think best. For more fluent speakers, an archival recording is suitable, but for complete beginners, a professional or modern recording with cleaner sound might be better, or you may choose to sing the song yourself.

Direct the discussion by asking questions such as:

- **“What words do or don’t you recognise?”**
 - This can build vocabulary (in less-proficient speakers), lead to a discussion of word meanings compared to English (in less-proficient speakers) or between dialects of Gaelic or in particular contexts (in more proficient speakers), or a discussion of cultural background or context. Students may like to keep notes of the new vocabulary in a format that best suits them.
- **“Where is the rhyme scheme?”**

- This easily leads to a discussion of the differences between rhyming in English and Gaelic (see “Gaelic rhyming” section further on). It might also prompt a discussion of dialectal difference as some rhymes may not work in all Gaelic dialects. If students are new to finding Gaelic rhyme schemes, it can be useful to have them find the beat by beating, tapping, or milling/waulking to the song.
- **“Show me the [conditional] tense.”**
 - Show, as an alternative to the above, future tense, past tense, genitive phrases, negations, animal words, verbs, etc. This is a good question to ask if the students have previously been working on a particular grammatical concept, and you may briefly explain or re-iterate how to form the particular case or tense in question.
- **“Gu dé tha seo a’ ciallachadh?”**
 - Translate the thing, if translating things is something your pedagogy allows (I know Gàidhlig aig Baile doesn’t allow for it). You don’t have to, especially if the students are more proficient — instead, use this question to prompt them to rephrase the story of the song (or each verse).
- **“How else could you say that?”**
 - This is similar to the above question, but could be applied to individual words, larger phrases, or whole sentences. It could be especially useful as some songwriters delight in finding the most obscure possible ways of saying simple things. It is also useful when dealing with dialectal variation.
- **“When or where did this happen?”**
 - Who wrote the song, and what context were they living in, or what context was the song sung in? Some songs have a rich historical or cultural context to explore.

Finish the lesson by rounding it up in some way. Summarise what has been discussed, offer the students a challenge (e.g., “find

another song by the same person or with a similar theme or from the same place or in the same structure” or “write another verse for the song,” perhaps), or sing the song together.

Some Notes on Gaelic Rhyming

In English, rhyming typically considers three things — vowels, consonants, and the number of syllables from the end of the word or line. That is, a “good rhyme” in English will usually fall in the last syllable of the line (or the last two or sometimes three syllables from the end of the line), and both consonants and vowels must match. For example:

I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping
plains
of rugged mountain ranges, of drought and
flooding **rains**

This rhymes in English, because “plains” and “rains” both end with “-ains”, and are both the last syllable of the line.

Should old acquaintance be forgot, and never
brought to **mind**
should old acquaintance be forgot, and days of
old lang **syne**

This might not rhyme in English, because not all the consonants match, although they are similar, and the

vowels are the same, and they're both on the last syllable of the line.

I sent to him a **letter**
which I had for want of **better** knowledge

This does not rhyme in English, because “letter” and “better” are not in the same position in the line, although they both end with “-etter”.

By contrast, Gaelic rhyming relies on two things – vowel assonance and beat. Gaelic rhyming doesn't care much for how many syllables there are until the end of the line or even where the line break is, but rather what beat the rhyming vowel falls on. To add to the difference to English rhyming, Gaelic rhyming often relies on **internal rhymes**; in a tune with four beats to a line, the rhyme might fall on the fourth beat in some lines and the second in others. For example, in *Hé mo leannan*, each two-line verse has an internal rhyme scheme:

'S e mo leannan, am fear **bàn**
A dheidheadh an **àird** air bhàrr an t-siùil

There's two beats per line (falling on *leannan*, *bàn*, *àird*, and *siùil*), and the rhyme falls on the second beat of the first line and the first beat of the second line – *bàn* and *àird* share a vowel, but not a consonant coda. The second beat of the second line is part of another rhyme scheme which links the verses, as we see:

'S e mo leannan, am fear **donn**
A thogadh **fonn** anns an taigh-ciùil

Donn and fonn rhyme internally, as they did in the last verse, while *ciùil* rhymes with *siùil* in the previous verse.

This internal rhyme scheme is also used in four-line verses, such as in *Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh*:

Tha trì *fichead bliadhna* 's a **trì**
Bho 'n a dh'fhàg mi Dùthaich 'Ic **Aoidh**
Càit' bheil gillea òg mo **chridh'**
'S na **nìonagan** cho bòidheach?

Some very well-worked poetry will have a reverse-internal rhyme as well, as we see in *Nuair a Chaidh a' Chlach a Thilleadh*:

'S mì **chiatach** le **seanchaidhean**
Feadh **islich** agus **garbhlaichean**
Gun d' **thill** sibh, Clach nan **Albannach**
Gu ceann-**bhaile** Beurla

Here, *seanchaidhean*, *garbhlaichean*, *Albannach*, and *-bhaile* are all part of the internal rhyme scheme on beats 2, 2, 2, 1, but the first three lines have another rhyme one beat 1, *chiatach*, *islich*, and *thill*. *Beurla* has the vowel that rhymes across all the verses and chorus.

This covers the vast majority of rhyme schemes you'll find in Gaelic poetry, although of course some songs have more familiar (to English eyes) rhyme schemes. The only other thing to note is which sounds rhyme with each other — *eu* might rhyme with *é* or even *ao* depending on dialect, while it might rhyme with *ia* and *ì* in other dialects. *Ao* might be rhymed with *ù* in some

cases, and *u* and *o* are often considered close enough to rhyme with each other.

Student-Directed Example I

Hé mo Leannan

Discussion Topics

- Song features:
 - rhyme scheme
 - genitive phrases
 - conditional
- Waulking or milling songs and their cultural importance, in the past and today
- Encourage students to attend a milling

frolic

- Have a go at writing your own verses using the same rhyme scheme!

Séisd:

Hé mo leannan, hó mo leannan
'S e mo leannan, am fear ùr
Hé mo leannan, hó mo leannan

'S e mo leannan Gille Chaluim
Carpantair an daraich thu

My sweetheart is Gille Chaluim
You are the carpenter of the oak

'S e mo leannan am fear donn
A thogadh fonn anns an taigh-chiùil

My sweetheart is the brown-haired man
Who would raise a tune in the music house

'S e mo leannan saor an t-sàbhaidh
Leagadh lobhta làir gu dlùth

My sweetheart is the carpenter of the saw
Who would lay down flooring tightly

'S e mo leannan am fear bàn
A dheidheadh an àird air bhàrr an t-siùil

My sweetheart is the fair-haired man
Who would go to the top of the sail

'S e mo leannan am fear laghach
'S tu mo roghainn, thaghainn thu

My sweetheart is the nice man
You're my choice, I'd choose you

'S tric a chaidh mi leat dha 'n bhàthaich
Sneachd' na b' àirde na mo ghluin

Often I went with you to the byre
Snow higher than my knee

'S leabaidh bheag an cuil a' chidsin
Far 'm bu tric bha mise 's tu

And the little bed behind the kitchen
Where often you and I were

'S galair na 's miosa na 'n déideadh
Air an té thug bhuam mo rùn

And a disease worse than the toothache
On the one who take from me my love

Nar meal i 'n gùn ùr 's a' chiste
Na 'n a shuidheas air a ghluin

Let her be without a new gown in her clothes
chest
And without what would sit on her knee

Comhairle bheirinn fhìn air gruagach
A bhith cumail suas ri triùir

Advice that I would give to a girl
To be keeping up with three

Ged a dhèanadh iad uile fàgail
Bhitheadh an làmh aic' air fear ùr

Athough they'd all leave
Her hand would be on a new man

'S nuair a **bhitheadh** gàch 'nan làighe
Dh'fhosglainn dhuit an uinneag-**chiùil**

And when everyone would be lying
I'd open for you the back window

Student-Directed Example II

Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh

What is the context?

Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh is in the very north of
Scotland.

Patrick Sellar was hugely responsible for the Clearances, and was even trialed once for manslaughter after burning a cottage down with a woman still inside it. The song is set in around 1885, 70 years after the Clearances in *Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh*.

Discussion Topics:

- The role of sheep in the Clearances
- The role of Sellar in the Clearances
- Where did the people go?
- The role of religion and the seriousness of *mallachd* and invoking Hell, referencing Judas, etc.
- *Thu* vs. *sibh*
- Song features:
 - rhyme scheme
 - past tense verbs (5 unique verbs)
 - genitive phrases

Mo mhallachd aig na caoraich mhòr
Càit' bheil clann nan daoine còir
Dhealaich rium 'n uair bha mi òg
Mus robh Dùthaich 'ic Aoidh 'na fàsach?

My curse upon the great sheep
Where now are the children of the kindly folk?
Who parted from me when I was young
Before Sutherland became a desert?

Tha trì fichead bliadhna 's a trì
Bho 'n a dh'fhàg mi Dùthaich 'ic Aoidh
Càit' bheil gillean òg mo chrìdh?
'S na nionagan cho bòidheach?

It has been sixty-three years
Since I left Sutherland
Where are all my beloved young men
And all the girls that were so pretty?

A Shellar, tha thu nisd' 'na d' uaigh,
Gaoir nam bantrach na do chluais
Am milleadh a rinn thu air an t-shuaigh
Ro 'n uiridh an d' fhuair thu d' leòr dheth?

Sellar, you are now in your grave,
The wailing of the widows in your ears
The destruction you did to the people
Until last year, did you get your fill of it?

A chiad Dhiùc Chataibh, le d' chuid foill
'S le d' chuid càirdeis do na Goill
Gum b' ann an iutharn' bha do thoill,
gu m b' fheàrr Iudas làmh rium.

The first Duke of Sutherland, with your share of
deceit
And with your friendship for the Lowlanders
You deserve to be in Hell
That Judas would be preferred next to me

A Bhan-Diùc Chataibh, 'eil thu ad' dhith?

Càit a' bheil do ghùnan sìod'?

An do chùm iad thu bho 'n oillt 's bho 'n strì

A tha 'n diugh am measg nan clàr aibh?

Dutchess of Sutherland, where are you know?

Where are you silk gowns?

Did they keep you from hatred and from struggle

Which is today among the press?

Student-Directed Example III

Nuair a Chaidh a' Chlach a Thilleadh

le Dòmhnall Mac an t-Saoir, "Am Bàrd Pàislig" (See Ronald Black's *An Tuil: Anthology of 20th-Century Scottish Gaelic Verse*, pp. 176-180)

What is the context?

The Stone of Destiny was repatriated in Christmas 1950 and returned to England several months later.

Discussion Topics:

- The history of the Stone
- The part the stone played (and plays) in politics historically (distant past as well as 20th century)
- all the many many historical references in this song
- Song features:
 - Rhyme scheme
 - Past tense verbs
 - Conditional verbs
 - Future tense verbs
 - Prepositions (including prepositional pronouns)

Sèisd:

Tha tighinn fodham, fodham, fodham
Tha tighinn fodham, fodham, fodham
Tha tighinn fodham, fodham, fodham
Tha tighinn fodham speuradh

It behoves me, hoves me, hoves me,
It behoves me, hoves me, hoves me,
It behoves me, hoves me, hoves me,
It behoves me to swear.

'S mì-chiatach le seanchaidhean
Feadh islich agus garbhlaichean
Gun d' thill sibh, Clach nan Albannach
Gu ceann-bhaile Beurla

Tradition-bearers are not pleased
Throughout low and rough country

That you returned, the Stone of the Scots,
To the English capital

'N uair leig sibh sìos gu 'n nàimhdean i
A' ghnìomh a bhitheas gu caillte dhuibh
'N robh sìol nan sonn gun cainnt' aca
'S na traoidhearan ag éigheachd?

When we let her down to enemies,
The deed that's your undoing,
Was the race of heroes speechless
While the traitors cried for joy?

Thig dìochairt nan cuid uaghannan
Air sinnsreadh sìol nam fuar-bheannan
Bho 'n sin sibh dh'ar luchd-fuatha i
A thug bhuaibh i leis an eucoir

The cold-mountain people's ancestors
Will vomit in their graves
Since you gave it to your enemies
Who wrongly took it from you.

Tha iomadh linn bho spùill iad i
'S bho dh'islich iad ri ùrlar i
Ma 's rìoghail iad, 'ar leam-sa
Gur e biùthas nam fear-bréige

It's a long time since they stole it
And lowered it to the floor;
If they're royal, it's my opinion
That it's imposters' fame.

Nan d' fhuair mi fo mo mheòirean i
'N uair thàinig maor an tòir oirre
Mu 'm bitheadh i saor 's an t-òrd agam
Bhitheadh Seòras gun a dhéideag.

If I'd got my hands on it
When the police came after it,
Before I'd finished with my hammer
George would have lost his toy.

B' e Clach na rìogachd Albannach
Bho iomadh linn is aimsir i
'S mu 'n sininn do Mhac Carmaic i
Gun sgealbhainn às a chéile i

It was the Scottish Kingdom's Stone
Through many an age and epoch,
And before I gave it to MacCormick,
I'd split it apart.

Preparing for Challenges

It might be that your students simply aren't ready to have the formation of the genitive explained to them, but the song has *dhan mhuir* in one line and *uisge na mara* in the next. Prepare for the possibility of being asked about it, and don't be afraid to keep the answer as simple as "That's the genitive case," "to the sea" as opposed to "water of the sea," or "That's a bit tricky to learn about just yet."

About the Author



Raghnaid NicGaraidh

Raghnaid NicGaraidh is born and raised in South Australia, with roots in Scotland through her father. She grew up around Gaelic-speakers in Adelaide and has been intentionally speaking the language since she was a teenager. While studying for a degree in linguistics and ethnomusicology in Melbourne, she was the conductor and music director of Coisir Ghàidhlig Bhioctòiria (the Scottish Gaelic Choir of Victoria) from 2017-2020, and she has been teaching Gaelic language classes since 2016.

2. Gaelic Rhyme Schemes

RAGHNAID NICGARAI DH

Tags: [Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation](#); [Youth](#); [Intermediate](#)

Activity Summary Statement

In this activity, students learn about how rhyming works in Gaelic songs and poetry through case studies of Gaelic songs chosen by themselves and the teacher. They may contrast with English or other language songs and poems, and may try their own hand at composing some verses with the rhyme schemes at the end.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Understand what rhymes in Gaelic;
- Understand how Gaelic ideas of rhyming differ

from English ideas;

- Understand that rhyming and other poetic devices are culturally dependent;
- Become familiar with common rhyme scheme patterns in Gaelic song;
- Appreciate how different dialectal pronunciations might affect rhymes;
- Develop the skills to compose a short verse or couplet in Gaelic using a traditional rhyme scheme.

Gaelic Level

This lesson can be suitable for Gaelic learners and speakers of all levels, from complete beginners to fluent speakers. Many fluent and native speakers have only been educated in English-language literary conventions and benefit from a clearer explanation of Gaelic rhyme schemes.

Lesson Preparation

1. Choose the songs you will use as examples. Have a range of waulking songs (two-line verses) and more complex four- and eight-line verse songs. Ensure you are comfortable with the rhyme schemes and can explain how they work. It's best to choose songs whose rhyme schemes are consistent.
2. Prepare the songs in written form: as hand-outs or as a screen-share.
3. You might like to ask students to bring along their own favourite songs to look at. Make sure you ask them to bring them in written form!

Resources Required

Required resources:

- Written hand-outs of the songs you will use;

- Whiteboard and whiteboard marker.

Optional resources:

- Replace both of these with the mark-up option in screen-share on Zoom.

Other resources:

- I've done [a YouTube video](#) about this, which might be helpful.

Lesson Structure (1.5 – 2hrs)

Total time listed is 1.5-2 hours, but you could take a whole day over this if you wish as there is plenty to discuss and many possible examples to look at for each step.

Lyrics for the following songs available below:

“Good” English rhyming examples:

- [“I love a sunburnt country”](#)
- [“Triantiwontigongalope”](#)

“Not-so-good” English rhyming examples:

- [“Auld lang syne”](#)

“Really weird” English rhyming examples (good segue into Gaelic):

- [“Clancy of the Overflow”](#)
- [“Willie Macbride”](#)

Time	Activity	Resources
10-15 min	<p>Opening activity: Brainstorm different ideas about rhyming, with reference to any languages or previous knowledge had by the students (e.g., whole syllables vs. vowels; where rhyme happens in a poetic text).</p>	White board to note the ideas down
10-15 min	<p>Discuss English rhyming in particular, with references to a few examples of “good” and “not-so-good” rhyming in English. Discuss why it’s considered “not-so-good” (e.g. rhyme limited to vowels, doesn’t occur at end of the line, etc.) and how this is a culturally-based judgment.</p> <p>English rhyming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vowels • consonants • occurs at ends of lines 	

5 min	<p>Now introduce Gaelic concepts of rhyming:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vowels only • rhyme falls on consistent beat, regardless of number of syllables at the end of the line <p>Discuss how different cultures value different things in their poetry. Old Irish and Ancient Greek, for example, both preferred to count syllables and stresses, and paid attention to assonance and alliteration (words starting with the same letter or having similar sounds).</p>	
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10-15 minutes	<p>Look at your two-line verse Gaelic examples. Talk about internal rhyming (last beat on one line rhyming with an earlier beat in the next) and inter-verse rhyming (last beat on the last line rhymes across multiple or all verses).</p> <p>If needed, clap or beat the rhythm to feel where the beats fall. Milling songs are great for this because students will be used to doing that anyway! Have a blanket or sheet on hand to help with this.</p>	<p>Two-line verse examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hé mo leannan • O ho ro 'Ille Dhuinn • Maraiche (Niteworks' version)
10-20 min	<p>Look at the four-line verse Gaelic examples. Find the internal rhymes on the last beat of lines 1-3 and the earlier beat in line 4.</p> <p>See if you can find a reverse internal rhyme (earlier beat of lines 1-3) in some of the songs!</p>	<p>Four-line verse examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh

5 mins	<p>Summary of what you've learnt:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English = vowel, consonant, syllable count • Gaelic = vowel only, beat or stress • English = end-rhymes • Gaelic = internal rhymes 	
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30 mins	<p>If you have strong speakers, encourage them to compose a few two-line verses of their own! Using a popular waulking song as a base from which to copy the rhyme scheme is a good idea. Have the class agree on a topic (it doesn't have to be serious!) so you can put the verses together afterwards into a new song. For intermediate learners, you could brainstorm words as a group to create a list of words that share the same vowel, or work on the new verses together as a group.</p> <p>At one workshop, groups rewrote <i>Hé mo leannan</i> to be about Gaelic settlement of Mars!</p>	
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Variations

For any of the steps in the lesson plan – English verses, two-line verses, four-line verses – you might look through one song as a group, and then split off into pairs to work through another song.

You might take a moment to “brainstorm” how spotting the rhyme scheme can be a useful tool for other things, such as learning to pronounce new-to-you words, or helping you to remember lyrics when trying to memorise a song.

Preparing for Challenges

Some students, and especially beginners, may have difficulty identifying the rhyme structure. This can be a good opportunity to review some language foundations such as the sounds of [Gaelic](#), spelling (if working with texts), word stress, and long and short vowels.

Rhyme Examples

English poems

This list is not exhaustive and you may choose your own, or have students bring their favourites. Any part of the lesson can be repeated with different poems and songs if you want to reinforce it at a later date.

[“I love a sunburnt country”](#) Dorothea Mackellar

The love of field and coppice, of green and shaded **lanes**,
Of ordered woods and gardens, is running in your **veins**,
Strong love of grey-blue distance, brown streams and soft dim **skies**,
I know but cannot share it, my love is other**wise**.

I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping **plains**,
Or ragged mountain ranges, of drought and flooding **rains**,
I love her far horizons, I love her jewel-**sea**,
Her beauty and her terror – this wide brown land for **me**!

[“The triantiwontigongalope”](#) C J Dennis

There is a funny insect that you do not often **spy**,
And it isn't quite a spider, and it isn't quite a **fly**,
It is something like a beetle, and a little like a **bee**,
But nothing like a woolly grub that climbs upon a **tree**,
Its name is quite a hard one, but you'll learn it soon, I **hope**,
So try: Tri-, Tri-anti-wonti-,
Triantiwontigongal**ope**.

It lives on weeds and wattle-gum, and has a funny **face**,

Its appetite is heart, and its manners a **disgrace**.
When first you come upon it, it will give you
quite a **scare**,
But when you look for it again, you find it isn't
there.
And unless you call it softly, it will stay away and
mope,
So try: Tri-, Tri-anti-wonti-,
Triantiwontigongalope.

["Andy's gone with the cattle now"](#) Henry Lawson

Our Andy's gone to **battle now**
Against Drought, the red marauder,
Our Andy's gone with **cattle now**
Across the Queensland **border**.

He's left us in **dejection now**
Our hearts with him are **roving**
It's dull on this **selection now**
Since Andy went a-**droving**.

"Auld Lang Syne" Robert Burns

Should old acquaintance be forgot, and never
brought to **mind**
Should old acquaintance be forgot, and days of
old lang **syne**?
We twa have run about the braes, and pulled the
gowans **fine**
But we've wandered mony a weary fit since days
of old lang **syne**
We twa have paddled in the burn frae morning

sun til **dine**

But seas between us braid have roared since
days of old lang **syne**.

“Loch Lomond”

It was there that we parted in yon shady glen
On the steep, steep side of Ben **Lomond**
Where in the purple hue the Highland hills we
view

And the moon coming out in the **gloaming**

“[Clancy of the Overflow](#)” Andrew “Banjo” Paterson

I sent to him a **letter**, which I had for want of
better knowledge, sent to where I **met him** by
the Lachlan, years *ago*,
He was sheering when I **knew him**, so I sent the
letter **to him**,
Just on spec, addressed as follows: Clancy of the
Overflow.

“[No man’s land/ Willie Macbride](#)” Eric Bogle

Did they beat the drum **slowly**?
Did they sound the fife **lowly**?

Did the rifles fire **o’er ye**
As they **lowered** you down?

Gaelic Verses

This list is not exhaustive and you may choose your own, or have students bring their favourites. Any part of the lesson can be repeated with different poems and songs if you want to reinforce it at a later date.

[Hé mo leannan](#)

'S e mo leannan, am fear **donn**
A thogadh **fonn** anns an taigh-**chiùil**

'S e mo leannan, saor an t-**sàbhaidh**
Leagadh lobhta **làir** gu **dlùth**

'S e mo leannan am fear **bàn**
A dheidheadh an **àird** air bhàrr an t-**siùil**

'S e mo leannan am fear **laghach**
'S tu mo roghainn, **thaghainn thu**

'S tric a chaidh mi leat dha 'n **bhàthaich**
Sneachd' na b' **àirde** na mo **ghlùin**

My sweetheart is the brown-haired
man
Who would raise a tune in the music
house

My sweetheart is the carpenter of the
saw
Who would lay down flooring tightly

My sweetheart is the fair-haired man
Who would go to the top of the sail

My sweetheart is the nice man
You're my choice, I'd choose you

Often I went with you to the byre
Snow higher than my knee

[Maraiche](#)

O 's mairg tha 'n diugh feadh **garbhlaich**
'S ri **falbhan** am measg **fraoich**

Us gathan grèin gu h-òrbhuidh
A' **dòrtadh** air gach **taobh**

Gum b' fheàrr a bhi air bàrr nan **tonn**
Air **long** nan cranna **caol**

'S a' faicinn nan seòl **ùra**
Ri **sùgradh** anns a' **ghaoith**

O, pitiful is the day through rugged
country
and wandering amongst the heather

And the sun's rays goldenly
rushing forth on each side

That it would be better to be on top of
the waves
on the ship of the slender masts

And seeing the new sails
making merry in the wind

[Dùthaich Mhic Aoidh](#)

Mo mhallachd aig na caoraich **mhòr**,
Càit' bheil clann nan daoine **còir**?
Dhealaich rium 'n uair a bha mi **òg**
mus robh **Dùthaich** 'ic Aoidh 'na *fàsach*.

Tha trì fichead bliadhna 's a **trì**
Bho 'n a dh'fhàg sinn Dùthaich Mhic **Aoidh**
Càit' bheil gilleann òg mo **chridh'**
's na **nighean**agan cho *bòidheachd*?

My curse upon the great sheep,
Where now are the children of the kindly
folk?
Who parted from me when I was young
Before Sutherland became a desert?

It has been sixty-three years
Since I left Sutherland
Where are all my beloved young men
And all the girls that were so pretty?

About the Author



Raghnaid NicGaraidh

Raghnaid NicGaraidh is born and raised in South Australia, with roots in Scotland through her father. She grew up around Gaelic-speakers in Adelaide and has been intentionally speaking the language since she was a teenager. While studying for a degree in linguistics and ethnomusicology in Melbourne, she was the conductor and music director of Coisir Ghàidhlig Bhioctòiria (the Scottish Gaelic Choir of Victoria) from 2017-2020, and she has been teaching Gaelic language classes since 2016.

3. Transcription Frolics

Transcription Frolics

HEATHER SPARLING

Tags: [Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation](#);
[Adults](#); [Advanced](#)

Activity Summary

Transcription frolics are group activities that crowd-source the transcription of Gaelic songs. This activity can be done either online or in-person.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Improve their aural comprehension of Gaelic;
- Recognize a rhyme scheme in a Gaelic song;
- Practice writing (transcribing) Gaelic;
- Experience a “frolic,” a culturally relevant group work activity;
- Learn (about) one or more Gaelic songs, their creators, their purpose, and their source communities.

Gaelic Level

This activity is best undertaken by advanced Gaelic learners.

However, learners at other levels can participate so long as there is a critical mass of advanced learners who can undertake the bulk of the work, or if the teacher chooses a clear and simple song appropriate to the students’ level of fluency.

Preparation for Lesson

1. The teacher should choose one or two Gaelic song recordings (or create them!) for transcription. Careful attention should be given to the clarity of the recordings.
2. Provide the audio recording(s) to students in advance of the activity (1-7 days in advance), along with any contextual and background information the teacher may want to include.
3. Instruct students to listen to the recordings at least twice before the transcription frolic. Students should simply listen to the song all the way through the first time they listen. Upon second and subsequent listenings, students should try to listen for recognizable words and try to get the gist of the song's overall meaning.
4. Prepare an editable Google doc for the transcription.

Resources Required

Required Resources:

- Digital recordings of Gaelic songs to be transcribed;
- Google doc for the shared transcription;
- Each student must have their own playback device, headphones, and something on which to access the Google doc (a laptop is ideal);
- A “correct” version of the transcription (if one exists);
- One or more quiet spaces where ambient sound won’t disrupt the transcriptions, and where playing music aloud on speakers won’t disrupt others.

Optional Resources:

- Extension cords and power bars (to ensure that no one’s laptop runs out of power);
- Flip charts or flip chart paper and flip chart markers or white boards;
- Headphone splitters;
- High-quality speakers (if you plan to listen to recordings together).



Participants at an in-person transcription frolic. Photo by Heather Sparling.

Lesson Structure (50-90 min)

Time	Activity	Resources
5 min	<p>Introduce the concept of “frolics” in Gaelic culture (e.g., milling frolics, spinning frolics, barn raisings). Explain that this is why this is called a “transcription frolic”: we are crowd-sourcing the work of transcription.</p>	<p>“Frolic” entry in <i>Dictionary of Cape Breton English</i>.</p>

10 min	<p>Pros and cons of transcription: Discuss the value of being able to transcribe songs. Talk about the need to transcribe songs for which no transcriptions yet exist. Talk about how transcribing can aid oral comprehension. Brainstorm the challenges of transcribing songs (can be hard to understand, language can be poetic or atypical, grammar can be irregular, can be hard to know where words start and end). Transcription gets easier the more songs have been learned or transcribed (there are stock phrases and</p>	
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	commonly rhymed words).	
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<p>5 min</p>	<p>Provide instructions for the transcription frolic. Share the Google doc link. Students will listen to the recording on their own devices and transcribe the song into the Google doc. Everyone will work on the same transcription, but students can choose where to start (they don't have to all start from the beginning). Discourage overwriting someone else's transcription unless a student is very confident that they have heard the lyrics correctly. Instead, find ways to use fonts, italics, parentheses, or comments to</p>	<p>Example song: "Bàta Iagain Cheanadaich"</p>
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	make alternate suggestions.	
10-30 min	Transcribe the song simultaneously. The amount of time required will depend on the length of the song, its complexity, its clarity, and the level of the students' Gaelic fluency. Go until the full song is transcribed (although gaps and uncertainties may exist). Allow enough time for students to go back over the transcription to check for accuracy or make corrections.	

<p>10-30 min</p>	<p>Review the transcription together. What questions came up? Where are there uncertainties? Can the group resolve any of them? Share a “correct” version of the transcription (if one exists). Where are there discrepancies?</p>	<p>Notation, transcription, and translation of “Bàta Iagain Cheanadaich” in <i>Brìgh an Òrain</i>, p 271-5. Transcription also appears in An Drochaid Eadarainn. See also below.</p>
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<p>Optional 10 min</p>	<p>Ask students if they can identify the rhyme scheme in the song. Recognizing the rhyme scheme can help with transcription. Rhyme is based on long vowels and involves both end rhyme and internal rhyme. “Internal rhyme” is rhyme that happens in the middle of a line. For example:</p> <p>Verse 1: 'S gur e 'n Ceanadach mo nàbaidh 'N saor as fheàrr a thogas bàta; Chan iarr e lòcair na tàl Ach spéicean làidir, cruadhach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This song has 	<p>For more on how Gaelic rhyme works, consult Watson's Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry, 1550-1900.</p>
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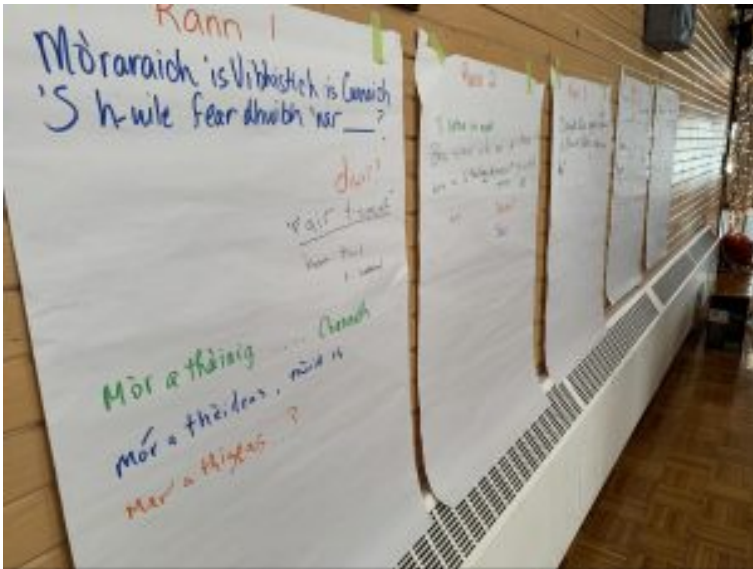
	<p>a common rhyme scheme: end rhyme for first three lines followed by internal rhyme in the fourth line (bold text)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note that the “à” sound generally happens on the second last syllable of each line (not the last syllable) — this could be a single word or two words (e.g., <i>ùr dhi</i> in the last verse)• Last word of every verse rhymes (again, the second last syllable: “ua”) <p>Note: although <i>tàl</i> in the verse above is a single syllable, the next line starts with an unaccented</p>	
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	syllable, <i>ach</i> ; when sung, <i>ach</i> will sound right after <i>tàl</i> , giving the impression that <i>tàl</i> is the second last syllable of the line.	
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Variations

There are many ways to vary this activity. For example:

- Instead of using a Google doc, set up a piece of flipchart paper on the wall for each verse of a song.
- Ahead of time, use an app ([Audacity](#) is free) to slow down the recording slightly. Together, listen to each verse three times while everyone transcribes as much as possible for themselves. Afterward, work together to create a complete transcription.
- Use headphone splitters to allow pairs or small groups to work on transcriptions of the same or different recordings.
- Split the class in half. Each half takes a turn at collaboratively transcribing a song (two songs altogether). Then switch songs with each group building on the transcription created by the other group.
- Invite a fluent, native, or elder speaker to participate or provide feedback on the resulting transcription.



Group song transcription. Photo by Heather Sparling.

You may find that different activities work better for your group or help to develop different skills and group bonding. You can vary:

- the size of the group working on a transcription (e.g., individuals, partners, small groups, large group);
- the technology used (e.g., Google Docs, audio apps that enable the slowing down of a recording, earphone splitters, audio and video file annotators);
- synchronous or asynchronous activities;
- face-to-face or virtual activities;
- whether participants listen to a recording separately or together;
- whether participants work together on the same song or section of a song, or whether participants work on different materials.

Preparing for Challenges

You may wish to prepare for any of the following potential challenges:

- Technical issues, whether due to equipment failure, power outage, or students' lack of familiarity with particular apps and software;
- Student frustration if the audio recording or song is particularly difficult to transcribe;
- Student frustration with unfamiliar vocabulary or dialects;
- Difficulty “finalizing” a transcription for which no transcription already exists: how will you decide which of the various transcription options is “right”?

Lyrics

Bàta Iagain Cheanadaich

*A bhean an taighe, fàg an siola
Botul là tha mi 'sireadh
Dh'òlainn deoch-slàinte nan gillean
A dh'imich Di-luain bhuainn.*

Forget the gill, good serving lady,
A full bottle's what I require;
For I would drink the lads' health
Who took leave of us on Monday.

*'S gur e 'n Ceanadach mo nàbaidh
'N saor as fheàrr a thogas bàta;
Chan iarr e lòcair na tàl
Ach spéicean làidir, cruadhach.*

The best shipwright to build a boat
Is my neighbour Kennedy;
He requires neither plane nor adze,
Just strong spikes of steel.

*A' cheud té thog e riamh 'san àite
Chaill e shuas aig drochaid Shàm i;*

*Chìte fhathast ri muir-tràigh i
'S na cruinn bhàn' an uachdar.*

The first boat he ever built in the district
He lost down at Sam's Bridge;
At low tide she could still be seen
With her white masts jutting upwards.

*Tha té eil' aige ga cur an òrdadh,
Cha bhi a leithid anns a' Phròbhans;
Théid i fairis an Cuan Reòite
'S an North Pole a bhuanndachd.*

Now he's fashioning another
Whose like will not be seen in the province;
She'll traverse the Arctic Ocean
And arrive at the North Pole.

*'S gabhaidh sinn iongantas 'us iòghnadh
Nach fhacas aon do chloinn daoine:
An North Pole a bhith ri'r taobh
'S an saoghal a' dol mun cuairt dhuinn.*

With awe and amazement we'll all behold
A sight as yet unseen by man:
The North Pole there beside us,
And the globe rotating round us.

*'S gum bi sinn uile cho bòsdail
An onair a bhith aig a' phròbhans;
Ma thilleas e dhachaigh beò
'S am Pole aig' air a ghualainn.*

And we'll all be extremely proud
Of the honour accorded to the province,
If he returns home alive
With the North Pole on his shoulder.

*A' bhliadhna a chaidh e a Labradòr
A dh'iasgach an sgadain reòidht',
'Se MacCuithinn bha 'na chòcair'
'S reòite leis an fhuachd e.*

The year he went to Labrador
To fish for frozen herring,
MacQueen, who was the cook on board,
Was frozen solid by the cold.

*Nuair a thill iad far na bhòidse
Gu robh sneachd agus gaoth reòit' ann;
Fhuair iad càball chur fo sròin
Mun chròic a bh'aig an fhuaran.*

And when they returned from the voyage
Accompanied by chilling wind and snow;
They got a cable under her prow
And around the hitching stump at the spring.

*Tha i nist air a h-insiùradh
Fhuair iad acarsaid as ùr dhi;
Chuir iad suas i 'n sin 'nan triùir
Fos cionn an ùrlair-bhualaidh.*

And now that she has been insured
They've found her a new anchorage:
The three of them have raised her up
To hang over the threshing floor.

References

Davey, William John, and Richard P MacKinnon. 2016. *Dictionary of Cape Breton English*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Shaw, John, ed. 2000. *Brìgh an Òrain*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Watson, William J. 1918. *Bàrdachd Ghàidhlig: Specimens of Gaelic Poetry, 1550-1900*. Glasgow: An Comunn Gaidhealach.

About the Author



Heather Sparling

Heather Sparling is the Canada Research Chair in Musical Traditions and a Professor of Ethnomusicology at Cape Breton University. She researches Gaelic song in Nova Scotia, as well as vernacular dance in Cape Breton and Atlantic Canadian disaster songs. She is the author of *Reeling Roosters and Dancing Ducks: Celtic Mouth Music* (2014). She is also the director of the SSHRC-funded project, [Language in Lyrics](#), through which [Transcription Frolics](#) were developed.

4. Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran

Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran

ROBYN CARRIGAN

Tags: [Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation](#);
[Children](#); [Beginner](#)

Activity Summary

This sweet amusing three line lullaby introduces the topic of cattle droving and builds confidence and pronunciation skills for beginner level students from age seven to adult. The small vocabulary is not difficult to quickly memorize and provides an opportunity to work on pronunciation of broad and slender r sounds and aspirated c with a broad vowel (e.g. *-ach*).

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Build confidence in acquiring a complete song;
- Gain facility with broad and slender r's and broad ch's;
- Learn about cattle droving and facets of the historical Gaelic economy;
- Acquire vocabulary.

Gaelic Level

Suitable for ages seven years to adult and for any language level.

Lesson Preparation

The song may be shared in advance of the lesson, although this is not required as the song is only three lines.

The pronunciation files may best be reviewed with the instructor present to help secure pronunciation, and then shared with students after as a guide, depending on the level of the learners.

Print the materials and song sheets or provide access to digital copies.

Resources Required

- Clear, high-quality audio speakers
- Device (e.g., computer, tablet, phone) to access files
- Internet connection to play Youtube videos and pronunciation files

- Printer for sheets or materials (but these may also be accessed digitally)
- Whiteboard or similar is useful to display the three lines of lyrics

Lesson Structure (30 minutes)

Time	Activity	Resources
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10 mins	<p>Working on pronunciation.</p> <p>Although this song is simple it provides an opportunity to enjoy some of the features of Gaelic language consonants. A light-hearted and encouraging approach can be very successful especially when working with beginner students, such as broad and slender R sounds.</p> <p>R's at the beginning of a word, or found as RR elsewhere, are generally rolled:</p> <p><u>Gaelic sounds – Pronounce R at the beginning of a word</u></p> <p>R's next to Broad Vowels within a word (i.e. A, O, or U):</p>	<p>Full pronunciation with a variety of speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran – Robyn Carrigan</u> • <u>Cadal Ciarach mo Luran – Spoken Lyrics – Sionainn MacM.</u> • <u>Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran – Heather S.</u> • <u>Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran – Ed MacD.</u> • <u>Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran – Rob P.</u> <p>Pronunciation Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad R's (within a word) (00:00) <u>Gaelic sounds – Pronounce R</u> • Slender R's (00:56) <u>Gaelic sounds – Pronounce R</u> • Broad CH's <u>Gaelic Sounds – Pronounce CH</u>
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	<p><i>Cadal ciarach mo luran</i></p> <p>Gaelic R's that are not at the beginning of a word and are next to the vowels A, O, or U are considered BROAD. They are lightly tapped. The tongue taps the roof of the mouth behind the teeth. In <i>ciarach</i> and <i>luran</i> we use the tongue to add a quick R.</p> <p><u>Gaelic sounds – Pronounce a non-initial Broad R</u> (00:00 – 00:56)</p> <p>R's with Slender Vowels (i.e. E and I):</p> <p><i>Chan fhaigh dròbhair a' chruidh thu</i></p> <p>Gaelic R's that are not at the beginning of a word and that are next to</p>	
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	<p>the vowels E or I are considered SLENDER. The R next to a slender vowel is softened and in some dialects resembles an airy English ‘th’ sound.</p> <p><u>Gaelic sounds – Pronounce Slender R</u> 00:56</p> <p>Gaelic CH, with Broad Vowels: A, O, or U:</p> <p><i>Cadal ciarach mo luran</i> Chan fhaigh dròbhair a’ chruidh thu</p> <p>This sound comes out of the back of the mouth and has been described as the sound a cat makes coughing up a hairball. Have the class all try like a cat. Be silly and use exaggeration. The sillier the better!</p>	
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	<p><u>Gaelic Sounds – Pronounce CH</u></p>	
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<p>13 mins</p>	<p>Singing the song. Lyrics below.</p> <p><i>Cadal ciarach mo luran Bidh mi-fhìn agad tuilleadh Chan fhaigh dròbhair a' chruidh thu</i></p> <p>Sleep (in) twilight my darling, I will be with you always, The drover of cattle won't get you.</p>	<p>Song sheets, sheet music, Sol-fa, Song Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheet Music • Melody of the Song in Sol-fa • SOL-FA MOVABLE DO SYSTEM <p>Teaching Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran – 0:00 PIANO ONLY/ 1:09 PIANO SUNG LYRICS <p>Examples of full song performance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nova Scotia – Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran – Robyn Carrigan (feat. Jenny Melvin) • Scotland – Julie Fowlis – Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran
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7 mins	History of the Cattle Drovers. Discussion of the economy of Highland society.	Resources and Links: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DROVERS SHEET • The Highland Drovers • Scottish Cattle Droving – When all drove roads led to Crieff
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Variations

The lesson easily expands to a longer lesson of 45 or 60 minutes by adding more time in the pronunciation, acquisition, or the Drovers section of the lesson. The pronunciation component can easily expand with the use of the sample files provided. Create a shorter lesson by removing the History or Pronunciation component, or focus solely on Acquisition.

For example: 45 Minute Lesson

15 mins	Working on pronunciation
15 mins	Acquiring the song
15 mins	History of the Cattle Drovers. Discussion of the economy of Highland society

Other Options:

- Advanced: Compose three new lines in Gaelic suitable for a lullaby.

- Beginner Junior: Divide the lesson into two parts and learn the first two lines in Lesson 1, adding the third in Lesson 2.

Preparing for Challenges

- Student Hesitancy: Warming up the students' voices readies them for singing, providing physical and mental ease and confidence. Humming works! Here is a classic vocal warm-up: [How to do the Lip Trill](#)
- Pronunciation: Use the call-and-response method with the teacher modeling the correct pronunciation and one student echoing the word or phrase, then re-model and select a different student to echo. You can check how the students are doing in a gentle, immersive manner.

Further Reading

Haldane, A.R.B. 1952. *The Drove Roads of Scotland*. Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson.

Witherspoon, Kelly A. 2020. "Scottish Cattle Companies on the Western Frontier." *Bound Away: The Liberty Journal of History* 3(2). [Available online](#).

Lyrics

In the video below the melody of the song is taught at the beginning of the video. At 1:09 the lyrics and melody are provided.

[Cadal Ciarach Mo Luran – 0:00 PIANO ONLY/
1:09 PIANO/SUNG LYRICS](#)

CADAL CIARACH MO LURAN

The simple song structure consists of three verses. Each verse has four lines, the first one repeats three times with a different line for the fourth.

*Cadal ciarach mo luran,
Cadal ciarach mo luran,
Cadal ciarach mo luran,
Bidh mi-fhìn agad tuilleadh.*

*Bidh mi-fhìn agad tuilleadh,
Bidh mi-fhìn agad tuilleadh,
Bidh mi-fhìn agad tuilleadh,
Chan fhaigh dròbhair a' chruidh thu.*

*Chan fhaigh dròbhair a' chruidh thu,
Chan fhaigh dròbhair a' chruidh thu,*

*Chan fhaigh dròbhair a' chruidh thu,
Bidh mi-fhìn agad tuilleadh.*

Repeat Verse 1

Sleep (in) twilight my darling

I will be with you always

The drover of cattle won't get you

About the Author



Robyn Carrigan

Gaelic recording artist, performer, and educator; Robyn Carrigan is a Nova Scotia native. An award winning singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, Robyn started early in her musical family, growing up in the “Gaelic Belt” of Highland Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. Robyn reached fluency in Gaelic largely through immersion methods, Ùlpan, Gàidhlig aig Baile, and most recently the Bun is Bàrr mentorship program. Over the past nine years Robyn also returned to Scotland five times with intensive immersions of Gaelic language and culture in community with native speakers and short courses at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. From 2013 Robyn has been active with her

Gaelic band and as a solo artist recording Gaelic songs, touring, playing Music Festivals, Highland Games and touring Canada, the US, the UK, and teaching Gaelic song and language workshops here and abroad. A community organiser, Robyn sat on the board of the Vancouver Gaelic Society before moving back home. Based in Cape Breton, she shares her love of the language as a private instructor, performer, consultant and workshop presenter.

5. O, Siud an Taobh a Ghabhainn

HANNAH KREBS

Tags: [Grammar and Vocabulary](#); [Adults](#); [Advanced](#)

Activity Summary

This lesson shall serve as a tool to help students review and apply the future tense and to better understand Gaelic. This song also provides examples of Gaelic worldview and history, which can be used to help students make connections with the bard's life and experience of emigration. This activity could be done online or in person.

Background

O, *Siud an Taobh a Ghabhainn* is an emigration song composed by Anna NicGilleÌosa (Nancy McGillis) of

Mòrar (Morar) who settled in Glengarry County, Ontario. This song illustrates bards using song as a record of what their community was experiencing and how they may have felt about it, and demonstrates the interconnectedness of Gaelic communities and kinship groups in Canada, despite physical distance. This song remained in the oral tradition in Cape Breton despite McGillis settling in Ontario. From a grammar perspective, this song provides several examples of common verbs in future and conditional tenses.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Gain confidence singing a song they already have learned;
- Learn about the composer and context of the song;
- Become more familiar with the future tense;
- Identify verbs in the song in future tense;
- Learn and review question, positive, and negative

forms of various future tense verbs;

- Practice using the verbs in conversation, asking and answering questions.

Gaelic Level

Intermediate-advanced. Learners should be familiar with common verbs and have been introduced to the future tense of at least one verb. This lesson could be led entirely in Gaelic in an immersion setting or in English. Best suited for older youth or adults.

Lesson Preparation

1. Students should already have been introduced to the song in a previous lesson.
2. Be familiar with the information on the **bana-bhàrd** *Anna NicGilleÌosa*.
3. Students should have some basic knowledge of the future tense (or, could use this song as the introduction – see [Variations](#) below).
4. Identify target verbs in the song based on prior knowledge of the group (could focus on working with just one or two, or many).
5. Prepare at least one example scenario to demonstrate and practice each verb in conversation. Assemble any additional props required to aid with this.

Resources Required

Required Resources:

- White board or flipchart and marker
- Lyrics of song (projected or handouts)

Optional Resources:

- Recording of song
- Maps of relevant areas in Scotland and Canada (strongly recommended — could just use Google maps on the computer)
- Writing utensils and paper for students
- Additional props for verb activities
- Flashcards or Google images showing feelings, actions, etc., portrayed in the song

Lesson Structure (1hr – 2hrs)

Estimated total time is 1 hr 5 minutes to 2 hrs 10 minutes, depending on how in-depth the topics are discussed. It would be ideal to include a break about halfway through if teaching a longer lesson.

Time	Activity	Resources

5-10	<p>Introduce lesson and review “O, Siud an Taobh a Ghabhainn”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already knowing the song, students can sing along to the verses and chorus depending on comfort level • Briefly talk about what will be covered in the lesson • Encourage students to record all or part of the lesson for reinforcement 	<p>Sound recording, or teacher singing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>O, Siud an Taobh a Ghabhainn</u> – Hannah Krebs • <u>O, Siud an Taobh a Ghabainn</u> – Singer not listed, but recognized as Margaret MacLean (Mairead bean Ruairidh) from Boisdale. The tune on this is a little different from some other versions out there. <p><u>Lyrics</u></p>
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5-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about <i>bana-bhàrd</i> Anna NicGilleÌosa • Emigrated from Knoydart in 1786 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Show on map • Settled in Glengarry County, Ontario • There is a family story in NS that maintains that relations of hers settled in Antigonish County, NS • Song known and collected in Cape Breton 	Maps of Scotland and Canada
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10-15	<p>Review with group keys for identifying future tense verbs (e.g. “-idh” endings, irregulars). Give a few examples of root forms and see if students can come up with the future positive (e.g., <i>cuir</i> -> <i>cuiridh</i>).</p> <p>Have the students work in pairs and go through the song to try and identify all the future tense verbs they can.</p> <p>Come back to the big group and go through the song to make sure all the future tense verbs got identified.</p>	<p>White board or flip chart</p> <p>Lyrics of song projected or written out</p> <p>Paper with lyrics or scrap paper for students</p>
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30-60	<p>Work on practicing the future tense and learning new future verbs using the verb(s) from the song you picked for your group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go over question, positive and negative forms • Use the verb with one of the example questions you prepared, and have students take turns asking and answering using the target verb • Use additional examples to illustrate meaning if necessary • If students are comfortable, get them to try making their own questions using the verbs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ e.g., Gabh (<i>an gabh thu tì?</i> – have cups and a teapot as props) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>An gabh?</i> ▪ <i>+ Gabhaidh</i> ▪ <i>- Cha ghabh</i> ◦ e.g., Falbh (<i>am</i> 	
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	<p><i>falbh thu</i> <i>an-dràsta?</i> – have student go out the door briefly or remain seated)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>Am falbh?</i>▪ <i>+ Falbhaidh</i>▪ <i>– Chan fhalbh</i> <p>Repeat with as many verbs as desired. Ideally, movement and props can be incorporated in the example questions to make them more engaging.</p>	
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5-15	<p>Discuss the meaning of the song:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is happening? • Get students to explain some of the verses in their own words, draw pictures, etc., as best they can with their speaking level. • Could also talk about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ When is it happening? ◦ What is going on in Scotland, Nova Scotia, or Canada? ◦ How do you think the <i>bàrd</i> feels? 	<p>Whiteboard or flip chart</p> <p>Optional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing utensils, paper for students • Map • Flashcards, Google images, etc. to show feelings, and actions
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5-15	<p>Sùil air ais Review: Ask the students questions about what happened in the lesson, and review the verbs you worked on. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cò rinn an t-òran seo? • Cò às a bha Anna NicGilleÌosa? • Dé na gnìomhairean air an robh sinn ag obair? <p>Go over question, positive and negative forms again for all verbs worked on in the lesson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions from students 	
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5	Sing song again	
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Variations

- If the students haven't learned the future tense already, have students look at the words, and try to identify verbs before the future tense is taught — see if they can identify the new tense and spot future tense patterns and endings within the song, and then review what they found and go over specific verbs;
- Spend some extra time talking about emigration patterns, geography, and place names
 - Places in Scotland mentioned in the song, other Gaelic areas;
 - Places Gaels settled in North America;
- Look at the rhyme scheme of the song;
- When discussing the meaning of the song, you could dive deeper into some of the symbolism;
- If using a recording sung by [Margaret MacLean](#) (*Mairead bean*

Ruairidh), share more information about her, her people, dialect, etc.;

- For a more advanced group:
 - Look for and practice verbs in the conditional or relative future as well;
 - Compose another verse of the song; or
 - Make a game to change the song to past tense.

Preparing for Challenges

Some challenges which may arise in the above activities:

- Students may have a hard time identifying verbs in the text, especially if they haven't done much reading and writing before. If this might be a struggle for your group, you could conduct the activity as a group, or have the group look at just one verse at a time where the target verb is.
- Discussion about the song and the *bàrd* might be difficult for students to understand and participate in through the medium of Gaelic if this lesson is conducted in an immersion setting, depending on their level. Information about *Anna* could be provided in English along with the lyrics while discussion points could be geared to the level of comprehension of the students, or more time might be spent on describing and illustrating

the meaning of the song with actions, pictures,
etc.

Lyrics

O, Siud an Taobh a Ghabhainn

by Anna NicGilleÌosa, from Margaret MacDonell's "The Emigrant Experience," pg 132-135. A slightly different version of the lyrics are published in Newton's "Seanchaidh na Coille," p 130-131, as they appeared in "The Casket" (Antigonish), April 27, 1893.

O, siud an taobh a ghabhainn,
E, siud an taobh a ghabhainn,
'S gach aon taobh am biodh an rathad,
Ghabhainn e gu h-eòlach.

That is the road I would take,
That is the road I would take,

And wherever the road lay
I would take it for I know it well.

*Gabhaidh sinn ar cead de Mhòrair,
Arasaig 's Mùideart nam mòr-bheann,
Eige 's Canaidh gheal nan ròiseal,
'S Uibhist bhòidheach ghreannmhor.*

We'll take leave of Morar,
Arisaig, and mountainous Moidart,
Eigg, and fair, surf-swept Canna,
And beautiful, lovely Uist.

*Cnòideart fuar 'us Gleann a Garaidh
Far am bheil na fiùran gheala,
'S Uisge Ruadh o'n Bhràighe thairis
Gu Srath Inbhir Lòchaidh.*

Knoydart and Glengarry,
Where there are white saplings,
And the Red Stream from the Brae
Over to the glen of Inverlochy.

*Tha na càirdean gasda, lionmhor,
Thall 's a bhos air feadh nan crìochan;
'S ma dh'fhàgas mi h-aon dhiubh 'n dìochuimhn'
'S aobhar mìothlachd dhòmhs' e.*

Gallant, numerous are the kinsmen,
Here and there throughout these areas;
If I forget any of them
It will be a cause of deep regret to me.

*Dòmhnallaich 'us gu'm bu dual dhaibh
Seasamh dìreach ri achd cruadail,
A bhi diann a' ruith na ruaige
Dileas, cruaidh gu dòruinn.*

The MacDonalds were always wont
To stand boldly in the face of hardship,
Eagerly putting opponents to rout,
Faithful, intrepid in adversity.

Long 's leòmhann, craobh 'us caisteal,
Bhiodh 'nan sròiltean àrd ri 'm faicinn;
Fireun, 'us làmh dhearg 'us bradan,
'Us fraoch 'na bhadaìn còmh' riuth'.

Ship and lion, tree and castle,
Visible on their raised standards,
The eagle, the red hand, the salmon,
The sprigs of heather.

Chì mi 'n cabrach air an fhuaran,
A ghréidh fhéin nan treud mu'n cuairt dha.
A h-uile té 's a sròn 's an fhuaradh
Mu'n tig gnùis luchd-tòrachd.

I see the stag at the spring,
His herd like warriors around him;
Each one with its nose in the wind
Lest a huntsman appear.

Leam bu bhinn a' chaismeachd mhaidne,
An déidh dùsgadh as mo chadal,
Coileach dubh air bhàrr a' mheangain,
'S fiadh 's a' bhad ri crònan.

Sweet to me was the morning music
When I awoke from sleep;
A black cock in the treetops
And the deer bellowing in the thickets.

Falbhaidh sinn o thìr nan uachdran;
Ruigidh sinn an dùthaich shuaimhneach,

*Far am bi crodh laoigh air bhualtean,
Air na fuarain bhòidheach.*

We shall leave the land of the lairds;
We'll go to the land of contentment,
Where there will be cattle in the folds
And around the fine pools.

*Falbhaidh sinn, 's cha dèan sinn fuireach;
Fàgaidh sinn slàn agaibh uile.
Seòlaidh sinn air bhàrr na tuinne;
Dia chur turus oirnne.*

We shall leave and not delay;
We'll bid you all farewell
We'll sail over the billows.
God speed us.

Further Reading

MacDonell, Margaret. 1982. *The Emigrant Experience: Songs of Highland Emigrants in North America*. Toronto: University Press. Especially pages 131-135.

Newton, Michael Steven. 2015. *Seanchaidh Na Coille | Memory-Keeper of the Forest: Anthology Of Scottish-Gaelic Literature of Canada*. Sydney, Nova Scotia: Cape Breton University Press. Especially pages 129-132.

MacPherson, Chelsey. 2021. "A' Tarraing Gàidheil Ghlinne Garraidh Bho Thobair Mhic-Talla." BA thesis, St. Francis Xavier University.

Dunn, Charles. 1953. *Highland Settler*. Toronto: University Press.

About the Author



Hannah Krebs

Hannah Krebs works as a Gaelic Cultural Animator at Baile nan Gàidheal | Highland Village Museum and teaches Gaelic classes in a number of communities in Cape Breton. Born and raised in Ontario, she began learning Gaelic when she moved to Nova Scotia, and holds a degree in Celtic Studies from St. F.X. University. She loves dancing, riding horses, and getting to know this beautiful part of the world better.

6. Òran nan Sealgairean

LAURA STIRLING

Tags: [Culture, Literature, and Poetry](#); [Adults](#); [Intermediate](#)

Activity Summary

After learning *Òran nan Sealgairean*, composed by Archie MacKenzie (*Eairdsidh Sheumais*) of Christmas Island, students will be able to look at the story within the song as a group. They will identify new or unusual vocabulary, discuss the purpose of the song, identify real places and mythological characters in the song, and finally create a storyboard to tell the story themselves.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Develop the confidence and skill to tell a Gaelic story;
- Improve their vocabulary;
- Learn about a Nova Scotia Gaelic song, its creator, and his local community;
- Recognize a rhyme scheme in a Gaelic song;
- Learn about the Fenians, and discuss why they are referenced in *Òran nan Sealgairean* and how they represent aspects of the worldview of the Gaels;
- Use this song (and the story within it) to create a new story of their own, such as describing a day out or an adventure.

Gaelic Level

This activity is designed for advanced beginner or intermediate Gaelic learners. Beginners could be included in the final storytelling session.

Lesson Preparation

Students will have learned the song well prior to this lesson.

Resources Required

Required Resources:

- [“The Songs of a Nation”](#) by Frances MacEachan in *Am Bràighe* (p. 14);
- [Sgeulachdan nan Gaisgeach | The Stories of Heroes](#) by Ruairidh MacIlleathain (*An Litir Bheag* 853);
- [History of Christmas Island Parish](#) by Archibald MacKenzie;
- [“Òran nan Sealgairean”](#) recording (sung by John Joe MacKenzie);

- A flipchart or a wall-length whiteboard and plenty of coloured pens or markers or any other materials to illustrate a story.

Optional Resources:

- [Sgeulachdan nan Gaisgeach | Stories of Heroes](#) from Seòras Mac a' Phearsain and Ruairidh MacIlleathain;
- [“A Fenian Tale”](#) translated in *Am Bràighe* (p. 24 and p. 27);
- [“Òran nan Sealgairean”](#) Gaelic lyrics in *Teachdaire nan Gaidheal* (1929): vol 4, number 7 (see [Lyrics](#) for translation).



“Big Pond, Nova Scotia” by Capercanuck is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license

Lesson Structure (1.5 hour class)

Time	Activity	Resources
20 min	<p>Discuss the importance of song within Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia. Explain how comic songs would be sung less often, but gave great pleasure to local audiences who would recognize names and events. These songs — a little like an inside joke — were only ever fully understood in the small local community where they originated.</p> <p>Put up the article “The Songs of a Nation” on the projector for students to read.</p>	<p>F. MacEachen, “The Songs of a Nation” (p. 14) Òran nan Sealgairean: lyrics and translation</p>
20 min	<p>Ask students if they have heard of the Fenians. Who are they? Together read and listen to a story about Oscar, one of the band of heroes. Discuss why the local hunters of our comic song are compared here to the Fenians.</p>	<p>MacIleathain, R. “853: The Stories of Heroes.”</p>
10 min	<p>Talk about the creator of the song — Archie MacKenzie — and the area where he lived, Rear Christmas Island in Cape Breton.</p>	<p>MacKenzie, Archibald J. History of Christmas Island Parish.</p> <p>See p. 64 for a concise description of the author, and p. 145 for an entry concerning the early days in the parish: “Some of the Characteristics of the Pioneers of Christmas Island Parish” (St FX Digital Collections)</p>

20 min	<p>Listen together to an archival recording of the song more than once. Discuss unusual words such as euchdail. Make new sentences with it.</p> <p>Or, to develop a greater understanding of poetic and linguistic rhythm, take one or two lines from the song and substitute words while keeping the same number of syllables. For example,</p> <p>'S tìm dhomhsa tòiseachadh ri òran chur ri chéile.</p> <p>'S tìm dhomhsa tòiseachadh ri litir chur gu Annag.</p> <p>Go around in a circle making up sentences without thinking too much over it, just keeping the syllable count consistent. More advanced students could give greater consideration to long vs. short vowels and/or rhyme (e.g., replacing òran with òrdugh). Allowing silly word substitutions will make this activity easier</p>	<p>MacKenzie, John Joe “Oran nan Sealgairean [Audio recording].”</p>
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	<p>and more fun for the class (e.g., replacing òran with òrdag). See “variations,” below.</p> <p>To make it easier, you could suggest each person substitutes just one word to change the sentence, and so on.</p> <p>Point out the complex Gaelic rhyme scheme within the verse:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> 'S tìm dhomhsa tòiseachadh Ri òran chur ri chéile Mu dheidhinn nan sealgairean A dhearbhadh gu robh iad treunail </p>	
15 min	<p>Separate into small groups or work as individuals to tell the story within the song. Give each group a verse or two to paraphrase in their own words. Create simple or silly or dramatic illustrations according to individual ability (stick figures are perfectly fine!), to represent the actions of the story. Ask students to use words from the song while enhancing them with their own words to develop the story further. They can make the story their own.</p>	
5 min	<p>Put the parts of the story together. If possible, perform it for another group of learners.</p>	

Variations

There are many ways to vary this activity.

1. Arrange pieces of flipchart paper on the wall in sequence for each scene of the song. Have the group present the finished story with simple illustrations to a beginner group, and then teach the beginners the chorus so that they can join in with the song.

2. An advanced intermediate group could create their own comic song, following the same complex Gaelic rhyme scheme to celebrate their own local heroic comic event. First, ask them to read “A Fenian Tale” from [p. 24 of Am Bràighe \(Autumn 1993\)](#), which had been published earlier *Mac-Talla*, a historic all-Gaelic newspaper published in Sydney, NS, from 1892-1904. Then discuss the qualities most valued by the Fenians. It is a long list! What sort of person would possess these qualities today? Do we still value the same qualities in our present-day leaders or heroes?

To aid them in creating their own verses, you could begin by removing a few keywords and asking them to replace the words to create new verses of their own. In this way, they will become familiar with the rhyme scheme, play with the words, and create something original without starting from scratch — a daunting task.

For example:

'S tìm dhomhsa tòiseachadh
Ri òran chur ri chéile
Mu dheidhinn nan sealgairean
A dhearbhadh gu robh iad treunail

'S tìm dhomhsa tòiseachadh
Ri òran chur ri _____
Mu dheidhinn nan sealgairean
A dhearbhadh gu robh iad _____

As a group, they could start out by brainstorming random two-syllable words that fit the rhyme, in this case the **é** sound in **chéile** and **treunail**. Give the students five minutes to come up with as many words as possible. Have one person write these up on the whiteboard or flipchart at speed. Then allow the students to work individually to make a new verse using the word store they have compiled.

They would then proceed to create a story-song of their own, perhaps incorporating some of the qualities of the Fenians: feats of strength, fighting against all odds “up to nine to one,” mastering 12 books of poetry...

It could be a chance to learn and make use of phrases of comparison such as *cho laidir ri each* or create new ones. And the common expression *cothrom na Feinne*, “the Fingalian fair play; — i.e. one to one, *gaisgeach air gaisgeach agus laoch ri laoch*” (**Dwelly**, *cothrom*) might be introduced, especially if the students are not familiar with it.

Students could work together to create the song or individually to create their own story and songs in this way.

Preparing for Challenges

If students lack experience or are uncomfortable telling a story within a group, you might try a few simple warm-up activities: have them work in pairs, telling the story to each other in their own words. Then, in a circle, tell the story by going around the circle and having each student add one more sentence. Repeating this more than once will build confidence.

If students lack confidence drawing or illustrating the story, remind them that they are telling a story with pictures. The pictures do not need to be perfect. The story is all that matters. It might be an idea to break the ice with a game of Pictionary as a warm-up exercise.

If students are shy about singing within a wider group, remind them that the Gaelic people sang songs for many purposes, often to make work lighter (milking the cow, spinning wool), and often in a communal setting. It rarely involved singing to an audience from a stage! It was about the song, not the singer. In order to build confidence, make sure the students know the song so well that they do not need to look at the written words. This takes time. Allow extra time, if at all possible, to learn the song really well from the start.

Lyrics

Òran nan Sealgairean

By Archie MacKenzie, translated by Laura Stirling

Seist (Chorus):

*Fail ill ò ro fail ill ò ro
Fail ill ò ro éileadh
Hi rithill iùil agus ò
'S na thog i ò ro éile*

*'S tìm dhomhsa tòiseachadh
Ri òran chur ri chèile
Mu dheidhinn nan sealgairean
A dhearbhadh gu robh iad treunail.*

It's time to start
To put together a song
About the hunters
Who swore they were strong.

*Mu dheidhinn nan sealgairean
A dhearbhadh gu robh iad treunail
Cha robh leithid anns na linnntean
O'n bha 'n Fhinn ri chèile.*

About the hunters

Who swore they were strong
There was never the like in the centuries
Since the Fenians were together.

*Cha robh leithid anns na linnntean
O'n bha 'n Fhinn ri chéile
Cha d'rinn Oisean, Fionn is Diarmaid
Gnìomh a bha cho euchdail.*

There was never the like in the centuries
Since the Fenians were together
Ossian, Finn and Dermid never did anything
That was so heroic.

*Cha d'rinn Oisean, Fionn is Diarmaid
Gnìomh a bha cho euchdail
Cha do dh'fhàg iad aon tunnag beò
An taobh shìos do phòn Iain Sheumais.*

Ossian, Finn and Dermid never did anything
That was so heroic
They did not leave one duck alive
The lower side of John James' pond.

*Cha do dh'fhàg iad aon tunnag beò
An taobh shìos do phòn Iain Sheumais
Na cearc thomain dhèanadh fuaim
Gun luaidh' a chuir fo sgéithe.*

They did not leave one duck alive
The lower side of John James' pond
Nor could wood grouse make a sound
Without a shot under the wing.

*Na cearc thomain dhèanadh fuaim
Gun luaidh' a chuir fo sgéithe*

'S gur ann a mhuinntir a' Chùil,
An triùir a rinn an euchd 'ad.

Nor could wood grouse make a sound
Without a shot under the wing
It's of the people of the Rear*,
The three fellows of these heroic exploits.

'S gur ann a mhuinntir a' Chùil,
An triùir a rinn an euchd 'ad.
Bha iad aig a' phòn 'ud shìos
Mun d'rinn a' ghrian ach éirigh.

It's of the people of the Rear*,
The three fellows of these heroic exploits.
They were at the pond down there
Just before sunrise.

Bha iad aig a' phòn 'ud shìos
Mun d'rinn a' ghrian ach éirigh
'S gu robh am blunderbuss aig Eòs
'Cur ceò dheth gu na speuran.

They were at the pond down there
Just before sunrise
Joe had a blunderbuss
That fired off smoke into the sky.

'S gu robh am blunderbuss aig Eòs
'Cur ceò dheth gu na speuran
Is tunnagan ga'n toirt a-nìos
Nan ceudan bhàrr na sgéitheadh.

Joe had a blunderbuss
That fired off smoke into the sky
Bringing down ducks
On the wing by the hundreds.

*Is tunnagan ga'n toirt a-nìos
Nan ceudan bhàrr na sgéitheadh
Gus na lìon 'ad leotha an càr
Cho làn 's nach rachadh té eil' ann.*

Bringing down ducks
On the wing by the hundreds
Until they filled up the car
So full that not one more would fit in.

*Gus na lìon 'ad leotha an càr
Cho làn's nach rachadh té eil' ann
Chruinnich uaislean às gach àit'
'S bha "Bonnie Lad" e fhéin ann.*

Until they filled up the car
So full that not one more would fit in
Nobles from every place gathered
And the bonnie lad himself was there.

*Chruinnich uaislean às gach àit'
'S bha "Bonnie Lad" e fhéin ann
'S gur e Kelly agus Forbes
A fhuair còrr na feusda.*

Nobles from every place gathered
And the Bonnie Lad himself was there
And it's Kelly and Forbes
That got the leftovers of the feast.

*Rear Christmas Island

About the Author



Laura Stirling

Laura Stirling teaches Scottish Gaelic with Sgoil Ghàidhlig an Àrd-bhaile (Halifax Gaelic Society) in Nova Scotia. Her first love is travelling and, a close second, learning languages. She began learning Scottish Gaelic at university, and has continued, with a stubborn desire to speak the language of her great grandmothers. After her first milling frolic at the Gaelic College in Cape Breton, she wanted to sing it too. She is still learning, and singing, and finds joy in every new word.

7. Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn

SUILBHIDH LAW

Tag: [Grammar and Vocabulary](#); [Children](#); [Intermediate](#)

Activity Summary

Using *Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn*, students will gain an awareness of song rhythm, substituting lyrics that fit the rhythm of the tune while consolidating the genitive form of forenames and the prepositional pronouns of *ann* + possessive pronouns, e.g. *ann* + *mo* = *nam*.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Recognize the beat of the song and clap the beats;
- Do the hand motions that go along with the song;
- Consolidate their understanding and use of names in the genitive case;
- Consolidate their understanding and use of prepositional pronouns (*nam, nad, na, na, nar, nur, nan ornam*)
- Recognize the rhythm of the tune and how lyrics fit into that rhythm;
- Substitute names and professions in the original lyrics (and optional states of being).

Gaelic Level

This activity is best suited for children (around ages 5-6). However, it could be adapted to suit adult learners who are advanced beginners or intermediate learners. The entire lesson could be done entirely through the medium of Gaelic.

Lesson Preparation

1. The students have already been taught the song and are able to sing the words and tune together. They will have already understood what *puirt-à-beul* is.
2. Have the recording of [Mary Jane Lamond](#)'s version of the song queued up on the computer.
3. Have ready a box of items that students can name. It can be used for the revision exercise on forming the genitive of nouns, if you choose to do the exercise this way. The box could include items such as a pen, a pencil, a piece of rope, watch, book, scarf, light, hat, hairbrush, cup, toys (such as dog, cat, sheep, horse, house, soldier, car, truck), etc. — any variety of items that would interest your students (children or adults), for all of which they would have already learned the words.
4. Have the room ready for students to work in groups of four.

Resources Required

Required resources:

- Lyrics of *Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn*, either projected on a screen or written on a large piece of paper visible to everyone;
- A place to write proper names that students offer and which everyone can see (e.g. computer or projector, flipchart).

Optional Resources:

- For a more detailed description of the grammar points covered in the lesson, refer to the following:
 - Boyd Robertson, Iain Taylor's *Teach Yourself Gaelic*;
 - Michael Byrne's *Gràmar na Gàidhlig*;
 - Roibeard Ò Maolalaigh's *Scottish Gaelic in Three Months*;
 - [Scottish Gaelic Grammar Wiki](#);
- To conduct the lesson as a *Gàidhlig aig Baile* session, refer to the [Gàidhlig aig Baile Tutor's Guide](#), to understand the theory and method.

Lesson Structure (1 – 2hrs)

Time	Activity	Resources
30 min	Introduce the idea that students will explore the song <i>Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn</i> in greater depth by changing the lyrics. Make the lyrics to <i>Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn</i> available and play the recording song (or, alternatively, sing it to the class).	<p>Play recording of Mary Jane Lamond's version of <i>Seallaibh Curaigh Eòghainn</i> (from her album, <i>Làn Dùil</i>) available on YouTube.</p> <p>Other audio options:</p> <p>Learn Gaelic – Joy Dunlop (includes the lyrics and translation)</p> <p>Fèis Ross, Màiri McGillivray</p>

30 min	<p>Sing the song and demonstrate the hand gestures that go along with it. Sing the song together with everyone doing hand gestures.</p> <p>Sing the song together with the class and ask them to clap the beat as you sing the first part twice. Tell them there are four beats to a measure and, as you sing each measure, clap out the four beats, pausing between each measure. Sing it again and ask them to count out the four beats as you sing and clap.</p> <p>Sing the second part of the song twice with the class clapping out the beat. Point out that the word “<i>bidh</i>” begins before the first bar (it’s technically an eighth note). As you sing the second part, clap out the four beats, pausing between each measure. Sing it again and ask them to count out the four beats.</p>	<p>See this video for the song performed with hand gestures.</p> <p>Refer to the sheet music from Fèis Rois.</p>
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5 min	<p>Ask the students if they can spot the difference in the spelling of the name between the first lines of each of the two parts. Explain what the difference signifies. Model how the genitive case for proper names is formed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masculine names lenite at the beginning and slenderize before the final consonant; • Feminine names slenderize before the final consonant; in some dialects the beginning consonant lenites also. <p>Seat the students in a circle. Indicate that you want the student to say a noun followed by a proper name in the genitive (to indicate possession). Say a noun and point at a student in the circle. The student seated next to that student needs to say the noun followed by the</p>	<p>For the genitive case of names see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boyd Robertson, Iain Taylor's <i>Teach Yourself Gaelic</i>, pg 170- 171 (Lesson 14); • Michael Byrne's <i>Gràmar na Gàidhlig</i>, page 34 (1.3.7); • Roibeard Ò Maolalaigh's <i>Scottish Gaelic in Three Months</i>, pg 94, (Lesson 7); • the Scottish Gaelic Grammar Wiki.
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	<p>genitive form of the first student's name, e.g., <i>taigh + Dòmhnall = taigh Dhòmhnail</i>. Proceed around the circle so each student has a turn. During each student's turn, encourage the others to say the phrase quietly to themselves too, so that each student gets practice with all the nouns and all the names.</p> <p>If they need more practice after the first round, use a different noun and different names. Have the students call out names they know and write them on the smartboard or flipchart.</p> <p>Alternately, instead of the teacher naming a noun, you could have each student choose an item from the box you have prepared and hold it up to the student whose turn it is and have them say the phrase. So for instance, if the first student (<i>Peadar</i>) chose a toy dog</p>	
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	<p>from the box, then you would indicate to the student next to him to say the phrase which would be <i>cù + Peadar = cù Pheadair</i>. The box of items provides props that are concrete and helps to engage the students as well as using more senses to help imbed the name of the item and structure into students' memories so it becomes automatic and they are not translating from English to Gaelic or vice versa.</p>	
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<p>5-15 min</p> <p>Optional (5 mins)</p>	<p>Point out “<i>na sgiobair</i>” in the lyrics and explain why you need this grammatical construction.</p> <p>Review how to use prepositional pronouns: <i>nam, nad, na, na, nur, nar, nan/m</i>).</p> <p>Have the students tell you the names for different occupations and write them on the board, explaining to everyone what that occupation is. Some words to consider: <i>seòladair, ministear, oifigear, seinneadair, tidsear, sgeulaiche, dotair, bèicear, nurs or banaltram, còcaire, oileanach, neach-lagha</i>, etc.</p> <p>Seat the students in a circle. Demonstrate that you want the student to say: <i>Bidh + proper name + appropriate prepositional pronoun + occupation</i>. E.g. <i>Bidh Màiri na h-oileanach</i>. With the first student in the circle, say their</p>	
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	<p>name and name an occupation. Ask the next student to answer. Say the phrase you want to hear and then have the student repeat it. Proceed around the circle. As with the previous exercise, during each student's turn, the others should be quietly saying the phrase to themselves, so that each student gets practice with each phrase.</p> <p>Optional: Review for "states of being" using verbal nouns: <i>nam shuidhe, nad dhùisg, na chadal, na seasamh, nar ruith, nur sìneadh, nan laighe</i>. Have the students call out the verbal nouns and write them on the smartboard.</p>	
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<p>20-25 mins</p> <p>Optional: (10 mins)</p>	<p>Split the class into groups of four or five. Explain that they are to pick two names and two occupations and change the name in the song and the occupation (and states of being) in the song to create new lyrics. The students can look at the smartboard to refer to the list of names and occupations (and states of being). Explain that in order to fit the rhythm of the tune, the name and the occupation should be two or three syllables each. They will need to try the name with the tune to see if it will work. The teacher should move amongst the groups to check the progress and offer help. When the groups have are ready with at least one name and occupation, the class can reconvene and each or some group(s) could offer the name and occupation and the class could decide if it</p>	<p>For a list of the common verbs denoting states or conditions that take the propositional pronouns being taught here (e.g. <i>nam</i>, <i>nad</i>, <i>na</i>, etc), refer to Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh's <i>Scottish Gaelic in Three Months</i>, page 62 (Lesson 5).</p>
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	<p>works. The class could sing one or two of the new lyrics that work.</p> <p>Optional: You could have the students change the second line of the second part to be: <i>Bidh</i> + proper name + appropriate prepositional pronoun + verbal noun, e.g., <i>Bidh Seumas na chadal oirre</i>.</p>	
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About the Author

Suilbhidh Law

Suilbhidh Law’s interest in Scottish Gaelic and Gaelic culture began after she became bored with London during the 6 weeks she spent there on her first trip to the continent; she decided to explore other parts of the UK. Within an hour of arriving in Edinburgh, she realized her mistake in spending so long in England and vowed to return to Scotland. Upon her return to Toronto after a second trip where she spent 3 weeks exploring Scotland on a Britrail pass, she began to search for ways and means to learn Scottish Gaelic and found a path through the Toronto Gaelic Learners’ Society. Thus began her involvement with Gaelic language and culture which still entrances her to the present day.

8. Far Am Bi Sinn Fhìn Is Ann a Bhios na h-Òrain

ROBERT PRINGLE

Tags: [Grammar and Vocabulary](#); [Adults](#); [Advanced](#)

Activity Summary

This activity uses the well-known *puirt-à-beul* “Far Am Bi Mi Fhìn” as a starting point to develop a variety of language skills, including rhyming in Gaelic, the future tense, and different tenses of “to be,” as well as enunciation. Students start by swapping out a few words and gradually create whole new lines and verses for the song. These exercises will take creativity, courage, and above all a sense of fun.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Practice singing and songwriting in Gaelic;
- Identify rhyming words in Gaelic;
- Develop facility with the future tense;
- Develop facility with different tenses of “to be.”

Gaelic Level

This exercise is best for advanced students with the required vocabulary to riff off the familiar song. It can be used with intermediate students if some advanced students are available to support the class.

Preparation for Lesson

1. Choose an online recording of the song to familiarize the students with the melody and words.
2. Provide this recording a week before meeting for the lesson so that the students have a chance to become familiar with the song and rhythm.
3. Ask the students to start by listening to the song a few times without looking at the words; ask them to identify words or parts of words that are familiar to them.
4. Next encourage students to become familiar with the song by using the lyrics and the recording together.



“A’ siubhal air na cladaichean,” le Rob Pringle

Resources Required

Required resources:

- Digital recording of the song, such as:
 - [Willie John MacAulay’s version](#)
 - [Joy Dunlop’s version](#)
- Each student needs access to a laptop or other device, preferably with headphones;
- [Lyrics](#)

Optional Resources:

- Paper and pen for jotting down ideas

Lesson Structure (1.5 – 2 hrs)

Time	Activity	Resources
20	Provide the lyrics . Introduce some of the ideas around Gaelic rhyme such as matching long vowel sounds and initial and final stress.	To learn more about <i>puirt-à-beul</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather Sparling's MA thesis on <i>puirt-à-beul</i> • Puirt-à-beul (Wikipedia)

<p>20-30</p>	<p>Spend time singing the song together. Work through verse by verse going through pronunciation and emphasis. Start with switching out a single word, e.g., <i>brògan</i> for <i>dòchas</i>.</p> <p>Switch out other words as confidence grows. Students will remain challenged as they repeat the familiar song with new words. For example: (Original) <i>Far am bi mi fhìn is ann a bhios mo dhòchas</i> <i>Far am bi mi fhìn is ann a bhios mo dhòchas</i> <i>Far am bi mi fhìn is ann a bhios mo dhòchas</i> <i>Far am bi mi fhìn bidh mo dhòchas ann</i> (Example 1) <i>Far am bi mi fhìn is ann a bhios mo bhrògan</i> <i>Far am bi mi fhìn is ann a bhios mo bhrògan</i> <i>Far am bi mi fhìn is ann a bhios mo bhrògan</i> <i>Far am bi mi fhìn bidh mo bhrògan ann</i> (Example 2) <i>Far am bi 'n t-ìm is ann a bhios na bòcain</i> <i>Far am bi 'n t-ìm is ann a bhios na bòcain</i> <i>Far am bi 'n t-ìm is ann a bhios na bòcain</i></p>	
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	<i>Far am bi 'n t-ìm bidh na bòcain ann.</i>	
20	<p>Improve knowledge of the future tense by substituting the song's verbs, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Gheobh thu èisg a-màireach far am faic thu tuinn.</i> • <i>Chì thu fèidh a-màireach far am faigh thu craobhan.</i> 	
30-60	<p>Improve knowledge of different forms of "to be" by changing the verbs from the future to the past, or even into the conditional, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Far an robh mi fhìn, is ann a bha mo dhòchas</i> • <i>Far am biodh Sìne, etc.</i> 	

Variations

- The activity can be as a virtual activity in real-time by using a shared Google document;
- When singing, increase the speed of the verses as they become repeated. This exercise is fun, develops enunciation, and is a great way to end the class.
- Invite the students to each take a verse and try their own variations upon it (individually, in pairs, or in small groups), and

collect them all at the end to have a huge, rollicking version.

Preparing for Challenges

Seinn co-dhiubh! Sing anyway! There are many reasons why a student or instructor might feel hesitant to actually sing out the song, from shyness to hesitation around ideas of “competence” as a singer. It is important to emphasize the communal nature of Gaelic singing, and that music is sung for its own sake and not necessarily as a performance, and to approach the exercise with a light-hearted and fun attitude.

Lyrics

Sèist:

Far am bi mi fhìn is ann a bhios mo dhòchas (x3)
Far am bi mi fhìn bidh mo dhòchas ann

Théid mi fhìn is Sine null gu taigh a' phìobair (x3)
'S nì sinn brod an ruidhle leinn fhìn air an làr
'S mur toir am piobair port dhuinn airson ruidhle (x3)
'S ann a bheir sinn sgrìob chun an fhìdhlear bhàn
Siubhal air na cladaichean 's a' coiseachd air a'
ghainmhich (x3)
Far am bi mi fhìn bidh mo dhòchas ann

English Translation

Chorus:

Wherever I will be tis there lies my hope, (x3)
Wherever I will be my hope is therein.

Sheena and I will go yon to the piper's house, (x3)
We'll dance the best part of the reel ourselves on the floor.

And if the piper doesn't give a tune for a reel, (x3)
Then we'll take a jaunt to the fair fiddler's.

Traveling on the shores and walking on the sand, (x3)
Wherever I will be my hope is therein.

About the Author



Robert Pringle

Robert Pringle is an electrician from Cape Breton whose grandmother sang Gaelic songs to him at bedtime. He is currently teaching Gaelic part time for [Daily Gaelic](#) and is also a researcher for [Cree8ive Advisory](#). He graduated from StFX in 2005 with a joint major in Celtic Studies, and then left to teach English in Korea. In 2011 he moved to Alberta and was there until 2021 when he moved back to Cape Breton.

9. Dh'Ith na Coin na Maragan

SHANNON MACMULLIN

Tags: [Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation](#); [Adults](#); [Intermediate](#)

Activity Summary

Participants will learn a very simple piece of *puirt-à-beul* in an immersive environment using the [Gàidhlig aig Baile](#) methodology. Suitable for various levels, participants engage in everything from learning Gàidhlig, singing, and song-making.

Background

Puirt-à-beul, or mouth tunes, are fun and uplifting. Often composed in an intricate weaving of words, many are lighthearted and include much repetition. Singing *puirt-à-beul* can be a wonderful grounding tool, a transitional activity, a closing, and a great language

lesson. In this session, participants will learn the melody and two turns of a *port* | tune. Then, they will play with and manipulate the lyrics to create new verses and themes.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Acquire a Gaelic *puirt-à-beul*;
- Compose additional verses to the *puirt-à-beul*;
- Recognize language patterning and manipulate words – collectively for intermediate learners, individually for advanced learners;
- Improve their aural comprehension of Gaelic;
- Improve their spoken Gaelic;
- Enhance memory skills;
- Engage with song and music in an accessible, enjoyable way.

Gaelic Level

This activity is well-suited to learners at various levels:

- Beginners will learn the words and melody to the tune. They will become familiar with the sounds, phrases and sentence structure of the lyrics. They will also build comprehension and patterning skills.
- Intermediate learners will learn the words and melody to the tune. They will increase their comprehension and production of Gaelic. They will collectively create new verses to the *puirt-à-beul*. They will also build comprehension and patterning skills.
- Advanced learners will compose their own verses to the *puirt-à-beul*. They will increase their confidence in singing by memory.
- Native speakers can easily engage in this lesson in a variety of ways: learning and singing the *puirt-à-beul*, sharing memories of the singers and musicians in the area, or sharing a variation of the tune or dialect.

Preparation for Lesson

1. Source lyrics and music for the tune you want to teach.
2. Gather props or photos to help illustrate the words of the *puirt-à-beul*, and support the language lesson. If props are not available, pictures can be drawn or sourced on Google Images. For example:
 - [doll family](#)– to indicate *agam*, *agad*, *aige*, *aice*, *aca*, etc.
 - [dice](#) – to play MadLib
 - [calendar](#) – to support conversation & illustrate tenses.
3. Provide the audio recording of the *puirt-à-beul* in advance, when possible.
 - Instruct students to listen to the recording many times before the session. Let them know that there's no need to decode the meaning, or learn the words; they should simply listen to the song all the way through several times.

Resources Required

Required resources:

- GaB methodology experience and training;
- Digital recording(s) of the tune [sung](#) and on [fiddle](#);
- Recording devices for students who wish to record the lesson;
- Flip chart paper, easel, markers;
- Digital copy of [lyrics](#) for screen sharing and printing;
- MadLib [template](#).

Optional resources:

- TV and HDMI cable to screen-share photos and audio;
- Invite participants to bring musical instruments;
- Email addresses to share resources with participants after the session.
- Digital copy of [sheet music](#) for screen sharing and printing.
- While the sheet music is included, I would encourage the instructor and participants to engage in learning by ear initially. Using recordings, modeling, and singing together, participants will easily pick up the tune by the end of the session.

Lesson Structure (2-2.5 hrs)

Time	Activity
5-20 mins	<p>Orientation:</p> <p>Provide GAB orientation to class as required. <i>Fàilte</i> huge, warm welcome to all present. Introduce any speakers present. If desired, have participants introduce themselves. Make a very warm invitation for ALL to Singing is a birthright, good for a soul, and a beautiful to remember and honour ancestors, and to connect with other. In Gaelic culture, there is always singing. And a song for every activity and every part of the day.</p> <p><i>Puirt-à-beul</i> translates as mouth music. It is vocal music. <i>Puirt-à-beul</i> can be sung for dancers and even if there are no musicians or instruments to be found <i>à-beul</i> offers a fun way to connect with sounds, rhythm and melody. Lyrics are often fanciful, using words to fit the tune and enhance the rhythm.</p>

5 min	<p>Listening:</p> <p><i>Éistidh sibh rium fhìn an toiseach. Gabhaidh mise a beagan thursan gun dèan sinn barrachd eòlais air.</i></p> <p>Lyrics:</p> <p><i>O dh'ith na coin na maragan 's na lùban dubh' aig Ruairidh</i> <i>'S i Seònaid rinn na maragan 's na lùban dubh' aig Ruairidh</i></p> <p>The dogs ate Rory's puddings and black pudding It was Janet that made Rory's puddings and black</p>
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15 min	<p>Using GaB, props and photos, learn the first turn.</p> <p>O dh'ith na coin na maragan 's na lùban dubh aig Ru.</p> <p>Use the GAB method to learn the meaning of each word, offering much repetition and manipulation of phrases. Offer participant a chance to ask and answer each prompt. Offer meaning with props, drawings, and body language.</p> <p><i>An do dh'ith thu fhéin maragan an-diugh?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An do dh'ith thu riamh iad?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Dh'ith/Cha do dh'ith</i> ◦ <i>Cuin a dh'ith thu maragan?</i> ◦ <i>O chionn fhada</i> • <i>Dé th' ann?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>'S e marag/marag gheal/lùban dubh a th' ann.</i>
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15 min	<p>Using word substitutions, repeat with several items and several participants. Have participants ask you the question and model the answers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Có leis a tha seo? (Tog rud sam bith a tha goirid dha l</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Iain.</i> ◦ <i>O, sin a' fón-làimheadh aig Iain.</i> ◦ <i>... aig Màiri, aig a' chloinn, aig Donnchadh, msaa</i> <p>Review <i>agam/agad/aige/aice/msaa</i> using hand action</p>
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5 mins	<p>Sing the first verse in call and answer style 3 times. Po long vowel sounds.</p> <p>Leader sings the first line, the participants sing it back to the leader.</p> <p>Begin slowly. Increase speed as confidence increases.</p> <p>Together, sing this turn 2 times. On the third time, sing on their own, not at all, or only the first word while the students sing through largely on their own. Support and repeat as needed.</p> <p>Have the participants keep time by toe-tapping while singing.</p>
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15 mins	<p><i>Tàmh – Cumaibh còmhradh 's a' Ghàidhlig. Dèanaibh a' gabhaibh tì còmhla.</i></p>
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<p>30 mins</p>	<p>Using GaB, props, and photos, learn the second turn.</p> <p>S i Seònaid rinn na maragan 's na lùban dubh' aig Ru</p> <p>As before, use the GaB method to offer much repetition and manipulation phrases, focusing on past tense verbs. Offer each participant a chance to ask and answer each prompt. Use props, drawings, and body language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dé rinn thu 's a' mhadainn? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Dhùisg mi tràth. ◦ Cha do dh'ith mi bracaist. ◦ Ghabh mi cupa do thì. • Dé rinn Seònaid? • An d' rinn i aran? • An d' rinn i bonnach-buidhe? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Rinn i maragan. • Có rinn na maragan? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 'S i Seònaid rinn na maragan. • Có a dhùisg tràth ? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 'S i Sionainn a dhùisg tràth. • Có a sgrìobh a' leabhar seo? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 'S e Iain MacRaing a sgrìobh e. • Có a rinn am bùrach? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ A' chlann ◦ 'S iad a' chlann a rinn am bùrach. <p>Have participants ask you the questions to model the a pattern.</p> <p>Illustrate the 'S i and 'S e pattern by examining other statements with this construction (as many as time allows). This will be good preparation for the song-making portion.</p> <p>Create a sentence for each participant based on something that really happened.</p> <p>Sing this verse using the same pattern as above.</p>
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Again, encourage toe-tapping or percussion activities with syllable counts.

<p>20 mins</p>	<p>Composing:</p> <p>Rinn mi fhìn port beag: O dh'ith a' chlann am pizza sin 's na milseagan aig Sionainn x4 'S e Deylin rinn am bùrach 'ud anns an taigh aig Sionainn x3 O' dh'ith a' chlann am pizza sin 's na milseagan aig Sionainn! An dèan sinn port beag eile?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nì/Cha dèan. <p>Working together (or in small groups), brainstorm words in MadLib fashion. These will form the words from which a new song text will be made.</p> <p>Rudan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dé th' ann? • Dé th' agad? • Dé cheannaich thu o chionn mìos? • Dé chì thu? • msaa <p>Past tense verbs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dé rinn thu a-raoir? • Dé rinn an cù agad? • Dé rinn a' leanabh? • msaa <p>(Invite participants to ask other questions as time allows)</p> <p>Daoine</p>
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- *Có a th' againn an-diugh?*
- Consider listing family members, favorite sports, cast of TV shows or movies, local characters, characters — anything that will help get the juices flowing.

Consider themes that might be fun to express in a *beul*.

Add the list of brainstormed words to a chart. Roll the dice to select a word from each category needed to create a new lyrical line. See if the words work together and fit the rhythm of the song. Tip: use small words, plurals, and emphatic endings to fill in any gaps: *ud, sin, -se, et*. If words don't work, substitute another word from the chart or any word or idea that comes to mind. There is no wrong. Have fun!

Optional:

Skip the dice. Read the words and see if any seem to naturally fit together. Or see if anyone is inspired to create a word or idea that may work.

OR working in small groups, or individually, choose a topic and have a go at creating some ideas, words and sentences that may work. Here are some topics to get you started:

- running out of gas
- chasing after the cows
- computer crashed
- first footing on New Year's
- a new baby is born
- anything goes!

5 mins	<p>Singing:</p> <p>Sing the <i>puirt-à-beul</i> together several times. Add the created verses.</p> <p>Add music and percussion and dance as desired!</p>
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Variations

There are many ways to vary this activity. For example:

- This lesson can be broken up into bite-size pieces during a weekend or week-long immersion, progressing each day until the tune is learned before moving on to composition.
- After the participants learn the *puirt-à-beul*, it can be used as a grounding tool between activities or lessons and at the start of the day. Singing at the end of a session is also a nice way to close the day if participants have reached their maximum saturation point.

- Show and Share, or Show and Tell
 - For advanced learners, have each participant teach the verse they composed to the others.
 - Compositions can be made and shared in pairs or small groups rather than created and shared within the large group or by individuals.
 - Students can compose as individuals, share in small groups or pairs, vote on which one they will present to the group together as a pair or group.
- Invite any musicians to play their instruments. Or make your own “instruments” to play or create rhythms.
- Whose mouth is the fastest? Singing together, or as individuals, sing the tune and gradually increase the tempo. How fast can you go?
- Dance to the tune.
 - Teach a basic strathspey or reel step (as appropriate) and dance to your *puirt á beul*.
- Compare and contrast various versions of the melody, verses, regional dialects, etc.
- Add actions to go along with each verse.
- Make and eat *maragan* together.
- Create a GaB lesson from the newly created verses.
- Other *puirt-à-beul* that can be used as the basis for additional lesson plans:
 - Morrison, Dan: [Còta Mór Ealasaid](#)
 - Lamond, Mary Jane: [Calum Crubach](#)
 - Krebs, Hannah: [Gilleann an Dròbhair](#)

Preparing for Challenges

You may wish to prepare for any of the following potential challenges:

- Technical issues — be prepared to sing the song without listening to the recording.
- Student frustration if learning the tune is challenging.
- Student hesitancy to sing.

Further Reading

Sparling, Heather. [*Reeling Roosters and Dancing Ducks: Celtic Mouth Music*](#). Sydney, NS: CBU Press, 2014.

Lamb, William. [*Keith Norman MacDonald's PUIRT À BEUL The Vocal Dance Music of the Scottish Gaels*](#). Isle of Skye, Scotland: Taigh nan Teud, 2012.

About the Author



Shannon MacMullin

Shannon is a Gàidhlig aig Baile instructor and the Cultural Experiences Coordinator at Baile nan Gàidheal | Highland Village Museum. She is also active in community development and the Gaels Jam. She is passionate about connecting folks to Gàidhlig language and culture modelling o ghlùn gu glùn | from knee to knee transmission and creating spaces for Gaels to gather.. She loves time with the family and remembering how to play with the little grandboys keeps her feeling young. She is a maker, a learner, and a connector.

10. Gura Mise fo Éislein

SHANNON MACMULLIN

Tags: [Listening, Speaking, and Pronunciation](#);
[Adults](#); [Intermediate](#)

Activity Summary

Participants will learn a Gàidhlig song in an immersive environment using Gàidhlig aig Baile (i.e., by ear, without the written lyrics). Engaging in communal song is a wonderful way to build group trust, individual confidence, and connect to the Gaelic arts. Participants will enhance memory of language acquisition through music and song.

Background

This milling song has a beautiful melody. It tells of lovers parted and the young man laments his situation. It is sung by John (Seògan) Shaw and was recorded by

[John Shaw](#) for the [Cape Breton Gaelic Folklore Collection](#). While the verses are short, they offer a look at several interesting and important constructions in the language. The rhyme scheme is also easy to understand, acts as a memory aid, and offers a jumping-off point to discuss long and short vowels and pronunciation.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Improve their aural comprehension of Gàidhlig;
- Improve their spoken Gàidhlig;
- Enhance memory skills;
- Recognize a rhyme scheme in a Gaelic song;
- Learn about Gàidhlig songs, their creators, their singers, their themes, and their source communities and related kinship groups.

Gaelic Level

This activity is well-suited to learners at various levels:

- Beginners will learn the chorus and become familiar with the sounds and phrases and song information. They will also build comprehension skills.
- Intermediate learners will learn the chorus and a few verses. They will increase their comprehension and production of Gàidhlig. They will learn associated song information.
- Advanced learners will learn the complete song. They will increase their confidence singing by memory. They will learn associated song information.
- Native speakers can easily engage in this lesson in a variety of ways: learning the song, sharing memories of the song and singers in the area, or sharing a variation of the song.

Lesson Preparation

1. Source lyrics to the song you want to teach. This lesson plan is organized around the song, “Gura Mise fo Éislein,” but the basic outline will work for many songs.
2. Gather props to help illustrate the song, and support the language lesson. If props are not available, pictures can be drawn or sourced on Google Images, such as:
 1. [doll family](#)
 2. [action figure](#)
 3. map of [NS](#) and [Scotland](#)
 4. [clock](#)
 5. [calendar](#)
 6. toy [stag or hind](#)
3. Provide the audio recording of the song to students in advance, when possible.
4. Instruct students to listen to the recordings at least ten times before the session. They needn't decode the song or learn the words; students should simply listen to the song all the way through.
5. Prepare the “Lyrics Pictures” representation of the lyrics. Students will not be provided with written lyrics. Here is an [example](#). Feel free to create your own prior to class. Or create one collectively if

leading an intermediate or advanced class.

Resources Required

Required resources:

- GaB methodology experience or training;
- Digital recording of the [song](#);
- Speaker with which to share audio;
- [Lyrics](#) and “Lyrics in Pictures” [image](#);
- Students wishing to record the lesson will need a device on which to do so;
- [Information and photos](#) about the song maker, singer, kinship group, theme, etc.;
- Flip chart paper, easel, markers, and masking tape (“Lyrics in Pictures” are likely to be longer than one page).
- Digital copy of the [lyrics](#) for screen sharing and printing. At beginner and intermediate levels, working aurally and visually without the written word is recommended.

Optional resources:

- Laptop, TV, and HDMI cable to screen share photos

and audio;

- High-quality speakers (computer audio is often not loud enough for a group);
- Email addresses to share resources with participants after the session.

Lesson Structure (2.5-3 hour class)

Time	Activity	Resources
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<p>5-20 mins</p>	<p>Orientation:</p> <p>Provide GAB orientation to class as required. <i>Fàilte</i> – offer a huge, warm welcome to all present. Introduce any native speakers present. Provide group introductions and greetings if desired at the beginning of a session. Make a very warm invitation for ALL to sing. Explain the aesthetic for Gàidhlig singing differs from the mainstream aesthetic we may be more familiar with – favours pitch, quality, and tone.</p> <p>A good voice was appreciated, but it was secondary to the Gaels. In the words of Lachlann Dhòmhnaill Nill:</p> <p><i>Ged nach biodh an duine cho fìor cheòlmhor idir, ma bha e cho math gus a' rann a leantail agus ma bha na faclan aige mar bu chòir dhaibh agus freagarrach, sin a' rud a bha dhìth ormas.</i> (Though the singer might not be that musical, if he was good at following the verses</p>	<p>GAB Tutors' Guide</p> <p>Brìgh an Òrain p23 and p27 Gaelic Beginners' Primer Additional Reading: Boost Memory and Learning with Music</p>
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	<p>and if he knew the words properly, that's what I desired.) (MacLellan 2000, 23)</p> <p><i>Co-dhiubh bhiodh tu na b' fheàrr na duine eile, cha e sin idir e. Nan gabhadh e na h-òrain 's nam biohd e toileach òran a ghabhail, 's e duine math a bh' ann a bhith mun cuairt.</i> (Whether you were better than somebody else was not the point. If someone could sing the songs and knew a good one and was happy to sing, that was the kind of person who was good to have around.) (MacLellan 2000, 27)</p> <p>Narratives of these types are common. Singing is a birthright, good for the soul, and a beautiful way to remember and honour ancestors, and to connect to each other.</p>	
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<p>5 min</p>	<p>Grounding:</p> <p><i>Airson toiseach tòisichidh, carson nach gabh sinn uile anail còmhla? Tarraing làn-anail Leig d' anail</i></p> <p>Repeat x3. Invite volunteer to lead for 4th breath. Invite a second volunteer to lead 5th breath.</p> <p><i>An do tharraing a h-uile duine anail? Tharraing! Tharraing a h-uile duine anail. An do leig a h-uile duine anail? Leig! Leig a h-uile duine anail. Ach Mario. Cha do leig Mario anail idir.</i></p>	<p>If you are not familiar with leading a grounding, practice with this video. Then, add the Gàidhlig and make it your own. Video will not be necessary during the lesson; the instructor will be the aural and visual guide.</p> <p>Additional Reading: Relaxation techniques: Breath control helps quell errant stress response</p> <p>This</p>
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		piece is optional. Instructors could also consider using movement or stretching as the grounding activity.
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<p>10 min</p>	<p><u>Gura mise fo Éislein</u> Song Information:</p> <p>'S e òran luaidh a th' ann. 'S ann mu dheidhinn cridhe briste a tha e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Có rinn an t-òran?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Chan eil fhios againn có a rinn e. 'S e òran gun urra a th' ann. • <i>Dé seòrsa do dh'òran a th' ann?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Òran luaidh. • <i>Có mu dheidhinn a tha e?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 'S ann mu dheidhinn cridhe briste a tha e. • <i>Có às a tha thu?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tha mi á Mira Mhór Uachdrach. ◦ Tha mi á Suidnidh. • <i>Có às a tha _____?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tha i/e á/às _____. • <i>Có às a bha Seògan?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Bha e á Beinn Smogaidh. 	<p><u>Photo and bio of Seogan</u> Informati on about <u>Milling Frolics</u></p>
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5 min	<p>Listening:</p> <p><i>Éistidh sinn ri Seògan Màiri Dhanaidh. Agus gabhaidh sinn fhìn òran cuideachd.</i></p> <p>Listen through one time together.</p> <p>Listen a second time, invite everyone to join in on the chorus.</p>	
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30 min	<p>Learning:</p> <p>Break each verse down and teach that language through GAB.</p> <p>Use the GAB method to offer much repetition and manipulation of these phrases. Offer each participant a chance to ask/answer each prompt. Convey meaning with props, drawings, and body language.</p> <p>Have participants ask you the questions to model the answers.</p> <p>Use hand actions.</p> <p>Point out the long vowel sounds.</p> <p>Make note of the rhyme scheme.</p> <p><i>Gura mise fo éislein</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Có thusa?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>‘S mise Sionainn.</i> • <i>Dé thuirt thu?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Thuirt mi gura mise Sionainn.</i> • <i>Ciamar a tha thu?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>gu math</i> ◦ <i>fo éislein</i> • <i>Dé thuirt thu?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Thuirt mi gura mise fo éislein.</i> 	<p><u>“Lyrics in Pictures”</u> <u>Spoken Lyrics</u></p>
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Sing this verse in call and answer style 3x.

Together, sing this verse and chorus 3x.

Anns a' mhadainn 's mi 'g éirigh

- Cuin a dhùisg thu?
 - anns a' mhadainn
- Cuin a ghabh thu do bhracaist?
 - anns a' mhadainn
- Cuin a thàinig thu a' seo?
 - anns a' mhadainn
- A Mhàiri, éirich?
 - A Thòmais, éirich!
- An do dh'éirich thu?
 - Dh'éirich/Cha do dh'éirich.
- An do dh'éirich a h-uile duine?
 - Dh'éirich. Dh'éirich a h-uile duine ach Mario.
- Carson a dh'éirich thu?
 - gus Gàidhlig a thogail
- Cuin a dh'éirich thu?
 - o chionn tacain
- Có a dh'éirich?
 - Dh'éirich Màiri is Tòmas.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Dh'éirich a h-uile duine. ◦ A Dhòmhnaill, éirich! • Dé tha thu ris? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Tha mi 'g éirigh. • Am bidh thu 'g éirigh tràth a h-uile madainn? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Bidh/Cha bhi. <p>Sing each verse in call and answer style 3x.</p> <p>Leader sings the first line, the participants sing it back to the leader.</p> <p>Begin slowly. Increase speed as confidence increases.</p> <p>Together, sing these two verses and chorus 3x.</p>	
15 mins	<p>Tàmh – Cumaibh còmhraidh 's a' Ghàidhlig. Dèanaibh agus gabhaibh tì còmhla.</p>	

<p>30 mins</p>	<p>Chì mi 'n eilid 's a céile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dé th' ann? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Damh/eilid. • An e damh a th' ann? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Chan e. 'S e eilid a th' ann. • Dé chì thu air a' rathad dhachaigh? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Chì mi Irlving. ◦ Chì mi an eaglais. ◦ Chì mi craobhan. • A' faic thu losgann? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Chan faic. ◦ Ma dh'fhaoidte gu' faic. • Their sùil air an uinneig. A' faic thu eun/a' ghrian/uisge/cù? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Chì/Chan fhaic. <p>Sing this verse in call and answer style 3x.</p> <p>Leader sings the first line, the participants sing it back to the leader.</p> <p>Begin slowly. Increase speed as confidence increases.</p> <p>Together, sing this verse & chorus 3 times. Then add in all the learned verses with the chorus and sing through once.</p>	<p>(as above for the first two verses)</p>
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	<p>‘S ‘ad a’ mire ri chéile <i>a’ mire = spòrs</i> <i>Seall dealbh dhaibh:</i> <u>a’ mire ri cat</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dé tha ‘ad ris?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Tha ‘ad a’ mire ri cat. <p><u>a’ mire ri cù</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dé tha ‘ad ris?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Tha ‘ad a’ mire ri cù. <p><u>a’ mire ri chéile</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Có th’ ann?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ ‘S e damh agus eilid a th’ ann.• Dé tha ‘ad ris?<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Tha ‘ad a’ mire ri chéile. <p>Sing this verse in call and answer style 3x. Leader sings the first line, the participants sing it back to the leader. Begin slowly. Increase speed as confidence increases. Together, sing this verse & chorus 3x. Then sing verses three and four with the chorus a few times.</p>	
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	(as above for the first two verses)	
5 mins	<p>Singing:</p> <p>Sing the song together. Repeat each verse 2x.</p>	<p>Consider recording the singing to share with the group.</p>

Variations

There are many ways to vary this activity. For example:

- For advanced learners, you could play with looking at the words and testing memory; look at rhyme scheme; compose new verses.
- Focus on the language and use the song as reinforcement.
- Use the language to assist comprehension and focus on learning the song as the session outcome.
- Have a milling frolic. Using a blanket, sheet or towel, gather around the table as one person leads the song. All join in on the chorus.
 - Each participant learns one verse and leads the song collectively while milling.
 - If a table or blanket is not available, participants can swing hands in time to the music as was traditionally done.
- Compare and contrast various versions of the melody, verses, regional dialects, etc.
- Add actions to the song for each verse.

Acknowledgement

This style of teaching songs is based on workshops designed by Mary Jane Lamond.

Preparing for Challenges

You may wish to prepare for any of the following potential challenges:

- Technical issues — be prepared to sing the song without listening to the recording.
- Student frustration if remembering verses is challenging.
- Student hesitancy to sing.
- Running out of time? Cut back on the verses you share in this session rather than rushing through to the end.

Further Reading

MacLellan, Lauchie. *Brigh an Òrain*. Edited by John Shaw. McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Lyrics

[Gura Mise fo Éislein](#)– for printing and
screen sharing

Séist (Chorus):

O ro hù hó gù

Hì ri hiùraibh ó eileadh

O ro hù hó gù

Gura mise fo éislein

I'm tormented with sorrow

Anns a' mhadainn 's mi 'g éirigh

As I rise in the morning

Chì mi 'n eilid 's a céile

I see the hind and her mate

'S 'ad a' mire ri chéile

As they frolic together

Chan ionnan 's mar a dh'èirich

It didn't happen thus

'S ann dhomhsa 's dha 'm chéile

With myself and my first love

Chuir 'ad sinne fad o chéile

They've put us far from each other

Is' a Shasainn 's mis' a dh'Éirinn

Her to England and me to Ireland

*Another version is sung by *Lachlann Dhòmhnail Nill* and can be found in [Brìgh an Òrain](#), p. 210, and heard on Gaelstream [here](#).

About the Author



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Shannon is a Gàidhlig aig Baile instructor and the Cultural Experiences Coordinator at Baile nan Gàidheal | Highland Village Museum. She is also active in community development and the

Gaels Jam. She is passionate about connecting folks to Gàidhlig language and culture modelling o ghlùn gu glùn | from knee to knee transmission and creating spaces for Gaels to gather.. She loves time with the family and remembering how to play with the little grandboys keeps her feeling young. She is a maker, a learner, and a connector.

II. Buill a' Chuirp

SHEENA GEIGER

Tags: [Grammar and Vocabulary](#); [Children](#); [Beginner](#)

Activity Summary

This lesson focuses on teaching basic body parts using an interactive children's song.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Learn new basic body parts vocabulary;
- Improve their aural comprehension of Gàidhlig;
- Improve their spoken Gàidhlig;
- Learn to read body parts vocabulary;
- Enhance memory skills.

Gaelic Level

This lesson was primarily created for beginner Gaelic learners. It is best suited for children, youth, and adults who don't mind learning through interactive songs.

Lesson Preparation

The instructor will need to:

1. Cut up body parts to be put together as a group.

Option 1: Paper images if the students are to complete the activity on the board.

Option 2: Overhead projector sheets if the activity is to be completed on the overhead projector

Option 3: Saved computer images if the activity will be done on a SmartBoard or via Zoom.

2. Print out [vocabulary boards](#)

3. Print off a [blank lyric sheet](#) for each student, and an Answer Key for the teacher
4. Print off [T-chart sheets](#) for each pair of students, or have enough paper for them to create their own.
5. Print off an [evaluation grid](#) for each student
6. Load the two YouTube videos into your browser ahead of time so that they have time to buffer:
 - [Video I](#): Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes in Gaelic and French;
 - [Video II](#): *Ceann, Gualainn, Glùinean, Cas.*
7. Have a computer (laptop is fine) with loud speakers, hooked up to a projector to project onto a white screen or wall.

Resources Required

Required resources:

- Digital recordings of the Gaelic song and movements (such as the YouTube videos, above);
- [Vocabulary boards](#) to hang up;
- [Blank lyrics sheet](#) and answer key;

- A quiet space where playing music aloud on speakers won't disrupt others.

Optional resources :

- Photos of body parts to review vocabulary
- [Evaluation grid](#) (if you plan on evaluating student comprehension)
- [T-chart sheets](#) (if the students do not come with their own paper)
- Extension cords and power bars (to ensure that the teacher's laptop will not run out of power);
- Flip charts or flip chart paper and flip chart markers
 - OR white boards with white board markers and overhead projector;
 - OR SmartBoard with markers.
- High-quality speakers

Lesson Structure (30mins – 2hrs)

Time	Activity	Resources
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15	<p>Pre-activity:</p> <p>Personalization: Anyone know how to – or remember how to – play “Simon Says” or sing “Head and Shoulders”?</p> <p>Contextualization: Explain how amazing it is that after all of these years, that they still remember those songs and dances, and how song and dance is a great way to remember new things. Explain that today we are going to learn about body parts using song and simple movements.</p> <p>Anticipation:</p> <p>1. Show photos of various, mixed up body parts taped randomly to the chalk or white board, and ask students to put them together correctly as a class on the board. Have enough pieces for everyone to have a turn. Make the</p>	
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	<p>pieces funny and random colours so that they think the final person or people are funny looking but complete. (<i>Smart board option: drag and drop the photos. Overhead projector option: have the parts photocopied and cut up into smaller pieces then ask students individually to put one piece together at a time.</i>)</p> <p>2. Ask students what songs they know in any language that contain (appropriate) body parts.</p> <p>3.Explain that we'll be singing the children's song "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" in Gaelic.</p>	
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15-30	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Ask students to work with a partner to create a T-chart list of the (appropriate) body parts they already know in Gaelic. Put the English on one side, Gaelic on the other. Ask students to share their brainstorming lists with the group. Put all prior knowledge on the board by labeling the funny bodies.</p> <p>Read through pre-made language boards pronouncing each body part (TIP: mix up the order so that it is different from the song):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ceann</i> = head • <i>Gualainn</i> = shoulders • <i>Glùinean</i> = knees • <i>Cas</i> = foot or leg • <i>Sùilean</i> = eyes • <i>Cluasan</i> = ears • <i>Beul</i> = mouth • <i>Sròn</i> = nose <p>Listen to the song on YouTube:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nova Scotia version • Scotland version <p>Fill in the blanks while listening to the song, then sing together.</p>	<p>T-charts Body part language board See complete lyrics below Fill-in-the-blanks lyrics sheet</p>
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	<p>Answer key:</p> <p><i>Ceann, gualainn, glùinean, cas, glùinean, cas, glùinean, cas. Ceann, gualainn, glùinean, cas, sùilean, cluasan, 's beul agus sròn</i></p>	
1hr	<p>Optional Post-Activity:</p> <p>Using magazines, flyers, catalogues, etc, cut out body parts and glue them together to create creative people, then label the body parts from the song (using the optional evaluation grid)</p> <p>For advanced groups: label 10 additional body parts, then create one sentence per body part to include adjectives to describe each body part.</p>	Evaluation grid

Variations

1. You could have the students use headphone splitters to allow pairs or small groups to work together to listen to the videos and fill in the blanks using their new vocabulary.

2. You could have one laptop per student, with headphones, to allow individuals to listen and re-listen to the recordings as many times as needed to fill in the blanks of the song.
3. Instead of using a beginner fill-in-the-blank style approach, you could have the advanced students transcribe the entire song, using no template.
4. Depending on the age and physical activity, you could have students dance along with the song. You could sing it slow, medium, and as fast as possible to make it fun and interactive for students, while having them focus on proper pronunciation. You could make it into a friendly group competition to see who performs it the best, so that students take the time to focus on both their pronunciation and corresponding body parts. Then they vote on the best performers.
5. You could have students go home and record themselves teaching the song to their siblings, friends, neighbours, elders, etc.
6. You could have advanced students substitute out the basic body parts for more complex ones that are not included in the song, then teach each other, while still using the basic structure of the song.

Preparing for Challenges

You may wish to prepare for any of the following potential challenges:

- Technical issues, whether due to equipment failure, loss of internet, power outage, or students' lack of familiarity with YouTube;
 - Load the YouTube videos ahead of time in separate browsers, so that they both have time to buffer and any ads can be skipped;
- Student frustration if the song seems too young for them;
- Student frustration if they do not want to sing or do the accompanying movements;
- Student frustration if the audio recording or song is particularly difficult to transcribe;
- Student frustration with unfamiliar vocabulary or dialects.

Lyrics

[Nova Scotian version:](#)

*Ceann, gualainn, glùinean, cas.
Glùinean, cas, glùinean, cas.*

Ceann, gualainn, glùinean, cas.
Sùilean, cluasan, 's beul, agus sròn

Head, shoulders, knees, toes.
Knees, toes, knees, toes.
Head, shoulders, knees, toes.
Eyes, ears, mouth, and nose.

Scotland version:

Ceann, gualainn, glùinean, cas, glùinean, cas.
Ceann, gualainn, glùinean, cas, glùinean, cas.
Agus sùilean, cluasan, sròn, agus beul.
Ceann, gualainn, glùinean, cas, glùinean, cas.

Head, shoulders, knees, toes, knees, toes.
Head, shoulders, knees, toes, knees, toes.
Eyes, ears, mouth, and nose.
Head, shoulders, knees, toes, knees, toes.

About the Author



Sheena Geiger

Sheena Geiger is a certified K-12 teacher, focusing primarily on French Immersion, Math, and Science. As the Head of the Foreign Languages Department at a private school, she developed

curriculum for multiple grade levels and languages. She enjoys traveling the world, singing, dancing, scuba diving and writing children's books in Gaelic, French and English. Sheena also has a [YouTube channel](#) (TeacherMommy12345) that focuses on Gaelic and French children's songs as well as kid-friendly educational videos about marine biology and zoology.

12. Dathan

SHEENA GEIGER

Tags: [Grammar and Vocabulary: Youth; Beginner](#)

Activity Summary

This lesson focuses on teaching basic colours of the rainbow using an interactive children's song.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Learn new vocabulary using the basic colours of the rainbow;
- Improve their aural comprehension of Gaelic;
- Improve their spoken Gaelic;
- Enhance their memory skills.

Gaelic Level

This lesson was primarily created for beginner Gaelic learners. It is best suited for children, youth, and adults who don't mind learning through interactive songs.

Lesson Preparation

No preparation required for the students.

The instructor will need to:

1. Print out [vocabulary boards](#).
2. Print off a [blank vocabulary sheet and answer key](#) for each student and for the teacher, respectively.
3. Print off [blank colouring page](#) for each student, and an [answer key](#) for the teacher.
4. Print off an [evaluation grid](#) for each student (if evaluating).

5. Bring in a variety of coloured scarves.
6. Load the YouTube videos in a browser ahead of time so that they have time to buffer.
7. Have a computer (laptop is fine) with loud speakers and power cords, hooked up to a projector to project onto a white screen or wall.

Resources Required

Required resources:

- YouTube videos of the Gaelic song and movements;
- Blank lyrics sheet and answer key;
- Vocabulary boards to hang up;
- A quiet space where playing music aloud on speakers won't disrupt others.
- Coloured scarves

Optional resources:

- Prism, glass, or diamond ring to show rainbow colours
- Colourful photos to review vocabulary
- Blank rainbow vocabulary sheet and answer key
- Evaluation grid (if you plan on evaluating student

comprehension)

- Coloured pencils, markers, crayons
- Flip charts or flip chart paper and flip chart markers or white boards with white board markers; SmartBoard, or overhead projector with markers.
- Extension cords and power bars (to ensure that the teacher's laptop will not run out of power)
- High-quality sound speakers

Lesson Structure (65 minutes)

Time	Activity	Resources
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15 min	<p>Pre-activity Personalization:</p> <p>What the weather is like today? What do you get when you mix both rain and sunshine? (A rainbow.)</p> <p>Contextualization:</p> <p>Explain that today we are going to learn our basic colours in Gaelic.</p> <p>Anticipation:</p> <p>Option 1: Shine a prism, glass, or diamond ring in the sunlight and watch a rainbow appear. Ask students to name the colours in English, then translate the colours into Gaelic with a partner.</p> <p>Option 2: Show a YouTube video of a prism in the sunlight separating the colours of a rainbow (note that this video is in English).</p> <p>Option 3: Show a</p>	<p>YouTube video showing a prism refracting light (in English)</p> <p>Videos of rainbows formed by rain and sunlight and by waterfall sprays (no language)</p> <p>Poster of a rainbow</p> <p>Rainbow vocabulary sheet</p> <p>Am Faclair Beag – Scottish Gaelic Dictionary</p>
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	<p>rainbows from rain and sunlight, or rainbows from waterfall sprays and sunlight.</p> <p>Option 4: Show a poster of a rainbow, and ask students to name the colours in English.</p> <p>Ask students to write down the colours of the rainbow in English on their rainbow vocabulary sheet, then work as a pair to translate them into Gaelic, either from prior knowledge or by using a physical or online dictionary.</p>	
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40 min	<p>Activity:</p> <p>Read through pre-made language boards and pronounce each colour. Mix up the order so that it is different from the song. Pronunciation can be found here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red = <i>Dearg</i> • Orange = <i>Orains</i> • Yellow = <i>Buidhe</i> • Green = <i>Uaine</i> • Blue = <i>Gorm</i> • Violet = <i>Purpaidh</i> • Pink = <i>Pinc</i> <p>Listen to the song on YouTube a few times each while filling in the lyrics sheet, then sing together as a group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nova Scotia version • Scotland version <p>Give each student a different coloured scarf. Have students lift their colour when they hear or sing their colour in the song. Speed up the song, and slow it down to make it fun and interactive. Switch colours with a partner then repeat</p>	<p>Language boards</p> <p>Gaelic-medium video of colours</p> <p>Lyrics sheet</p> <p>Song: Nova Scotia version Scotland version</p>
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	<p>the activity. Time permitting, give students two different colours.</p> <p>Advanced option: Give students one of each colour and have them lift each colour when they hear or sing it in the song.</p> <p>Lyrics:</p> <p><i>Buidhe, uaine, dearg agus pinc, Purpaidh is orains is gorm, Dathan aig a' bhogha- fhroise, aig a' bhogha- fhroise, aig a' bhogha- fhroise bhrèagha.</i></p> <p>Red and yellow and pink and green, purple and orange and blue. I can sing a rainbow, sing a rainbow, sing a rainbow too.</p>	
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20 min	<p>Optional Evaluation:</p> <p>Ask for student volunteers to point to a specific colour on the website (e.g., “find <i>dearg</i>”) or have students be the teacher and they quiz the group about each colour. Then they tap the SmartBoard or laptop for the pronunciation and written word, and have the rest of the class repeat after them.</p>	Gaelic colours assessment webpage
20 mins	<p>Optional Post-Activity:</p> <p>Using markers, paint, crayons, or materials from outside (leaves, flowers, etc., depending on the season), create a rainbow then label the colours (see attached example).</p> <p>Have students complete the self-evaluation grid, to see if they need additional practice with the pronunciation and recognition of colours.</p>	Rainbow colouring page Self-evaluation grid

Variations

1. You could have the students use headphone splitters to allow pairs or small groups to work together to [fill in the blanks](#) in

the song lyrics using their new vocabulary.

2. You could have one laptop per student, with headphones, to allow individuals to listen and re-listen to the recordings as many times as needed to fill in the blanks of the song.
3. Instead of giving the students the lyrics, you could have the advanced students transcribe the entire song.
4. Depending on the age and physical abilities of your students, you could have them dance along with the song. You could sing it slow, medium, and as fast as possible to make it fun and interactive for students, while having them focus on proper pronunciation. You could make it into a friendly group competition to see who performs it the best, so that students take the time to focus on both their pronunciation and corresponding colours – then they vote on the best performers.
5. You could have students go home and record themselves teaching the song to their siblings, friends, neighbours, elders, etc.
6. You could have advanced students substitute out the basic colours for more complex ones that are not included in the song, then teach each other, while still using the basic structure of the song.
7. You could have students use paints, and mix the paints to create new colours. E.g. yellow + blue = green. Then have students label their new colours.
8. You could have students play a game to sort the scarves or place children in rainbow order.
9. You could have students write other lyrics to this song. e.g. *Dathan air a' bhòrd mhòr, air a' bhòrd mhòr, nuair a tha e làn leis a' bhiadh.*

Another **variation** could be to go over colours and look at them through a traditional Gaelic lens. Discuss how they are similar or different from colour terms in English (e.g., both *ruadh* and *dearg* are translated as “red,” but their qualities differ). The following list comes from Ronald Black’s [*Cothrom Ionnsachaidh*](#) (2006, 94-95):

1. *Dubh*: black, black-haired
2. *Ciar*: dusky, dark grey or brown, tanned skin or hide
3. *Riabhadh*: brindled, streaked with dark shades (skin, hide, rocks)
4. *Cròn*: dark brown, dark-skinned
5. *Donn*: brown, brown-haired
6. *Ruadh*: orange, red-haired, deep yellow through orange to russet spectrum (covers sand, brown bread, brown paper, roe deer, carrots, fox)
7. *Dearg*: red, the colour of blood and fire, complexion, skin and hide, colour spectrum from pink to purple
8. *Lachdann*: tawny, mottled, dark and blotchy, skin and hide
9. *Odhar*: the colour of parchment and porridge, skin and hide
10. *Fionn*: fair, cream-coloured
11. *Buidhe*: yellow, yellow-haired girls, colour spectrum between *ruadh* and *fair*, oranges
12. *Uaine*: green, yellow-green, colour spectrum between *glas* and *gorm*

13. *Glas*: grey, ashen, pale, young shoots of grass
14. *Gorm*: blue, emerald, healthy grass, glossy black-blue (sheep, porpoises, skin colour)
15. *Liath*: silver-grey (hair, frost), pale-light blue (sea, sky)
16. *Gris*: grey
17. *Bàn*: white, fair-haired, empty
18. *Geal*: white, bright, brilliant, silver
19. *Breac*: speckled, dappled

Dealing with Challenges

You may wish to prepare for any of the following potential challenges:

- Technical issues, whether due to equipment failure, power outage, or students' lack of familiarity with YouTube;
- Load the YouTube videos ahead of time in separate browsers so that they both have time to buffer. You can [load the videos for offline viewing](#) if you won't have access to Wifi when teaching.
- Student frustration if the song seems too young for them to learn from, or because translations

aren't always literal.

About the Author



Sheena Geiger

Sheena Geiger is a certified K-12 teacher, focusing primarily on French Immersion, Math, and Science. As the Head of the Foreign Languages Department at a private school, she developed curriculum for multiple grade levels and languages. She enjoys traveling the world, singing, dancing, scuba diving and writing children's books in Gaelic, French and English. Sheena also has a [YouTube channel](#) (TeacherMommy12345) that focuses on Gaelic and French children's songs as well as kid-friendly educational videos about marine biology and zoology.

13. Tàladh Chrìosda

SHEENA GEIGER

Tags: [Grammar and Vocabulary](#); [Intermediate](#); [Adult](#)

Activity Summary Statement

Tàladh Chrìosda — the “Christ Child Lullaby” — is a beautiful Christmas song traditionally sung at Midnight Mass. The accompanying grammar lesson includes exploring *mo* versus *agam* constructs.

Background

The following account comes to us from Raghnaid NicGaraidh, of South Australia, concerning the historical details of this hymn. The song was composed by Fr. Ronald Rankin, who served as parish priest in [Moidart](#) in the mid-1800s, as a gift to his parishioners who were immigrating to Australia. It was to be sung by the

children as they made their way to Midnight Mass. Many Gaels from Moidart settled between Port Philip, Geelong, and Ballarat (the area immediately west of Melbourne) in the 1840s and 1850s.

Fr. Rankin became the priest at a place called Little River in 1857 and, at the time, it was the only Catholic parish in the district. He started a school there and it became something of a hub for Gaelic speakers in Geelong and the surrounding area — as far as Ballarat — until he died in 1863. Although the parish was growing, a replacement priest couldn't be found, and the Gaelic speakers scattered throughout western Victoria.

Our thanks to Raghnaid NicGaraidh, and to the descendants of the Moidart emigrants, for maintaining this history.

Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Become familiar with possessives and prepositional pronouns derived from *aig* (i.e. *agam*, *agad*, *aige*, etc.);
- Improve their aural comprehension of Gaelic;

- Improve their spoken Gaelic;
- Enhance memory skills;
- Engage with song and music in an accessible, enjoyable way.

Gaelic Level

This song is best suited for adults or youth, choirs or soloists of all levels. The *mo* versus *agam* grammar lesson is more suited for beginner to intermediate levels. This lesson can be done in person, online, or both.

Lesson Preparation

1. Learn the song ahead of time, focusing on learning

the melody.

2. Listen to the lyrics, giving particular attention to the nuances of the Gaelic language and variable accents. If it helps to break down the Gaelic words into phonetic sounds, do this ahead of time.
3. If interested, students may translate the song into English ahead of time, which can then be discussed in class.
4. All grammar will be taught in class while learning and singing the song together.

Resources Required

- [Printed Gaelic lyrics](#)
 - The full version of the song was published in the [Gaelic Society of Inverness \(1888-89\)](#)
- [“Tàladh Chrìosda” work sheet](#)
 - [“Tàladh Chrìosda” lyrics and translation](#)
- [Spoken pronunciation – Sheena Geiger](#)
- YouTube videos of the songs:
 - [Tàladh Chrìosda \(Sheena Geiger\)](#)

- [Tàladh Chrìosda \(The Barra MacNeils\)](#)
- [Grammar sheet Mo versus Agam](#)
- [Mo versus Agam table](#)

Lesson Structure (1hr 15min – 1hr 25min)

Time	Activity	Resources
5 min	Listen to and sing the song once or twice to warm-up voices, and get the class into a Gaelic participation state of mind.	
15 min	<p>Go over the song translation together.</p> <p>Optional: ask students for their translations before giving the instructor's version.</p>	<p><u>"Tàladh Chrìosda"</u> <u>work sheet</u> <u>Lyrics and translation</u> <u>Lyrics</u> as published in <i>The Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness</i> (1888-89)</p>
10-20 mins	<p>Identify the first word of the song as "mo," and ask for the translation ("my"). Ask the students if they've heard of another way to say "my" or "have" ("agam").</p> <p>Optional interactive activity: Have students race to see who can find all the <i>mo</i>'s in the song the fastest, or which team can find the most <i>mo</i>'s.</p>	

10 mins	Go through the various constructions of possessive pronouns (<i>mo, do, a, a, ar, ur, an or am</i>) and prepositional pronouns featuring <i>aig</i> (<i>agam, agad, aige, aice, againn, agaibh, aca</i>). Go over an example of each with the class.	Mo versus Agam table Helpful grammar site
15 mins	Give students exercises to do individually or in pairs. Go over the answers together as a group.	Grammar sheet Mo versus Agam
20 mins	Wrap up by singing the song together as a group.	

Variations

1. Ask students if they can identify the rhyme scheme in the song.
2. Grammar review of *mo* versus *agam* conjugations. Have students create a song, rap, dance, or poetry to remember the correct order of the conjugations. If there isn't enough time, this can be done as homework, then presented in class. The sillier the better for memorization purposes.
3. An interesting variation could be to introduce *bhuam*, *bhuat*, etc. (*bhuam* = lit. from me = I don't have = I want).

Preparing for Challenges

- Problem: No wifi to download the songs.
 - Solution: load the songs on YouTube ahead of time, then do not let the recording get to the very end of the song so that it needs to reload. Drag and drop the play bar from the end back to the beginning to get around the no wifi problem.
- Ensure that speakers are loud enough for the entire class to hear. This may require using external speakers rather than built-in computer speakers.

About the Author



Sheena Geiger

Sheena Geiger is a certified K-12 teacher, focusing primarily on French Immersion, Math, and Science. As the Head of the Foreign

Languages Department at a private school, she developed curriculum for multiple grade levels and languages. She enjoys traveling the world, singing, dancing, scuba diving and writing children's books in Gaelic, French and English. Sheena also has a [YouTube channel](#) (TeacherMommy12345) that focuses on Gaelic and French children's songs as well as kid-friendly educational videos about marine biology and zoology.

14. Goiridh Òg Ò: Activity Songs for Vocabulary

RAGHNAID NICGARaidh

Tags: [Grammar and Vocabulary](#); [Beginner](#); [Youth](#)

Activity Summary Statement

This lesson plan is based around vocabulary-building in a single topic area (such as animals or clothing), using “activity songs” (nursery and pre-school songs which encourage actions and repetition) to reinforce vocabulary pronunciation and common phrase structures.

Learning Outcomes

Beginner students will:

- Know the names of common animals and

confidently pronounce them;

- Describe the colour of the animal;
- State what sound the animal makes.

Intermediate students will:

- Know the names of animals and their babies;
- Describe the colour and body configuration of the animals;
- Describe where the animals live and what they eat.

Gaelic Level

Beginner to intermediate level — this lesson can be suitable for complete or nearly-complete beginners but can also be pitched to hold the attention of intermediate learners.

Lesson Preparation

This lesson can be used for many topic areas but is designed here to teach about animals or clothing.

1. Prepare props based on the selected topic:
 - for animals, animal figurines or laminated cards with animal pictures on them;
 - for clothing, dolls' clothes or laminated cards with clothes pictures on them.
2. Double-check relevant vocabulary, especially their spelling!
 - for animals, this includes animal names (check babies, words for male and female animals, words for a group), animal body parts, and animal verbs;
 - for clothing, try to brainstorm clothing vocabulary that students might want to know (someone will definitely come up with something you've never had to say in Gaelic before).

Resources Required

Required resources:

- For animals, plastic animal figurines, puppets, or cards with pictures of a variety of animals on them:
 - [Large matching cards \(animals\)](#)
 - [Small matching cards \(animals + numbers\)](#)
- For clothes, dolls' clothes or cards with pictures of a variety of clothes on them:
 - [Large matching cards \(clothes\)](#)
 - [Describing clothes \(cartoon people\)](#)
- Props are to be preferred over pictures to encourage tactile learning, ease of describing the animals and clothes, and a sense of play. In a pinch, Google images may be used.

Optional resources:

- Whiteboard and whiteboard marker (or, if online, the chat section of Zoom or Skype).

Lesson Structure (1hr-1.5hr)

Time	Activity	Resources
5 min	<p>Introduction: a brief reminder to stick to Gaelic and ask questions in English at the end. Ask familiar questions to settle into Gaelic.</p> <p>“Ciamar a tha thu?” and similar questions “Dè an t-ainm a th’ ort?” if necessary</p>	
10 min	<p>Song: Goiridh òg o Listen to the recording and pick out the animal names. You may simply tell students which words are animals and what animals they are, but see if the students know first even if you haven’t taught the vocabulary (many students have prior knowledge or extend themselves outside of class). If using only Gaelic for this section, you or the students may pick out the animal from the props rather than translating the word.</p>	<p>Lyrics from The Celtic Lyre Lyrics below YouTube video – Raghnaid NicGaraidh</p>

10 min	<p>Introduce the animal names. Pull the animal props out of a bag and state the name, having students repeat after you.</p>	Animal props
20-40 min	<p>Discuss the animals. Choose which of these questions best suit your learners' abilities or your target grammar (e.g. "<i>tha X air</i>" or "<i>tha e X</i>" structures, future or habitual tense)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name of the animal • Colour of the animal ("<i>Dè an dath a th' air?</i>" or "<i>Tha e X</i>") • Description of the animal (<i>mòr</i> or <i>beag</i>, <i>cunnartach</i> or <i>laghach</i>) • Describe the animal's body parts (e.g. <i>ite</i>, <i>bian</i>, <i>fada</i>, <i>goirid</i>, number of limbs, "<i>Cia mheud X a th' air?</i>") • "<i>Dè bhitheas X ag ràdh agus ag ithe?</i>" or "<i>Dè a dh'itheas e? Ithidh e...</i>" • "<i>Càit' am bi X a' fuireach?</i>" 	Animal props

10 min	Song: “ <i>Bidh cù ag ràdh...</i> ”	Video with animal props Video with stuffed animal toys Sound with lyrics
Optional 10 min	English time! Briefly explain the grammar structures, and allow students to ask questions.	Whiteboard

Variations

Animals

- You could choose another song with lots of animal names in it to listen to at the beginning.
- You could sing “*Bidh cù ag ràdh...*” between two segments of chatting about the animal props, and then learn another song at the end. Other song ideas include:
 - *Goiridh Òg O* – [lyrics](#) and [recording](#)
 - *Calum Crùbach* (for beginners) – [lyrics](#) and [recording](#) (another [recording](#))
 - *Dè nì mi ma chaill mi 'n t-each?* (for intermediate learners)

– [lyrics](#) and [recording](#)

- You might discuss how Gaels view(ed) the world by looking at which animals they talk about in songs.
- You might assign students to find another song with animals in it.
- If you are using the flashcards linked at the end of the lesson, you can play a matching game with the students.

Clothing

This lesson plan structure works very well with clothing, using doll clothes as the props. Clothes lend themselves especially well to sorting things by colour and by type, as well as describing what people are wearing (either the students, or pictures of people).

If you are teaching online, this is also something that works very well on Zoom, as students are forced to name each item rather than just sorting them manually!

Song ideas for the clothes topic include:

- Ribeanan rìomhach Màiri – [lyrics](#) and [recording](#)
- Tha brogan ùr’ agam an nochd – [lyrics](#) and [recording](#)
- Ciamar a nì mi dannsa dìreach? – [lyrics](#) and [recording](#)

The main “activity song” for the clothes topic that I use is “Tha brogan orm a-nis.” It has the tune of “Farmer in the dell”. [Here is a recording](#) of it.

Tha brògan orm a-nis

Tha brògan orm a-nis

Tha brògan agus stocainnean

Tha brògan orm a-nis

You should continue adding to the third line with each verse, letting

different students suggest the next item of clothing. Keep going until no one can remember all the clothes in order anymore!

Preparing for Challenges

A common issue that occurs is students not differentiating “*Tha i ruadh*” and “*Tha falt ruadh oirre*” structures, and producing something like “*Tha i falt ruadh oirre*.” This is something that usually needs to be addressed after the lesson as students usually won’t be aware enough of the issue to ask about it.

If you have students who speak different varieties of English, be ready for them to constantly debate what the thing should be called. Firmly and insistently remind them that we are in Gaelic class and we are speaking Gaelic and that you very much do not care what they call it in English. You may teach and use the phrases “*an aon rud*” (“the same thing”) and “*coma leat*” (“don’t worry”).

Lyrics

BIDH CÙ AG RÀDH...

I don't know if this is a commonly-known song. It has the tune of "Heel and toe polka" or "Little brown jug", and each verse is structured as so:

Bidh cù ag ràdh – ùf ùf ùf (x3)
Dè bhitheas tunnag ag ràdh?

Bidh tunnag ag ràdh – bhuac bhuac bhuac (x3)
Dè bhitheas càt ag ràdh?

Each verse introduces a new animal at the end, which is the featured animal of the next verse. Learners can take turns picking the next animal, by calling out the name or by holding up the relevant animal figure. Several recordings of this song are listed in the lesson plan table above.

You may also discuss the differences between animal noises in Gaelic and in English, or between different locations. These are the animal sounds I use in Australia, but different areas of Nova Scotia might have different sounds. [Here is a video](#) of me pronouncing the sounds.

Càt – mào mào mào
Cù – uf uf uf
Bò – mó mó mó
Caora – mé mé mé

Gobhar – é é é
Each – né né né
Asal – ì-homh ì-homh
Muc – gnos gnos gnos
Pocanach-craoibhe no koala – gnos gnos gnos
Ailbhean – tù tù
Pocanach-leumaidh no kangaroo-wallaby – cnap
cnap cnap
Cearc – gog gog gaog
Coilleach – gog a hì a haoidh
Tunnag – bhuag bhuag bhuag
Feannag – gòrg gòrg
Cùcabarag – cùcu càcaca
Seallainn – faraman faraman
Losgainn – cnag cnag

About the Author



Raghnaid NicGaraidh

Raghnaid NicGaraidh is born and raised in South Australia, with roots in Scotland through her father. She grew up around Gaelic-speakers in Adelaide and has been intentionally speaking the language since she was a teenager. While studying for a degree

in linguistics and ethnomusicology in Melbourne, she was the conductor and music director of Coisir Ghàidhlig Bhioctòiria (the Scottish Gaelic Choir of Victoria) from 2017-2020, and she has been teaching Gaelic language classes since 2016.

Glossary

euchdail

/iəxgal/

bua. coi. -e

heroic, daring

agad

at you

bana-bhàrd

female poet

Bidh

Will be

Cadal

sleep

Chan fhaigh

Will not get

ciarach

twilight

dròbhair a' chruidh

the drover of the cattle

euchdail

heroic

mi-fhìn

myself

mo luran

my darling

Sol-fa

thu

you (singular)

tuilleadh

anymore, more