

Learning Resources:

Poem



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National Poetry Day
in Scotland

Thursday
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Poems about LIGHT

The poet and his work

Mairi MacIain/Myles M Campbell is a poet, novelist and teacher, who works mainly in Scottish Gaelic and lives on Skye. He studied Celtic and History at the University of Edinburgh, graduating in 1976. He has taught Gaelic in schools in Gairloch and his native Skye, and published seven novels for young people in Gaelic as well as a novel for adults, *Teas* (Clàr/Ùr-sgeul, 2010). He has published eight collections of poetry, including a selected poems covering 1974 – 2006, *Breac-a'-Mhuiltean* (Coiscéim, 2007) in Scottish Gaelic with Gaelic linear translations.

He has a great interest in religion and the interface between science / philosophy and religion which has intensified since his conversion to Christianity. He has won numerous awards including several from the Gaelic Books Council and also he was given the An Comunn Gàidhealach National Mod Bardic Crown in 2002. He has been Honorary Bard of Comunn Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis / Gaelic Society of Inverness since 2012.

The Poem

'Dòchas' by Myles M Campbell is published in *Eileanan* (Roinn nan Canan Ceilteach, 1980). Translation from Ronald Black, ed, *An Tuil* (Polygon, 1999).

Choose from the following activities to build your own Stage 3 or 4 poetry lessons.

Opening up the poem (reading and discussion) LIT 3-04a/LIT4-04a, LIT 3-06a/LIT4-06a, LIT3-07a/LIT4-07a, LIT 3-16a/LIT 4-16a, LIT 3-11a / LIT 4-11a

Key questions

- What is the purpose of each couplet?
- This poem is very simply worded and indeed it has very few words. Why do you think the poet chose to write in this way? What's the effect?
- If you understand Gaelic, consider the meanings and the feelings created by 'Dòchas' in Gaelic and 'Hope', its English translation. Are there any differences? If so, what are they?
- Why is certainty 'the sun shining'?
- Look at the presentation of the poem on the card – what is the effect of the shape of the poem? Why do you think the designer has chosen to do this?

Dòchas

By Maoilios Caimbeul

Research

- The stars and the night sky have inspired poets throughout history. Which other poems can you find about stars and constellations? Try searching <https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk> and <http://www.poetryarchive.org> You can select from the poems you find to compile a class anthology.
- People have also made many other uses of stars such as navigation, astronomy and astrology. What can you find out about the practical applications of the stars? Prepare a short presentation to deliver to other students in your class.

Climbing inside the poem (performance and discussion) EXA 3-01a/EXA 4-01a LIT 3-02a/LIT 4-02a, LIT 3-08a/LIT 4-08a

- This poem makes a lovely short choral piece. In groups practise performing it. Pay attention to the hopeful qualities – the voices floating on the night sky. How can you convey this in small groups? If you have Gaelic speaking students maybe you could do a bilingual performance.
- Class discussion: faith, hope and certainty are abstract qualities: how are they relevant in the modern world? What represents faith or hope for you? Do you ever feel certain about something? What?

Building on the poem (writing) LIT 3-23a/LIT 4-23a, LIT 3-25a/LIT 4-25a, LIT 3-26a/LIT 4-26a

- Following on from your discussion of faith, hope and certainty, you may want to define these words using different images. Use these images to write your own poem.
- Write a poem using images to define other abstract qualities – how about perseverance, uncertainty, energy – what metaphors can you use to describe them?
- Either of these poems could be written in Gaelic or English or another language that you know well!
- Think about creative ways to organise your poem on the page. If, like 'Dòchas', your poem has few words, you may want to create a shape with your poem that reflects its mood or idea.
- Take lines from the poems that you found for your anthology of star poetry. Build new poems entirely from lines in these poems. This type of writing by collage is called found poetry. You can find out more about found poetry at <http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/poetic-form-found-poem>.

Dòchas

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Further reading and links

Selected poetry by Myles M Campbell

Eileanan (Celtic Department, Glasgow University, 1980)

Bailtean (Gairm, 1987)

A' Càradh an Rathaid (Coiscéim, 1988)

Blasad de Aesop (Seahorse, 1991)

A' Gabhail Ris (Gairm, 1994)

Saoghal Ùr (Diehard, 2002)

Breac-a'-Mhultein, selected poems 1974 – 2006 (Coiscéim, 2007), Scottish Gaelic with Gaeilge linear translations

Dà Thaobh a' Bhealaich / Two Sides of the Pass, co-author with Mark Goodwin (Two Ravens Press, 2009)

Websites

<https://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/maoilios-caimbeul>

<http://www.maoilioscaimbeul.co.uk>