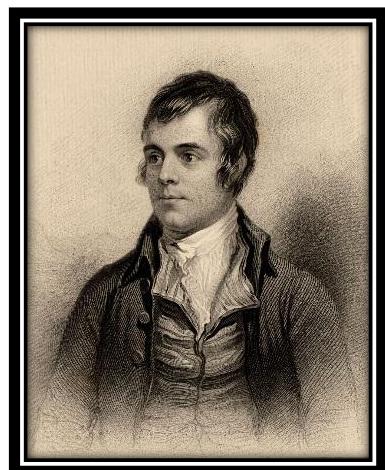


ROBERT BURNS

Robert Burns was born in Alloway, Scotland, on January 25, 1759.

He is the best loved Scottish poet, admired not only for his verse and great love-songs, but also for his character, his high spirits. He was the son of a farmer, born in a cottage built by his father, in Alloway in Ayr.



This cottage is now a museum, dedicated to Burns (fondly referred to as "Rabbie" by his contemporaries).

As a boy, he always loved stories of the supernatural, told to him by an old widow who sometimes helped out on his fathers' farm and when Burns reached adulthood, he turned many of these stories into poems.

His father, a tenant farmer, educated his children at home. Robert Burns had access to good books and was well read.

Between 1784 and 1785, Burns also wrote many of the poems collected in his first book, Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect. This collection was an immediate success and Burns was celebrated throughout England and Scotland as a great "peasant-poet."

Besides his poetry, Burns devoted the final twelve years of his life to composing and collecting traditional Scottish songs. They are essential in preserving parts of Scotland's cultural heritage. His "Auld Lang Syne" is still sung across the globe to celebrate the New Year.

Most of Burns' poems were written in Scottish. They document and celebrate traditional Scottish culture, expressions of farm life, and class and religious distinctions. Burns wrote in a variety of forms: epistles to friends, ballads, and songs. His best-known poem is the mock-heroic Tam o' Shanter. He is also well known for the over three hundred songs he wrote which celebrate love, friendship and work with often hilarious and tender sympathy.

ENGLISHMANIA

Burns died, on July 21, 1796, at the age of 37. Even today, he is often referred to as the National Bard of Scotland.

Burns will never be forgotten as his poems and songs are still as popular in Scotland as they were when first written.

Burns Night is a great occasion on January 25 th when many dinners dedicated to his memory are held all over the world. The ritual of the Burns Supper was started by close friends of Robert Burns a few years after his death and the format remains largely unchanged today, beginning with welcoming in the haggis. The poem ‘To a Haggis’ is recited and the haggis is then toasted with a glass of whisky. The evening ends with a rendition of ‘Auld Lang Syne’.

Questions

1. When was Robert Burns born?
2. Of which country is Robert Burns the national poet?
3. What was his father's occupation?
4. What was the nickname of Robert Burns?
5. In what language are his poems and songs written?
6. What is his most famous piece of work?
7. When do we celebrate Burns Day?
8. What do we eat at the Burns Supper?
9. How does the Burns Night begin?
10. What poem is read in the beginning of the Burns Night?
11. How old was Burns when he died?
12. How is Burns referred to?

