

WILL.H.OGILVIE POETRY

THEME: THE BORDERLAND

RELEVANT CURRICULAR AREAS:

Literacy, Language, Geography, History, Art, HWB

STARTER ACTIVITIES

We live in the Borderland - What makes this area special?

If you had a visitor to stay, where would you take them?
How many Border rivers, towns and castles can you name?
List adjectives to describe the Borderland.
Why do people come to visit the Borderland?

POETRY EXTRACTS

NUMBER 1.

Along the Ettrick hills a splendour wakes
Of red and purple; dark the shadows run
On Ruberslaw, but see! the Dunion takes
The golden sword thrust of the setting sun!

(From 'Sunset', Border Poems by W H Ogilvie)

Notes: Here, he is describing the effect of the dying sun on the surrounding hills - particularly the colours and shades it creates. The Ettrick hills are near Selkirk, Ruberslaw is an ancient volcanic plug near Denholm and The Dunion are the hills between Denholm and Jedburgh. Finally, the metaphor 'golden sword thrust' compares the sun's rays with a sword reminding the reader of the Borderlands reiving past.

Exploring the poem: Questions

1. What is the main focus of the Borders Landscape in the extract?
2. What do the colours 'red', 'purple', 'golden' make you think of? What does this tell you about how the poet views the landscape?
3. Ruberslaw is an ancient volcano. Poet is suggesting that the shadows are running from the hill. What might he be referring to?

NUMBER 2.

Just a line of blue hills to remember:
Just a valley one fails to forget,
Whether bound with the gold of September
Or with jewels of midsummer set!
Just a fringe of dark woodland and coppice,
Just a ribbon of river and stream
For a hem to the cornfields whose poppies
Burn soft as a rose in a dream!

(From 'The Land We Love', Border Poems by W H Ogilvie)

Notes: In this poem it as if the poet is sitting on the top of a high hill (the Eildons, the Black Hill near Earlston, Ruberslaw or Peniel Heugh) looking around the expansive view. The repetition of 'just' in this poem highlights the different types of landscapes there are in the Borderland: hills, valleys, woodland, water, agricultural. The frequent use of alliteration and assonance also highlight the variety of the scene. There is also reference to a patchwork quilt - often used to describe a landscape - with the words 'fringe', 'ribbon' and 'hem'. There is a wistful, romantic tone to the poem - as if the poet is remembering the view from a distance either in time or place - with the quotes 'one fails to forget' and 'rose in a dream'.

Exploring the poem: Questions

1. Where do you think the poet is standing as he writes this poem? Why do you think this?
2. List the different landscapes he describes.
2. Which line of the poem do you like best? Explain why and what it makes you think of.

NUMBER 3.

I see the rivers, low before the rains,
Laden with the laughter of the moorlands where they roam,
The little Border rivers flashing white like silver chains
Made to bind warm hearts to Home.

(From 'Home', Border Poems by W H Ogilvie)

Notes: The poet focuses on the Border waterways in this extract. He uses the senses of sight and sound to highlight the movement of the water. The repetition of longer sounding consonants - 'r', 'l' and 'm' - add a sense of movement to the lines replicating the movement of the water. He also personifies the river to suggest emotion and strength.

Exploring the poem: Questions

1. The poet suggests that the river is 'laughing'. What sounds does a river make to suggest this?
2. A river goes on a journey starting as a tiny stream to an estuary at the sea. Which part of the journey is described in this poem
2. Which line of the poem do you like best? Explain why and what it makes you think of.

NUMBER 4:

**The royal robes of purple cloak the shoulders of the Bens,
The silver birches are a glory in the glens,
But before you win your welcome where the high tops wait
You must make your bow to Cheviot as guardian of the gate;
For the Highlands may be calling, but it's a Cheviot waves you through -
That Old March Warder,
The Keeper of the Border,
Who gives you right of riding through the country of Buccleuch.
(From 'The Road to Scotland', *The Hill Road to Robertson* by W H Ogilvie)**

Notes: The poet focuses on the Border between England and Scotland - The Carter Bar on the A68, near Jedburgh. The Cheviots are the line of hills that separate Northumberland and the Scottish Borders. In the time of the Reivers a 'court' was held at the Carter Bar to try sort out disputes.

Exploring the poem: Questions

1. Describe the Cheviot Hills based on the poets description.
2. What is the role of the Cheviot Hills? Give a quote to illustrate this.
2. Which line of the poem do you like best? Explain why and what it makes you think of.

NUMBER 5.

*Here by the peel-tower old and grey
In sunlight mornings a lame boy lay,
Speeding him through o'er ridge and tree
To the magic peaks of the Eildons three;
Hearing the raiders battle - cry
In the call of the whaup that wandered by;
Filling his heary with patriot pride
From the far flung fields of the Borderside.*

(From 'Samilhom Tower', The Border Poems by W H Ogilvie)

Notes: Peel Towers are buildings from the Reiver period of history. This particular tower is Smailholm Tower located between St Boswells and Kelso. The novelist, Sir Walter Scott, came to stay in the nearby farm, Sandiknowes, as a child. Suffering with Polio he was sent here to stay with his Aunt to benefit from the fresh, clean air. The Eildons, near Melrose, can be seen for miles in the surrounding area. He makes a link between the Reiving History of the tower and the nature which surrounds it today. The Whaup (Curlew) commonly found on higher moorland. Nesting on the ground it makes a piercing, lonely cry when disturbed.

Exploring the poem: Questions

1. How does the Tower link the present and the past in this poem?
2. On the last line of this extract the poem uses alliteration, give a suggestion as to what it emphasises.
3. What was the 'lame boy' thinking about whilst looking at the view? Give a quote to illustrate this.

NUMBER 6.

TEVIOT

**I bring a song to you from out the laughing hills -
A song the binding mill wheels leave unthralled**

JED

**Of all the Cheviot's dearest streams I am the first;
...I wake again in grey-walled Ferniehurst**

(From 'A Song of Border Rivers' The Border Poems by W H Ogilvie)

Notes: In this poem, the poet uses the rivers to describe the scenery it passes. The Teviot runs through Hawick, once a bustling thriving Mill town. Early mills made wool underwear and socks. Later, the town became at the forefront of fashion knitwear,

include the ladies 'Twin set'. Of course, the knitwear industry was totally reliant on the river which runs through the town.

The Jed is the first river after the Scotland/England border and into the historic town of Jedburgh with its Abbey. It winds alongside the A68 - the main road between the two countries in the Borderland.

Exploring the poem: Questions

1. In what ways does a river make a 'song'?
2. What is the 'song' in the town the river passes through? How is the song of the river and the song of the town linked?
3. The river has been running through the Borders for hundreds of years. What history may it 'wake' in an old castle?

ACTIVITIES BASED ON POETRY

- Create a wall montage of the Borders Landscape and include quotes which inspire each landscape.
- Using similar techniques and word choice used in the poetry - write a piece of poetry or creative writing about a favourite area of the Borderland.
- Research the particular places mentioned in the poetry - produce a leaflet to promote the area to a visitor.
- Explore the scenery in own local area - the names of the hills, rivers, the type of agriculture etc
- Create a powerpoint (or similar educational app) of the poem to illustrate the places it mentions; use of descriptive language and/or the techniques it uses.

PLENARY ACTIVITIES

- Choose a colour and link it to the local scenery
- Use alliteration to describe a local place e.g. the lazy Leader; happy Harestanes
- On a map of the Borderland, have each child place a little flag of a place they enjoy visiting.

*Have you used this resource and come up with another idea?
If so, comment on the website and we can add it to this resource.*