Poet in the past

Scottish Poetry Library

Schools' poetry and architecture resource

Poet in the past
Scottish Poetry Library

POETRY & ARCHITECTURE RESOURCE

Welcome to Poet in the Past

The focus for this resource is writing poems about historic buildings with pupils from P3 to S4.

This teaching resource is based on the 2006 poetry competition, the third and last in our series of highly successful poetry and architecture Scottish schools' competitions, and offers an enduring set of ideas to support teachers working in interdisciplinary ways.

As with **Poet in the House 2004** and **Poet in Public 2005**, the objective is for young people to exercise their observational and language skills by focusing on the built environment and expressing their findings and feelings in poetry.

To support the writing process in all its stages, this resource pack offers a wide range of materials that provide both practical help and, hopefully, inspiration for you all.

We'd like to acknowledge the support of the Scottish Arts Council Lottery Fund, and of our original partner, the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, as well as the sponsorship and support of four leading Scottish heritage organisations:

Historic Scotland; the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust; the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland, and the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland.

Any of the enclosed materials may be photocopied for classroom use, excepting the images on the poster, although many of those are freely available from our sponsor organisations. Image credits and contact details are contained in the pack.

Your pack includes:

- Warm-up activities
- Four new poems:
  - 'Queen Mary's Bath-House' by Valerie Gillies (P3-5)
  - 'Scalloway Castle, Shetland' by Christine De Luca (P6-S1)
  - 'Spiral/Spire/Aspire' by Ken Cockburn (P7-S4)
  - 'Changehouse' by Rody Gorman (S2-S4)
- Three assignment/investigative worksheets at differentiated levels P3-S4
- Memory Map worksheet (P6+) in conjunction with the poster-reverse image
- Building Poems – some suggestions and ideas
- Double-sided poster
- Key to poster

Poet in the past
Scottish Poetry Library

POETRY & ARCHITECTURE RESOURCE

Introductory Notes

This resource encourages pupils from P3 to S4 to consider historic buildings, not only those that are formally protected and designated heritage properties and sites, but our wider architectural heritage. Consider the old school building renovated to incorporate the new, or torn down to be replaced. Consider the places and spaces, domestic and public, already incorporated into our individual and collective experience and memory.

Poet in the Past aims to

- encourage pupils' awareness of their historic built environment as it relates to the past and the present, through observation and direct personal encounter
- encourage an active, emotional, reflective and creative response through poetry

We haven't set (in stone) a definition of 'historic' as pupils' perceptions will vary according to their age, experience, awareness and understanding of their built environment. In a very real sense, as soon as a foundation stone is laid or the ribbon cut on a new building, it becomes part of our architectural and cultural heritage, although we would encourage you to focus pupils' attention on pre-1970s architecture.

Pupils may write from **memory**, **experience**, **observation/study** and **imagination**. All of these approaches are encouraged and combined in the activities suggested in this pack.

Poet in the Past and Curriculum for Excellence

The activities in this pack provide an interdisciplinary connection between social studies and language. Through their investigation and observation of historic buildings pupils can develop their "*understanding of the history, heritage and culture of Scotland, and an appreciation of … local and national heritage within the world*," and through the development of their own poems, using knowledge to interpret evidence, they have the opportunity to contribute to some elements of the outcomes set out in People, past events and societies.

Reading the enclosed poems, and any others about the built environment, gives a focus for analysis and discussion (EN 1, 2, 3 & 4- 19a) and developing their poems provides an important opportunity for pupils to gather, organize and use information (LIT 1, 2, 3 & 4 -25a & 26a), and to create new texts to convey their response to the building they have studied (LIT 1, 2, 3 & 4 - 28a; ENG 1, 2, 3 & 4 – 30a & 31a), setting their writing experience in a real and relevant context.

CATSLIDE DORMER CRAWSTEP GABLE RUMMLIN' CUNDIE TURNPIKE STAIR/FLYING BUTTRESS CORBELLED TURRET DORIC COLUMN PORT-COCHÈRE/ BOTTLE-NECK DUNGEON COFFERED CEILING OLD TOWN NEW TOWN BELL-TOWER DOME/MINSTREL'S GALLERY, BUTLER'S PANTRY PATER NOSTER HOME SWEET HOME/ARCADE, BALUSTRADE THUNDER BOX TROUGH/BUT AN' BEN BARROW-GRAVE STANDING STONES BROCH/TENEMENT PEDIMENT CLAUT AN' CLAY/BOOTSCRAPE BATTLEMENTS LOWPIN'-STANE/CHUMCHEEK LUMCHEEK OOTSIDE CLUDGE/ INGLE NEUK SASH AND CASE PORTER'S LODGE/BIG SCHULE WEE SCHULE BLESS THIS HOOSE/TRANSEPT NISSEN HUT WALLY CLOSE/SKYSCRAPER DRY-DASH TWENTY-STOREY FLAT/FOLLY-TURRET STAIRHEID AQUEDUCT/BLACKHOUSE COONCIL HOOSE PREFAB SMIDDY/FRONTPORCH SIDE-DOOR BACK-COURT MIDDEN/KIRK-STILE PANTILE LUCKENBOOTH/PARAPET SKEWPUTT MANSARD ROOF/ROUGHCAST WET HARL ASTRAGAL/ARCADE JAMSTANE CURTAIN WALL/CRYPT, PILASTER TOLL-BOOTH HENGE/DRY-STANE BOTHY, SINGLE-END/COOM-CEIL CUPOLA HYPOCAUST/ICE-HOUSE CESS-PIT BIGGIT WA'S/ARROW-SLIT SKYLIGHT GARDY-LOO/LIFT-SHAFT MINE-SHAFT TONGUE-IN-GROOVE/FORESTAIR STAIRHEID MAUSOLEUM/BREEZEBLOCK PILLBOX MAGDALENE ASYLUM/POORHOUSE TOLL-HOUSE RICH MAN'S SEAT/SCAPPLED COCKLAFT TURF AND PEAT/ CARTOUCHE DRY DASH GRANITE STANE/GINGEBREID COTTAGE LOZENGE PANE/DOON THE CLOSE AN' UP THE STAIR/ BUT AN' BEN WI' BURKE AN' HARE

Warm-up Activities

QUESTIONS FOR CLASS, GROUP OR PAIR DISCUSSION

What is an 'historic' building? (Take this opportunity to agree a working definition.) Brainstorm historic buildings in your own community; the oldest building or site. Is your home a historic building? What's your favourite historic building, and why? Does it fulfil the same purpose as when it was built? How do 'old' buildings look different? In what ways can they tell us about the times in which they were built: about political climate, priorities and needs, social attitudes, technological advances, belief systems, people, and their everyday lives? Are historic buildings important? Why do we, or should we, value, protect and preserve old buildings? Which buildings in your community would you protect, and why? How might you renovate and use a disused or ruined local building?

HOMEWORK

Ask pupils to find out and report back some of parents' and grandparents' memories of their homes and other buildings in the community - or ones that are long gone. Or, on their journeys to school, mentally note all the 'historic' buildings.

VISUALISATION

Ask pupils to close their eyes for a few minutes and visualise a journey to school, or into town, focusing on all the historic buildings they encounter. Side-coach with questions to aid concentration if necessary. Review in discussion afterwards.

Pupils decide on a historic building to describe, and after some preparation time, describe it aloud (or read from notes), without giving away its identity, for the others to guess. Encourage simile, metaphor and sensory detail in description of buildings and their features and qualities; this sets up pupils for writing, lending itself particularly well to creating riddle poems.

OUR POEMS

Read the poems aloud in class. Discuss how effective they are and what pupils like about them. (Of course, they may be used as models for pupils' own poems, so include in discussion technical aspects such as form, structure, conventions and how these are created.)

OUR POSTER

SIDE 1:
shows a selection of images to explore and inspire. (An image-key is included in this pack.) The selection conveys a wide range of historic buildings and specific architectural detail evoking period, atmosphere, social context, emotional texture, and the narrative/ imaginative possibilities of different building types. Each image potentially poses interesting questions, so prepare some in advance, encouraging pupils to ask their own, suggesting what kind of poem the image and question might inspire. For example, the Paxton Hall servants' staircase image suggests we consider what it might it have been like to be a 14-year-old tweenie-maid, spiralling at least twice-daily, bottom to top with heavy buckets of hot water, and top to bottom with full chamber pots.

SIDE 2:
shows a cutaway image of an Edinburgh New Town Georgian house. A self-explanatory poetry worksheet, **Memory Map for a Poem**, for P6+ is contained in this pack. This exercise can be used as an alternative to the more traditional worksheets enclosed, or as an ideal follow-up exercise to extend recall (of a visit) and encourage creative thinking.

FIELD TRIPS OR VISITS

Visiting a site or building seems by far the most inspiring approach. (See the text boxes on our poster for details of how our sponsor organisations can support visits/talks about historic buildings in your area.)

Take along our worksheets, additional paper/jotters, pencils, art materials, cameras. Have a small budget for postcards, brochures and guides. Prepare questions to ask guides and other people who work in the building. Post-visit, create a class montage of collected materials, responses, feelings to inspire writing.

Building Poems – some suggestions and ideas

Pupils can write their Poet in the Past poems in any style, although you might like to consider and discuss some of the ideas below. You could also look again at our poems; they offer forms which can be used as models or inspiration: a skipping rhyme; a concrete poem; a monologue.

Encourage pupils to extend their vocabulary of words used to describe features of buildings: general architectural terms and terms specific to particular building types. Extend this by considering the specific registers and dialects of speech identified with different roles connected to a given building e.g. status or rank (as in Scalloway Castle). Encourage pupils also to use their own Scots dialect and rhythms wherever appropriate.

A word about rhyme (particularly end-rhyming). It's not compulsory - or even, necessarily, desirable. The originality, immediacy and spirit of children's poetry often founders when they feel compelled to 'find a rhyme' at the expense of the original energy, drive or meaning of their idea. It can be appropriate and enhancing, so keep an open mind. Rhythm is the real key; encourage pupils to enjoy and create rhythms; try reading their lines aloud; look for internal rhymes, rhythms and sound patterns.

RIDDLES

Write lines describing buildings in unusual ways to create riddles to their identities. Encourage lots of metaphor and simile to really perplex readers. Ask pupils to think of the shapes and materials of construction; the functions of buildings; past and present activity within; the buildings' 'personalities' and relationships with neighbouring buildings; the sensory qualities of buildings from the point of view of people in the past, present - or of other tiny 'users': woodworm, mice…

TIME OR TIME-LINE POEMS

Write a two-stanza poem describing the building, or some aspect of the life of the building or its inhabitants, in the past (stanza 1) and in the present (stanza 2). Or a longer piece - each stanza representing a different period in the building's history. Poems need not be descriptive in a straightforward sense: who, for example might convey the description? An occupant? The building itself? One of its features? This will colour word-choice, tone, rhythm – everything! (For further poem ideas concerning 'history' and 'time', see our poster and 'Memory Map for a Poem' worksheet.)

QUESTION AND ANSWER POEMS

Each line of the poem is a question about the building, asked by the writer, or by someone who worked, or lived, or visited. Or by the building itself. Or by one architectural feature, or a series of different ones. Offer pupils six question words (who, what, when, where, why, how) and ask them to write a line beginning with each. Extend the piece by incorporating answers to create a series of two-line question-and-responses. Pupils could write questions, then circulate them so that others can write responses.

CONCRETE POEMS

Just as Ken Cockburn's 'Spiral/Spire/Aspire' dramatises its meaning by the way it looks on the page, mirroring a physical journey and sensations, try creating a building poem that is something to look at as well as read. This might result in lines shaped to reflect the entire construction (as in Edwin Morgan's 'Construction for I K Brunel'), or may suggest an individual feature, or may mimic the route of a walk through the building in a more subtly concrete way.

Suggest architectural shapes and features which may inspire and which lend themselves well: stairs, towers, mazes, random archaeological remains, windows, tiles, patterns.

CATSLIDE DORMER CRAWSTEP GABLE RUMMLIN' CUNDIE TURNPIKE STAIR/FLYING BUTTRESS CORBELLED TURRET DORIC COLUMN PORT-COCHÈRE/ BOTTLE-NECK DUNGEON COFFERED CEILING OLD TOWN NEW TOWN BELL-TOWER DOME/MINSTREL'S GALLERY, BUTLER'S PANTRY PATER NOSTER HOME SWEET HOME/ARCADE, BALUSTRADE THUNDER BOX TROUGH/BUT AN' BEN BARROW-GRAVE STANDING STONES BROCH/TENEMENT PEDIMENT CLAUT AN' CLAY/BOOTSCRAPE BATTLEMENTS LOWPIN'-STANE/CHUMCHEEK LUMCHEEK OOTSIDE CLUDGE/ INGLE NEUK SASH AND CASE PORTER'S LODGE/BIG SCHULE WEE SCHULE BLESS THIS HOOSE/TRANSEPT NISSEN HUT WALLY CLOSE/SKYSCRAPER DRY-DASH TWENTY-STOREY FLAT/FOLLY-TURRET STAIRHEID AQUEDUCT/BLACKHOUSE COONCIL HOOSE PREFAB SMIDDY/FRONTPORCH SIDE-DOOR BACK-COURT MIDDEN/KIRK-STILE PANTILE LUCKENBOOTH/PARAPET SKEWPUTT MANSARD ROOF/ROUGHCAST WET HARL ASTRAGAL/ARCADE JAMSTANE CURTAIN WALL/CRYPT, PILASTER TOLL-BOOTH HENGE/DRY-STANE BOTHY, SINGLE-END/COOM-CEIL CUPOLA HYPOCAUST/ICE-HOUSE CESS-PIT BIGGIT WA'S/ARROW-SLIT SKYLIGHT GARDY-LOO/LIFT-SHAFT MINE-SHAFT TONGUE-IN-GROOVE/FORESTAIR STAIRHEID MAUSOLEUM/BREEZEBLOCK PILLBOX MAGDALENE ASYLUM/POORHOUSE TOLL-HOUSE RICH MAN'S SEAT/SCAPPLED COCKLAFT TURF AND PEAT/ CARTOUCHE DRY DASH GRANITE STANE/GINGEBREID COTTAGE LOZENGE PANE/DOON THE CLOSE AN' UP THE STAIR/ BUT AN' BEN WI' BURKE AN' HARE

MONOLOGUE AND DIALOGUE POEMS

(See Christine de Luca's 'Scalloway Castle'.) Monologue poems can be voiced by animal, vegetable or mineral! By the building (or by a feature such as gargoyle, spire, window); a character, real or imagined from the past or present. Or you could address the building directly: writing/speaking to it as 'you'. Tell it what you love and hate about it, about the effect it has on you, about how it conceals and reveals things to you. Praise it, harangue it, interrogate it, elicit its secrets, expose its past crimes ….. don't let it off the hook!

Dialogue poems might consist of imagined exchanges, arguments, conversations between people, or parts of a building, or between two buildings: Edinburgh Castle speaks to your nearest castle? A tenement to a high-rise block? The Ring of Brodgar to Stonehenge?

FOUND POEMS

Ken Cockburn incorporates some 'found' lines into 'Spiral/Spire/Aspire', culled from graffiti (poignant) and a sign (banal) posted in the tower. These 'found' words startle and move us, bringing human presence into this heavenly structure. Such simple, ordinary, daily language can lead us into bigger themes. 'Found poetry' is writing that was not intended as poetry by its original maker, but is made into poetry by its finder. Material can be sourced widely: lists, graffiti, written notes, letters, news articles, labels, captions, scraps of conversation and other seemingly insignificant uses of language. The skill is in the finding – spotting uses of language that unintentionally create poetic effect or strong emotional response in the reader. Other creative tasks with found poetry include decisions about amount, arrangement and line-breaks. It's best to encourage pupils to frame their found material within a greater poem, setting it in the context of the building in which it was found. Consider: names carved on an old school desk; words overheard, display captioning, memorials, noticeboards, signage, and so on.

List poems

Are often seemingly simple (but in fact carefully chosen and crafted) lists of words and phrases: names, multi-sensory words, descriptions, images, architectural features and terms, memories, - all combining to create a strong impression of, in this case, an historic building. The list could take the form of a concrete inventory of materials, shapes or key features of the building. An inventory of sensations experienced through time, real and imagined, an imagined record of events and activities in the process of the construction of the building.

Chants

Made to read aloud, chants are poems in which some key words, phrases or lines are repeated over and over. Repetition and strong rhythms could have a powerful impact when used to convey the shape, size, scale, construction or colourful history of a building. What ghostly rhythms, sounds, words, phrases or sensory patterns have the walls, the stones absorbed throughout the centuries? – the deafening grind and clack of machines; whispers of responses and prayers in a chapel; the chant of times tables punctuated by the swish of a cane; the regular pulse of a lighthouse light; the crackling of a fire in an ancient hearth; machine-gun fire; the strains of lullabies?

Ballads

Write a poem that tells an exciting story (historically accurate or entirely imagined) about a building. Many old ballads tell tragic and strange stories about family/clan relationships, or recount tales of dramatic human events or supernatural happenings. Traditional ballads are written in four-line stanzas: lines 1 and 3 have four beats; lines 2 and 4 rhyme, and have three beats. Perhaps write collaboratively – each group attempting a different part of the poem.

Queen Mary's Bath-House is a little two-storeyed building, once a summer-house in the garden of Holyrood Palace. The 'Queen Mary' of its name is Mary Queen of Scots (1542-1567). Nobody really knows what it was used for. Some people say it has a spring flowing out of the floor, others say there is a golden dagger hidden in the roof. It will always be a mystery house.

I like to think of the games played in the garden and the time when the queen went running in out of the rain. So the poem has bouncy-ball rhymes. Try bouncing the rhythm for yourself with a ball in the playground. **Valerie Gillies, September 2005**.

Queen Mary's Bath-House

Pom-pom
On the green,
A wee den
For Scotland's queen.

A fat turret,
Old oak peg,
A tall chimney
Like a leg.

Crown and castle,
Pot-belly hut,
Clootie dumpling
Boiling up.

Her changing-room
For tennis games
Long ago,
Just the same.

A spy-house
For looking down
On her garden
Beyond the town.

Pom-pom
Pompalary,
Play-house
For Queen Mary.

Valerie Gillies

I still have no sense of pride in the lovely castle at Scalloway, near my home in Shetland. Probably this is because, from an early age, I was aware of the harshness of the owner, Earl Patrick Stewart. By imposing Scots law and quashing the local Udal (Norse) law he impoverished the local Shetlanders at that time (c.1600). The story of Earl Patrick demanding eggs from local people to make the mortar is part of oral tradition.

I decided to have two voices in the poem, the Earl (in English) and the stonemason (in Shetlandic) and to weave them together, bringing out their contrasting viewpoints and feelings. I felt a strong rhythm and light rhyme would give the poem shape and energy. Alliteration perhaps adds to the sound quality. I also tried to create a word picture of the castle. **Christine De Luca, August 2005**.

Scalloway Castle
Earl Patrick and his mason

I'll build a castle here in Scalloway.
The finest in my Earldom it shall be:
Renaissance style, a Scots château.
That'll keep these peasants on their knees!

Wha gied dis trooker poo'er owre wis,
wi oarders ta bigg his muckle hadd
an hae wis wirk ta him fur naethin?
Nae winder aaboady in Scallowa is mad!

Four storeys it will rise, with a Great Hall,
and chambers for ladies and their lords.
Turrets and slit-holes will decorate it
and, round the top, tapered towers galore.

He tievs da very eggs oot o da mooths
o bairns ta mix dis maedit mortar.
We höv an quarry fur his fancy haa,
varg lik slaves, bear ill-vicket tricks.

My castle will put Scalloway on the map,
raise its name as Patrick's capital.
Throughout the islands, power and justice
will be by-words for my blazoned battlements.

Naethin 'll mak wis prood o dy carbuncle.
Da waas 'll mulder, ivery storey,
an Earl Patrick, muckit moniment
dat du is, du 'll nivver grace wir history.

Christine De Luca

dis: this

da: the

dat: that

trooker: disreputable person

poo'er: power

bigg: build

muckle: large

hadd: hold, an animal's home

tievs: thieves, steals

maedit: maggot-infested

höv: throw

haa: hall, laird's house

varg: toil

ill-vicket: wicked

waas: walls

mulder: crumble to dust

muckit: covered in cows' manure

moniment: fool

dy: your

du: you (familiar)

The poem isn't based on a visit to a single church, but to several. The words in italics are all 'found' - I didn't make them up. I wanted to lay the verses out in an unusual way to reflect the movement up and down the stairs, and around the viewing platform. It's a slog climbing all those stairs, but usually worth it when you get there. I assumed the three words I've used in the title all had the same source, but each has a different root or etymology (a good dictionary will tell you what they are).
Ken Cockburn, August 2005.

Spiral/Spire/Aspire

the spiral
staircase
up (another
leads down)
is just wide e-
nough
for one
we read
the inked
scraped
chiselled
writing on
the wall
Mollie Jennings
TF 1942
God bless Eire
the light
strengthens
as we
reach

the viewing platform but here on high we're less
concerned with heaven than with our God's-eye-view of earth
look, there are the landmarks: car-park, river, hills, the faraway sea

we descend
the two
hundred
& nine
steps of
the other
staircase
& a sign
whispers
SILENCE!
YOU
ARE NOW
NEARING
THE BOTTOM
EVERY
SOUND
CAN BE
HEARD
IN THE
CHURCH

in single file we re-enter the soaring interior
and crick our necks to view the painted ceiling
whose height (and our less-than-perfect vision) make clear the distance
between our grounded selves and its constructed heaven.

Ken Cockburn

I wrote this poem when the tollbooth on the bridge linking the Isle of Skye, where I live, with the mainland of Scotland, was demolished. The poem includes elements of the Gaelic language and history. Most of my work is in Gaelic – Scottish and Irish – but I wrote this from the perspective of an outsider and day-tripper, which is what I am, I suppose. **Rody Gorman, September 2005**.

Changehouse

The tollbooth is like a changehouse crossing the Atlantic.
Passing by today it was more like
All that was left of a white house
That night when all the gales came to the island.
The roof is like an upturned coracle
In Canna where Alexander MacDonald would lie
Writing encomiums and panegyrics in Gaelic
For the Laird with a great big stone on his chest.

The timber slats are like the remains of a coble
Dashed against the shore in the Sound of Sleat.
Enough! The Scottish Executive
Decided to pull it down and remove the whole charge
But some of us wouldn't mind paying if you could see
A white house on the approach to the island
As Alexander MacDonald drifts out beyond
Eilean Ban composing the Birlinn of Clanranald.

Rody Gorman

changehouse, old inn; *white house*, type of house in the Hebrides; *coracle*, small oval rowing-boat; *Canna*, island in the Inner Hebrides; *Alexander MacDonald*, 18th century Jacobite Gaelic poet; *encomium*, *panegyric*, praise poem; *coble*, small flat-bottomed boat; *Sound of Sleat*, stretch of water between Isle of Skye and the Scottish mainland; *Eilean Ban*, island between Kyleakin on Skye and Kyle of Lochalsh on the Scottish mainland; *Birlinn of Clanranald*, a poem by Alexander MacDonald about the galley of the MacDonalds of Moidairt in the north west Highlands, and Uist in the Outer Hebrides

Poet in the past Scottish Poetry Library

MY HISTORIC BUILDING

MY NAME

1. My historic building is …… It was built in ……
2. I like it because ……
3. What happens in this building today? ……
4. Write something people did here in the past ……

LOOK!

5. Is the building….

☐ low?	☐ wide?	☐ straight?	☐ standing alone?
☐ high?	☐ narrow?	☐ curved?	☐ near other buildings?

6. Is it made from….

☐ bricks?	☐ stone?	☐ concrete?	☐ turf or peat?	☐ slate?
☐ glass?	☐ metal?	☐ wood?	☐ clay or mud?	☐ plastic?

7. Does it look….

☐ old?	☐ important?	☐ welcoming?	☐ plain and simple?
☐ old and new?	☐ unimportant?	☐ unwelcoming?	☐ fancy or decorated?

8. I know the building is **OLD** because ……
9. Stand in a spot you like and look

   up what do you see? ……

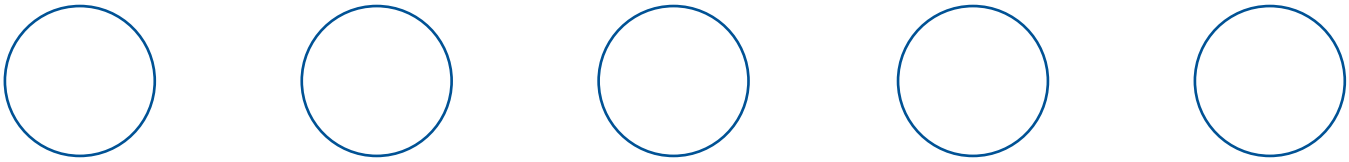
   down what do you see? ……

   behind you what do you see? ……

10. In the space below, draw 3 interesting shapes you can see in the building.

    Write beside each shape what it is. For example ◇ window panes

11. Colour the circles below to show what colours you see in the building.
Write below the colours what these things are.



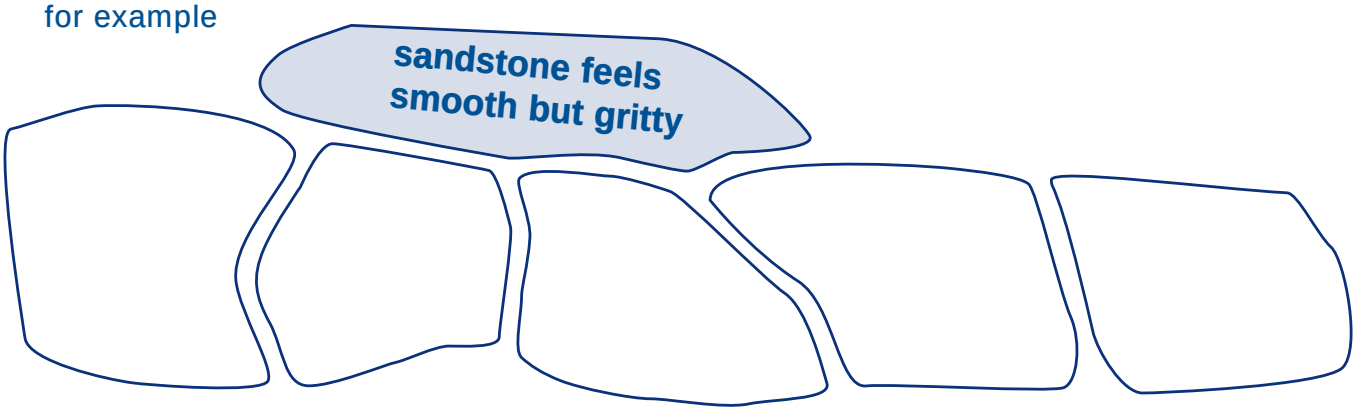
....

LISTEN!

12. Write something you can **hear** in the building ……

TOUCH!

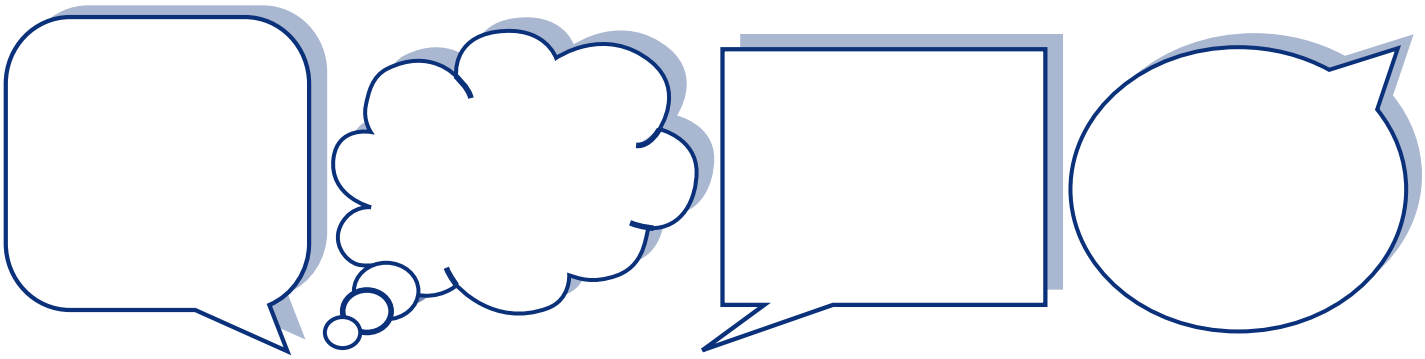
13. Clean hands, please! Run your hand gently along different surfaces in the building.
How do they feel? Inside each shape, write how different surfaces feel,
for example



IMAGINE!

14. Your **building** can talk!
What does it say? What have the windows seen?
What do the stones remember, from long ago?
Talk about this with a partner.

Then, in the **speech bubbles** below, write some things the stones might say or tell you.



2

Poet in the past Scottish Poetry Library

MY HISTORIC BUILDING

MY NAME

Make sure you have your jotter or some extra paper before you start

1. My historic building is …… It was built in ……

2. I chose it because ……

3. What happens in this building today? ……

4. I know the building is **OLD** because……

5. Are there **new** parts to the building? What are they?……

   ……

6 (a) Write down **three key words** to describe the **exterior** (outside) of the building

   …… …… ……

   (b) Write down **three key words** to describe the **interior** (inside) of the building

   …… …… ……

7. What happened here in the past? Underline words that describe what happened here, then add some of your own.

   art buying business births communicating cooking cruelty discussion debate defending disagreement dancing eating education entertainment exhibition fighting learning making meetings manufacturing music nursing parties playing punishing researching seeing selling showing sitting socialising singing sports talking thinking waiting walking welcoming wedding writing worshipping

   …… …… …… ……

8. Write down **three words** someone in the past might have used to describe the building when it was first built.

   …… …… ……

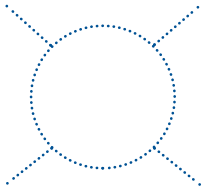
9. Are there special words for different parts of this building? Try to find out four words and write them down.

   …… ……

   …… ……

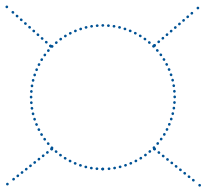
10. **In the present**

Use all your senses. In your jotter, draw 5 circles, each with 4 spokes. In the circles, write these titles – ‘colours’ ‘shapes’ ‘patterns’ ‘textures’ ‘sounds’. At the ends of the spokes, write 4 colours you can see, 4 shapes, and so on …



11. **In the past**

Use your imagination. Draw 4 circles, each with 4 spokes. In the circles, write these titles – ‘sounds’ ‘smells’ ‘movements’ ‘words overheard’ At the ends of the spokes, write 4 sounds you might have heard, 4 smells and so on…



12. With clean hands, run your fingers gently over different surfaces in the building. Write down how they feel and what they **feel like**.

…….. feels …….. like ……..

…….. feels …….. like ……..

…….. feels …….. like ……..

13. Choose a part or area of the building that interests you. Stand in it for a while. Close your eyes for a moment. Open them. Look. Feel. Then write…

The part of the building I have chosen is ……

It makes me feel ……

because ……

14. You are a person visiting or living or working in this building in the past. Write answers to these questions on a separate sheet or in your jotter. You might find ideas for a poem. Write down:

What year is it? **Who are you?** **How old are you?**

- some things that you do in this building
- some sounds you hear in the night
- some things that make you feel good about this building
- something you saw happen in this building
- some things people have said to you in here
- some things that make you feel bad, or unsettled or uncomfortable here
- some everyday sounds you hear
- some smells or tastes you experience here

3

Poet in the past Scottish Poetry Library

MY HISTORIC BUILDING

MY NAME

Make sure you have a sheet of paper or a jotter for extra note-taking before you start

1 My historic building is ……Built in……

2 I chose it because ……

3 Today, the function or purpose of the building is ……

……

4 What happened here in the past? Write down as many **verbs** as you can to describe the range of activities that went on e.g. learning, entertaining, punishing, arguing, bathing, fighting

5 What is it built from? Write down the names of as many of the **materials** as you can:

6 Write **2 key adjectives** to describe the **exterior** 1 …… 2 ……

7 Does the **exterior** suggest what the purpose of the building is? In what ways? ……

……

8 Write **2 key adjectives** to describe the **interior** 1 …… 2……

9 Write down **four pieces of evidence** that confirm that this building is **old**

(i) (ii)

(iii) (iv)

10 Write down **4 things** you observe or hear as **evidence** that you're in the **present day**. For example, has the building been renovated, changed or added to, to meet modern needs?

(i) (ii)

(iii) (iv)

11 How does the building make you feel? Underline words below that describe your feelings and add two of your own.

peaceful	excited	relaxed	insignificant	important	giggly
nervous	tense	curious	uncomfortable	out of place	inspired
restless	overawed	intimidated	thoughtful	stimulated	fascinated
anonymous	privileged	afraid	…….....	…….....	

12 Now choose **one** word from above and write your **reasons**. What creates that feeling? Is it something in you, or external? Something in the present or the past? Or both?

The ……makes me feel ……..

because……..

Write your answers and ideas for the next questions on a separate sheet of paper or jotter

13 Find a spot in the building you like. Observe and absorb the atmosphere. Use all 5 senses. How much **sensory information** can you gather?

Write down these headings and compile lists. Take your time. Do little sketches and drawings too if you like.

colours	**shapes & patterns**	**sources of light/shade**	**reflections**
symmetry	**sounds**	**movements**	**textures**
smells	**tastes**		

14 Choose **a texture** you noted, and make a **simile** or connection: The ……..

feels like …….. It reminds me of ……..

15 Choose **three colours** you noted and make up special names for them that reflect or describe their qualities e.g. oatmeal white, pomegranate red, spun silver, bumblebee yellow

16 Imagine that over the years the stones, like sponges, have absorbed the rhythms and words of the lives, work and people who were here. Sit and listen quietly. What might these rhythms be? e.g. the repeated strains of a lullaby; the rhythmic clack of machines; times tables being chanted; whispered prayers and responses? Write down some ideas.

17 **“A place is a space claimed by feelings.”**

Think for a while about what that might mean. What feelings have claimed this building? Choose a room or space or area of the building to stand quietly in. Relax. Breathe in and out slowly. Close your eyes. Breathe in and out again. Open your eyes. Look slowly to the left and right, up and down. Do it again and again. What feelings have been experienced and felt here? By who? And why? Now write down some ideas.

4

A GEORGIAN NEW TOWN HOUSE: A MEMORY MAP FOR A POEM

Poet in the past Scottish Poetry Library

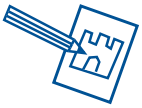
MY NAME

Here's a way of gathering thoughts and ideas for a poem.

Look and Read

Look at the 'cutaway' plan of an Edinburgh Georgian house on our poster. All around it are notes describing little strands of the house's life story: things that might have happened within its walls over the centuries: memories, events, moments, sounds, colours, textures, feelings...

Draw



On a sheet of paper, or in your jotter, stick or draw a picture, plan, sketch or photograph of your chosen historic building. Don't spend too much time on this. It doesn't matter if you don't think your drawing's very good; your ideas and thoughts are what count most of all. (Instead of a drawing, you could simply close your eyes and draw a line on the paper, tracing the route of the journey you take walking through the building.)

Think

Close your eyes for a while and think....Imagine what kind of life the building and its occupants have had. How the building might have changed over the years. How people have changed it. You could do some reading and research to find out things that really *did* happen in the building – or you could just use your imagination.

Make notes

Now, make your 'Memory Map': scribble little notes of your ideas around your drawing or picture, just like the 'Memory Map' on the reverse of the poster. Think with your five senses – and your poet's sense: colours, shapes, sounds, textures, movements, tastes, smells, voices, memories, feelings, emotions, things in the past, invisible now. Think in sense-pictures...and paint them with words.

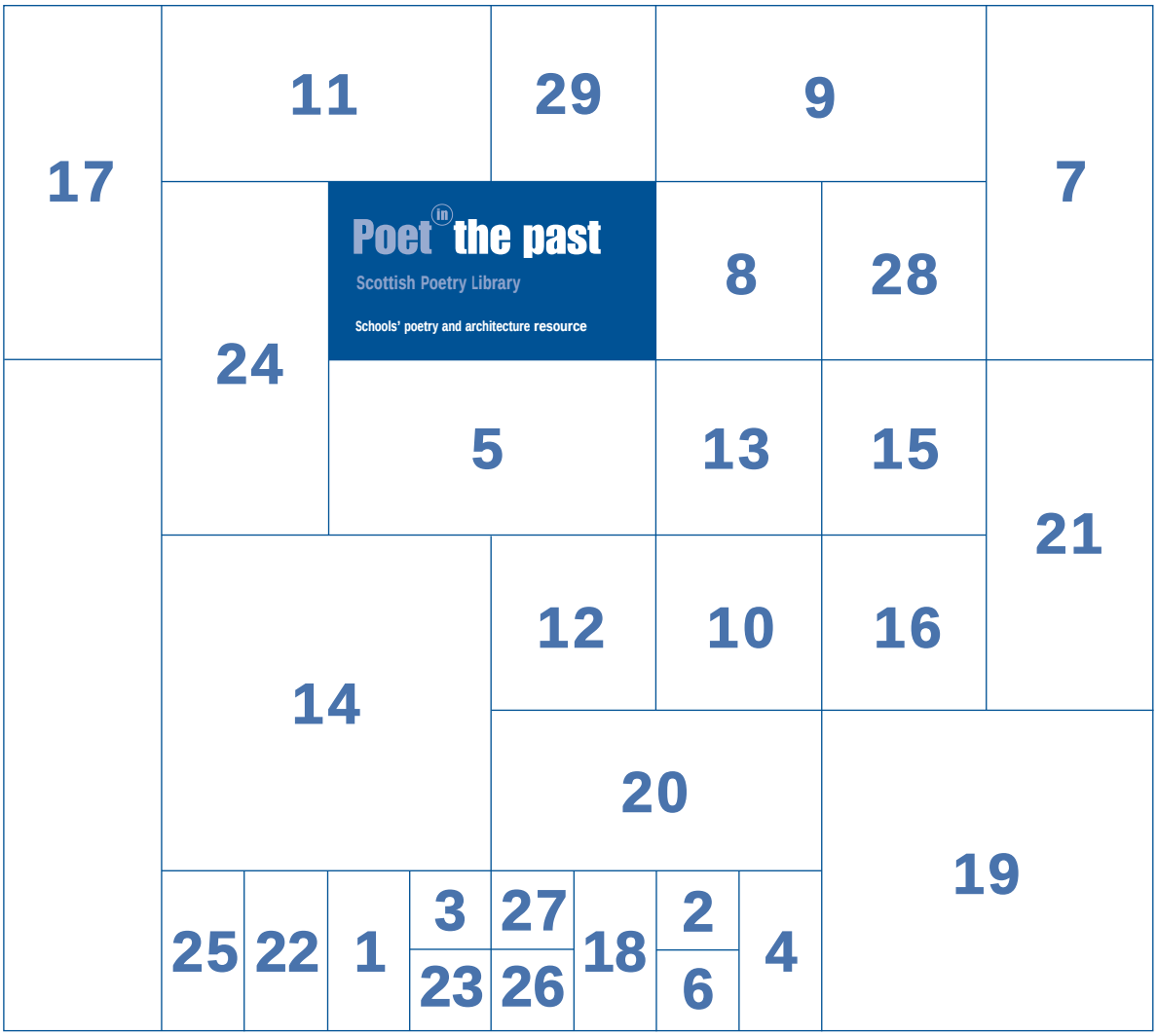
Now your poem!

You could write your poem from the point of view of one, or some, or all of the past occupants of the building - all having a verse each. Think too about the people who worked there or visited. Maybe you could write a poem in the voice of a builder renovating the building, who finds interesting things. Or perhaps your poem could have the feel or look of a diary or letter.

Or your poem could take the reader on a tour of the building; each verse taking us into a different room and revealing something important. You could write in the voice of a tour guide – or a ghost from the past – or yourself. Each line could start, 'I remember....', or 'Here is....' or 'Here, I saw/tasted/touched/heard....'

Or you could write as if you were the building itself. Maybe your windows are eyes, looking inward and outward, backward and forward in time? Maybe your stones can speak their secrets? Maybe you're the fireplace: what have you heard? Maybe you could even have a conversation with another building? Use the best ideas from your 'Memory Map'. **You choose!**

KEY TO THE POSTER IMAGES



All images on the Poet in the Past poster are copyright of the organisations named below and permission to reproduce them must be sought from these sources.

We gratefully acknowledge the following organisations and individuals who have assisted with the sourcing, provision and permissions required for images on the Poet in the Past 2006 poster. Special thanks to: Neil Fraser and Lesley Stokes (SCRAN); David Hicks (EWHT); Siobhan McConnachie (RCAHMS); Laurence Parkerson (Historic Scotland); Alison Stewart (Freight Design)

1 Barlinnie cell, 1961 © Newsquest (Herald & Times)/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

2 Forth Rail Bridge construction, 1889. Opened 4/3/1890 by the Prince of Wales © National Archives of Scotland/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

3 Doll's house by Glasgow School designer, Jessie King, circa 1913 © Victoria & Albert Museum/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

4 The Pineapple house. A mid-18th-century garden folly, Stirlingshire © The Scotsman Publications Ltd/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

5 Classroom, Glasgow, pre-1910. Girls and boys on separate sides of the room © Glasgow City Archives/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

Continued...KEY TO THE POSTER IMAGES

6 Demolition, Castlemilk, Glasgow, circa 2000 © Gerry McCann/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

7 Tenements and spacehoppers, Crown Street, Glasgow, 1970 © The Scotsman Publications Ltd/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

8 Whitfield housing development, Dundee, constructed 1967-72 © RCAHMS B/22166/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

9 Soldiers collecting eggs from a coop they have built in a rear-line trench in France in WWI © National Library of Scotland/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

10 Allan Johnston and his croft at Bunmhullin, Eriskay, Inverness-shire, 1971 © National Museums of Scotland/Licensed via www.scran.ac.uk

11 Skara Brae, Sandwick, Orkney circa 3,000 BC. Neolithic settlement comprising a network of semi-subterranean dwellings © Historic Scotland

12 Stanley Mills, Perth, c. 1700-1800. A complex of grade A listed water-powered cotton mills on the shores of the Tay © Historic Scotland

13 Mae's Howe, Orkney, c. 2800 BC. The finest chambered tomb in north-west Europe. Broken into in the mid-12th century by Vikings who carved runes on the main chamber walls © Historic Scotland

14 The Italian Chapel, Orkney. Built in 1943 by Italian POWs from 2 Nnissen huts placed end to end, decorated largely with materials salvaged from the sea. Chief creator, Domenico Chiocchetti (peace-time artist and church decorator) © RCAHMS

15 Ardoch Fort, Perth & Kinross, Roman, circa AD 80-90 and circa AD 140-163 © RCAHMS

16 Bootscrape, Edinburgh circa 1825. Note the legs shaped like animals' limbs © RCAHMS

17 Paxton House servants' staircase, nr Berwick upon Tweed, Scottish Borders. 1750s © RCAHMS

18 Tarbatness Lighthouse, nr Portmahomack, Highland. Originally built 1830, rebuilt 1892 © RCAHMS

19 Tantallon Castle, East Lothian. Surrounded on three sides by 30m cliffs. Fourth side is a massive 14th-century curtain wall. Occupied till circa 1699 © RCAHMS

20 Tranent Co-op and staff, East Lothian, 1920s © RCAHMS

21 Poster for Portobello open-air swimming pool, 1930s. Designed to Olympic specifications, with 6,000 spectator capacity. Opened 1936, closed 1980, demolished 1989. Featured a restaurant, ballroom, observation balcony, underwater illumination and Scotland's first electric wave-making machine, producing 1m-high waves © RCAHMS

22 St Cuthbert's churchyard watch-tower, 1827, Edinburgh World Heritage Site - from which watchmen protected new burials from notorious 'resurrectionists' such as Burke and Hare © EWHT

23 Dragon detail, Royal Mile, Edinburgh World Heritage Site © EWHT

24 Houses, Cowgate, Edinburgh, 1867. In the 1600s rich merchants lived here but by Victorian times it was one of the poorest parts of the city © EWHT

25 Stained glass window, St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh, 1495 © EWHT

26 Detail from Rothiemay's map of Edinburgh, 1647 – the map illustrates the towering 'lands' or tenements and narrow closes typical of Edinburgh's Old Town © EWHT

27 Boys' carved door sign, Preston Street Primary School, Edinburgh, 1897 © SPL

28 Barnardo's china charity collection box, 1950s © SPL

29 Queen Mary's Bathhouse, Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh. Traditionally associated with Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1567) © SPL

For further information about our Education Programme, resources and activities, contact

The Education Officer
Scottish Poetry Library
5 Crichton's Close
Edinburgh
EH8 8DT

T **0131 557 2876**
F **0131 557 8393**
E **education@spl.org.uk**
W **www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk**

Design by FREIGHT 0141 552 5303

Craigievar Castle. SC357706. © RCAHMS

The printed materials contained in this pack may be copied solely for educational purposes connected with the SPL Poet in the Past 2006 competition. Permissions for reproduction of print or images in any other form or for any other purpose must be sought from the authors, architects and photographers as credited.