

## **Candidate A evidence**

*“A study of how Anna Frater and Derick Thomson’ use poetic techniques and symbolism in ‘Cisteachan-Laighe’ and ‘Ar Canan ‘S Ar Clò’ to put across the theme of the decline of Gaelic and the importance of the language to the poets.”*

Both ‘Cisteachan-laighe and ‘Ar Canan ‘S Ar Clò’ effectively deal with the theme of the decline of Gaelic and showing the importance of the Gaelic language by using a range of poetic techniques and symbolism.

‘Cisteachan-laighe’ is about the decline and ‘death’ of the Gaelic language and culture. Thomson emphasizes how important his language is to him and also how naive people were not to realise that their language was in danger. He uses coffins and schoolteachers to symbolize what he believes to be the death of Gaelic and his culture.

‘Ar Canan ‘S Ar Clò’ also discusses the decline of the Gaelic language. In ‘Ar Canan ‘S Ar Clò’ we see an old man weaving tweed for a living, but a new type of fabric comes in that is so popular it leaves him with no one to weave for. He carried on weaving even though people laughed at him, but when the winter came, the new fabric did not keep the people warm, so they went back looking for the old man, who sadly had passed away. Just like in ‘Cisteachan-Laighe’, this poet uses symbolism effectively. The tweed and the new fabric are used for symbolism in a metaphor for English, the new fabric, the new language and Gaelic, the tweed, the traditional language.

Both poets are from Bayble on the Isle of Lewis, where Gaelic was the native language so their poems could also be seen as an account of their experience of the decline of Gaelic. The importance of the language is evident throughout their poems.<sup>1</sup> It is said that Anna Fraters poetry was heavily influenced by Derick Thomson.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/anna-frater>  
<http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/derick-thomson>

Near the beginning of 'Ar Canan 'S Ar Clò' Frater describes the tweed and the new fabric, she says the tweed is:

**"aodach tiugh trom a chumadh blàth iad."**<sup>2</sup>

She then goes on to say that the new fabric is:

**"tana"**<sup>2</sup>

She uses "tana" to describe the new fabric, and "tiugh", to describe the tweed, her effective use of contrasting word choice shows the difference between the two materials. This shows the poet's low opinion of the new fabric compared to her opinion of the tweed, which symbolizes Gaelic.

Here we see that in the same way that the tweed keeps people warm, the Gaelic keeps them warm too, just like a comforter.

**"aodach tiugh trom a chumadh blàth iad."**<sup>2</sup>

This shows that Gaelic supports them, it may be old, but it worked for its purpose, again this shows the importance Gaelic has in the poet's mind.

The writer explains here that the colours from the new fabric are stolen from the rainbow, as it's so bright and so eye-catching.

**"Dathan air an goid bhon bhogha-froise"**<sup>2</sup>

This statement shows us how amazing they thought the new fabric, or English was. How they compared it to a rainbow, something that is so spectacular. This ties in with

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<sup>2</sup> Ar Canan 'S Ar Clò - Anna Frater

the theme of the decline of Gaelic as people are moving onto this new exciting language English, symbolized by the new cloth, new colours.

The writer grabs our attention us here by explaining that the winter came and that they needed the tweed, Gaelic, back. They realized that the new cloth would not keep them warm so they wanted to go back to the tweed but it was too late. They went out to look for the old mans help, but he was no longer there:

*“Lorg iad am bodach  
agus chunnaic iad a’bheairt,  
agus cha b’urrain iad an clò,  
agus cha b’urrain dhaibh”<sup>2</sup>*

Here the poet effectively uses repetition to create suspense and to imitate the fact that the people were frantically trying to find the man and get the old tweed back which shows how desperate they were to get it back.

*“oir bha i air fàs meirgeach  
agus bha am bodach marbh.”<sup>2</sup>*

When the people go looking for the old man, had died, they had lost him. Just like they tried to go back to the Gaelic language and they had lost it, they couldn’t speak it anymore. The poet adds this in abruptly at the end for emphasis, showing the effect the new fabric had on the man and the tweed. Frater uses an effective image of the rusty loom to symbolize how the people had not taken care of their native language and they had let it begin to erode away. They had let the new fabric take over just like they let English take over Gaelic.

In ‘Cisteachan-laighe’ The start of the poem begins with a description of his grandfather. This is an effective beginning to the poem as it grabs the reader’s attention. Our senses have been linked with our memory; we often remember things in association with one of our five senses. Smell is the most evocative human sense. At the beginning of ‘Cisteachan-Laighe’ the poet describes the smell of sawdust and it is easy to visualize Derick Thomson walking down a Glasgow street, suddenly

transported back to his childhood by the smell of sawn timber from a joiners shop. The sense that sparks up his memory is smell; he remembers the smell of his Grandfathers work place, a place where he remembers seeing coffins

*“s a thig gu mo chuinnlean fàileadh na min-sàibh,  
thig gu mo chuimhne cuimhne an àit ud,”<sup>3</sup>*

The smell of sawdust brings him back to his childhood, he remembers the joiner shop with coffins, and this is what triggers his emotions to watching his Grandfather making coffins. This brings his thoughts then onto the death of his Grandfather. He sees it ironic that the grandfather made coffins for others but now they were used for him.

Children do understand death until it impacts their life. Thomson is trying to emphasize the fact that when you are younger it is hard to understand death and its implications, symbolized later on by how they did not see their language dying around them. He further develops this idea when discussing the death of the Gaelic language. He talks about the death of his Grandfather and describes it:

*“beachd, bloigh fios, boillsgeadh”<sup>3</sup>*

The poet’s use of alliteration here is used to link the ideas of death and stillness together, death is cold and unpleasant and this child has just realised this. The poet has carefully selected words that emphasis the pain and ugliness of death. The use of the harsh ‘b’ sound reiterates the harsh reality that death brings. His use of poetic techniques helps the reader to engage and understand the strength of his points more clearly.

The poet emphasizes a child’s lack of knowledge of death and its implications effectively. He found comfort as a small boy when he got back home and experienced;

*“far am biodh còmhradh, is tea, is blàths.”<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Cisteachan-laighe- Derick Thomson

Later in the poem he relates his grandfathers death to the death of his language but was unable to find comfort in the death of his language.

In the second part of the poem he applies a parallel image when he describes the death of Gaelic. He describes his English education & the teachers who taught it as

*“san robh saoir na h-inntinn a' locradh”<sup>3</sup>*

This is the teacher shaping the minds of their pupils, they are shaving away at the people that they are. Trying to deprive them of their identities, their culture and their heritage. The teachers tried to 'brainwash' the children to believe that their language was primitive and worthless. This is an image that creates a vivid picture in my head of the pain of this language being shaved away, this symbolizes the pain of losing and becoming disconnected with their culture and identify.

He explains to us the people that were in his class

*“cha tug mi 'n aire do na cisteachan-laighe,”<sup>3</sup>*

This is an effective bold metaphorical statement suggesting that the Gaelic language had died and was in the coffins around him and also a metaphor for the children. Their language was dying all around them and they had not noticed. This was the effect that the teachers and the education system biased against the language had. They had reduced it so much that it would have been seen to be dead.

The teachers were trying to make these pupils become something they were not, he uses a powerful image to describe how he felt they did this;

*“cha do dh' aithnich mi 'm brèid Beurla,  
an liomh Gallda bha dol air an fhiodh”<sup>3</sup>*

This creates an idea of the teacher putting an artificial coating onto these children to try and find their true identity. To polish them and to make them seem 'perfect' to

what was deemed to be acceptable at the time. To make them seem more acceptable in society they had to get rid of this waste of a language and culture, Gaelic. The use of imagery is highly engaging and it connects the reader to the message the poet is trying to communicate and it helps to add to my understanding of the topic as a whole.

I think that the poet has brought the poem to an effective end; his topic has changed in each stanza to finally get us to the problem of the death of his culture.

*"Cha dhlanaich tea no comhradh an craidh"<sup>3</sup>*

This is linked back to when he said that he needed tea and comfort when his Grandfather died, he has now realised that these things will give him no comfort with the grief he is facing from the death of his language and culture. This shows that it is extremely important to him and it is something that matters a lot, 'the small things' in life will not help him come to terms with the death.

Both poems end with the Gaelic language dead, emphasizing the decline of Gaelic taking place. Frater and Thomson both uses images to show the attitudes that were shown to Gaelic at that time but with their word choice show how important the language was and that the decline was a negative thing. Frater uses the tweed and new fabric and Thomson uses the coffins to symbolize the decline and death of their cultures language. The styles of both poems are told in a story format, which makes it easier for the reader to relate with and understand them.

*Word Count- 1599*

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**Primary Sources (The texts)

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<http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/derick-thomson>



## **Candidate B evidence**

An investigation into the negative viewpoints of the Highland Clearances as they appear through Gaelic Literature.

The Highland Clearances has left a damaging lasting legacy of Scottish history. It is also known as “Fuadach nan Gàidheal” which is Gaelic for “expulsion of the Gael”. Many people were forced to leave their homes and land to start a new life as they were to be replaced by sheep because the Government and some landowners believed that it would be a more cost effective use of the land. Considering the Highland Clearances impacted on people’s lives to such an extent, there have been many pieces of literature produced from within the affected community to express their opinions towards the subject and most of these opinions are very negative which is unsurprising considering just how awful the Highland Clearances were and how they are a significant part of Scottish history, Scotland would not be the way it is today if it wasn't for the Clearances occurring. Many poets and writers from throughout the Highlands have written heartfelt pieces of literature which expresses their own personal views of the Highland Clearances,

Sorley MacLean's 1952 poem 'Hallaig' is set during the clearances of Raasay. This poem made Sorley MacLean very well known. The poet was from the island Raasay and the poem is named after a small township on the island. This poem is originally written in Gaelic but has been translated multiple times into English. The poem can never be translated directly from Gaelic to English so people translate it as closely to the original as possible but add their own twists to it. As such, the poets own viewpoint is often lost or altered, therefore in order to truly understand we must study in original language. In this poem, trees appear as metaphors to represent the people that lived in Hallaig before the Highland Clearances occurred " 'na craoibh bheithe, 's bha i riamh" - this is a metaphor suggesting that the birch tree is where his love is from and she will always be there. MacLean echoes the lasting ties between the people and the land. This poem features a lot of contrast between love and hate, time and eternity, his personal opinion and the communities opinion and past and present "Tha tim, am fiadh, an coille Hallaig" - this is the first stanza of this poem and it immediately suggests that this poem will feature contrast. This is effective because it gives different reasons as to why the clearances impacted different areas of Raasay. Sorley MacLean portrays a more personal opinion of Hallaig in this poem as he has an intimate knowledge of the place and the people, as he is a local. This is a useful source as it creates an image of the Highland Clearances and how it affected people from the Highlands at this time. The poem explains the mood of the small place in Raasay after Hallaig was cleared, there is nobody living there "gach aon ghinealach a dh'fhalbh" - suggesting that each generation that were from the island have been forced to leave their homes due to the Clearances. MacLean's use of word choice here clearly demonstrates that he doesn't see any hope for return. MacLean expresses his views towards the clearances and makes the reader feel sympathetic towards the families that were removed from their homes and the many that died through his use of imagery which again makes this a useful source as it gives a strong negative opinion towards the Highland Clearances.

'Na Bleideagan' by Dòmhnall Iain MacIomhair is another piece of Gaelic literature which gives views of the Clearances and the writer's opinion of the Clearances are strongly expressed through this short story about an old lady and how she is forced to evacuate her home during the time of the Clearances, "Bha i aost. Bha i gle aost." - The writer's use of repetition emphasises how this character is too elderly and frail, she is incapable of leaving her home and starting a new life somewhere else. This is effective because it makes the reader feel sympathetic towards this character and it gives an insight as to how the Clearances were unfair and cruel regardless of age. She then looks back on her life living in the house she was brought up in and where she had brought up her own children and is now being told that she had to leave her home "Chunnaic i a h-athair a' clachaireachd an taighe" - The use of flashbacks in this story helps the reader to feel sympathy towards the character. The croft house is burnt down with the lady still in it, which again, makes the reader feel sympathetic towards this elderly character. This story conveys strong negative views towards the Highland Clearances and the cruelty of it all through creating a character the reader can sympathise with and highlights how the Clearances have affected people of many ages.

The Highland Clearances influenced many writers and poets which has inspired them to write pieces of literature, some of which are very well known. 'Srath Nabhair' is a poem by Derick Thomson which is about the Highland Clearances in Strathnaver and how the clearances affected citizens in Sutherland. The poet conveys negative views towards the Highland Clearances in this poem, targeting towards the Duke of Sutherland's factor, Patrick Sellar, a lawyer from Moray. "a' falach nan lotan a dh'fhàg Pàdraig Sellar 's a sheòrsa" - Thomson's use of imagery suggests that Thomson blames what happened during the Highland Clearances on Patrick Sellar. This is effective as it makes the reader understand how Patrick Sellar and people of his sort affected his family and locals from Strath Naver, which makes this poem emotive and suggests a negative opinion of the Highland Clearances.

Many fictional stories have been written about the Highland Clearances such as 'Consider the Lillies' - an English novel by Iain Crichton Smith who often writes in Gaelic. This novel is set during the time of the Highland Clearances in Sutherland. Smith uses the main character, an older woman, as a connection to the place as she is from Sutherland. The novel also conveys negative opinions towards the Highland Clearances, like the poem 'Srath Nabhair', the novel has strong views of Patrick Sellar. "For hadn't the long years of sacrifice taught her anything? Yes, they had taught her to endure more than she thought she could endure. And you couldn't judge God by his servants". - This source is useful as its use of characterisation is also similar to the 'Na Bleideagan' story as it makes the reader feel sympathetic towards the main character that is also an older woman like the main character in 'Na Bleideagan' and is a very traditional woman. This novel has many Biblical references throughout which is useful as it portrays the idea of traditions being lost due to the Clearances. This piece of Gaelic literature will encourage the reader to recognise the Highland Clearances as a harsh part of Scottish history. The novel also expresses how Patrick Sellar felt no sympathy towards the tenants of the land as he was brought up into wealth in Moray and then trained to become a lawyer so did not know what it was like to live off the land and understand the difficulties

that comes with that. This is another reason as to why so many pieces of literature about the Highland Clearances portray him as such a heartless person.

These pieces of Gaelic literature composed by different writers and poets all express strong negative views of the Highland Clearances. These authors have connections to the area and have been immersed in the culture from a young age. Their works show how the Clearances are such an important part of Scottish history and the lasting cultural impact it had on Scotland. Most pieces of literature about the Highland Clearances allow the reader to feel sympathetic towards a certain character which also helps the reader understand just how much of a harsh impact it had on so many people and families throughout Scotland. However, these authors are biased to the subject of the Clearances as they have been brought up and are from the Highlands. This is clear through their use of emotive language. Many Scots and people from other parts of the world will think of the Clearances as being a cruel part of Scottish history as many know that this is one of the main reasons as to why the Gaelic language and culture has declined so rapidly. However, some feel as though the Clearances had a positive impact on Scotland as it has benefitted Scotland's economy. This is seen through connections to the New World, the development of towns and cities and the development of industries. The perceived benefits of the Clearances is an area which requires further research. The Highland Clearances is still a controversial topic through the investigation of Gaelic literature. These pieces of literature will continue to remind us of how the Clearances affected Scotland and how it has made an impact on the culture and traditions of Scotland.

Word count: 1577

#### Bibliography:

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- 'Na Bleideagan' - Short story by Dòmhnall Iain MacÌomhior  
Eadar dà Sgeul/ Storlann/ 2010
- 'Srath Nabhair' - Poem by Derick Thompson

<http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/srath-nabhair> (from *Creachadh na Clarsaich/ Plundering the Harp* (Macdonald, 1982), accessed 1/10/15)

- 'Consider the Lillies' - Novel by Iain Crichton Smith (published by Canongate Publishing Ltd 1987 , Reissued in 2001 by Phoenix)

Additional resources:

Visit to Dunrobin castle, access to resources

## **Candidate C evidence**

### Communication as a primary concern in the short stories of Iain Crichton Smith

*"Iain often explored and re-explored specific themes in his work that were not only important to him personally, but central to his literature, his very dialogue with humanity. One of the most prominent of these is often, appropriately, evoked quite surreptitiously: the theme of communication (more accurately, miscommunication or a lack of communication)."*<sup>1</sup>

Over the past three years I have been studying the short stories of writer and poet Iain Crichton Smith and analysing several themes arising in them. During this time I have been mostly drawn to his interest and concern with communication, whether writing specifically about it or the way Smith communicates his inner thoughts, ideals and beliefs with the reader. His elaborate methods of communication bring the reader to question and think about issues such as relationships, conflict, loneliness and the mind working under pressure – which are just a few of the themes he touches upon. The messages Smith tries to communicate with the reader, is what I aim to discuss, with a focus on four stories that I found to be particularly communicative. Those being *An Duine Dubh*, *An Coigreach*, *An Taghadh* and *Bùrn*.

Personal experience feeds into the work of all writers and this seems to be particularly true of Smith, given that many of the topics Smith explores reflect what we know about his life generally. There are thought to be many experiences in his life that could have had an impact on Iain whilst he wrote. If you are not aware of his past life this wouldn't be as obvious to you, however after studying and researching his biography for the majority of my time in Gaelic, when I read his work I manage to pick up on things and question what could have inspired him to write about specific topics. I reacted this way to the four short stories afore mentioned.

I would like to address recurring theme of relationships and particularly that of family. Smith is particularly well known for his use of elderly women as main and dominant characters on his stories. You can find her in *An Duine Dubh*, *An Coigreach* and *An Taghadh*. I have become aware that when he includes an elderly woman as one of his characters the character is often symbolic of his own mother. I understand from other readings and from watching a documentary about Smith's life, that his mother was a particularly important to him.

*"Iain's mother, a returning presence in his work, exerted a great influence on his mind. Writing about her towards the end of his own life, Iain Crichton Smith described the 'intense pity' he felt for her. Her life had been a difficult one, not least of all because, widowed at a young age she was left to bring up three sons in economically challenging circumstances..."*<sup>2</sup>

Having just your mother whilst growing up would obviously impact a child, therefore Smith looked at his mother as a very strong independent woman regardless of her shortcomings and incorporated this into the characters he created for his stories. Despite highlighting her weaknesses, the elderly woman is usually the main or one of the main characters in the

<sup>1</sup> Kevin MacNeil, Introduction to *The Red Door, The Complete English stories 1949-76*, Iain Crichton Smith, p xxiv.

<sup>2</sup> As above, P xvii

expect from an islander and Gael, we see Smith regularly not conforming to the norm, such as agreeing with war or taking part in it.

*"This compassionate attempt to understand one who is different, this fascination with the individual, the outsider, is a typical theme in many of Crichton Smith's stories. Of his own sense of alienation, Iain would say: 'I have made the choice, I have forsaken the [island] community in order to individualise myself.'"*<sup>7</sup>

A sense of loneliness or isolation is often expressed through Smith's work and may well again represent the loneliness he felt throughout his life. He felt that he was marginalised from his island community of Lewis and in later life we learn that he suffered from a deep depression. Often Smith's stories will contain a circular structure and depict an event in someone's life that is particularly significant. However, the structure will mean that by the end the characters surroundings have not changed and that life just goes on – often by Smith placing the character back to where they were at the beginning. The lonely characters of the elderly woman and the black salesman in *An Duine Dubh* are particularly good examples of this.

*"Shuidh a'chailleach air a'chathair..."*

Smith finishes the story with;

*"'s shuidh i rithist aig an unneig, a' coimhead na sraid."*<sup>8</sup>

By using repetition and irony here, Smith successfully manages to express the isolation of his character. Despite being in a city, she is lonely and clearly spends a lot of time sitting and looking out into the window. She is happy to be visited, all be it by a foreign stranger who is trying to sell clothes in order to make a living.

*"Sia bliadhna – 's math dh'fhaidte – 's bhiodh e air ais na rìoghachd fhèin. Cha b' e seo a rìoghachd-san."*<sup>9</sup>

The characters in this story had never met one another and like the characters in *Bùrn*, have no common language between them. However, as with *Bùrn*, a connection is made and a sense of empathy is felt. In this case the old lady feels pity towards her visitor.

*"Cha robh ann ach an aonaranachd, a h-aonaranachd-se 's aonaranachd an duine dhuibh."*<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion my examination of Smith's short story writing it has led me to a better understanding of the craft of his writing and an appreciation of his view of the world. He has reflected deeply on his own life experience to form this world view and created a consistent set of themes and techniques to communicate them to his readers. I personally find his work successful on many levels. It has led me to reflect myself on how we all need to communicate and the obstacles to really achieving this.

<sup>7</sup> Kevin MacNeil, Introduction to *The Red Door, The Complete English stories 1949-76*, Iain Crichton Smith, p xiii.

<sup>8</sup> Eadar dà Sgeul, *An Duine Dubh*

<sup>9</sup> As Above

<sup>10</sup> As Above



## **Candidate D evidence**

### Should there be a bilingual presence on BBC Alba?

BBC Alba is the first and only television channel designated to broadcast in Scottish Gaelic. A wide range of viewers – both English and Gaelic speaking – tune in for its wide range of shows: from cookery to local interest; from comedy to drama; from cartoons to current affairs. For this wealth of information and entertainment to be accessible to everyone, a certain amount of English is present on the majority of programmes that are intended for adult viewers. Is this appropriate for a Gaelic language channel and its range of viewers?

English is used on the channel in the form of bilingual programming and subtitling. Subtitling is hugely controversial because it is a permanent feature of the channel and cannot be switched off. Programmes such as the news are not subtitled, because they are live. Young children's programmes are also left without subtitles as children have no need for them. Furthermore, by using Gaelic alone children are immersed in the language, which is proven to develop language skills. Programmes aimed at adults, however, are subtitled to ensure accessibility – the channel, like any other, must cater for a range of skill levels and for people who have no Gaelic whatsoever. This accessibility also makes Gaelic television appropriate as a learning resource – many teachers use the channel as support for taught lessons.

Some feel that as a result of this English presence 'the essential *raison d'être* of the Gaelic channel – to provide a Gaelic language service for Gaelic speakers – is being undermined.'<sup>1</sup>. Bearing this opinion in mind, a group of Gaelic speakers were asked for their thoughts on

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/tv-radio/experts-call-for-bbc-alba-subtitles-in-gaelic-1-3640233>, *Experts Call for BBC Alba Subtitles in Gaelic*, Dec. 21st 2014 – view of Andrew Lambourne

the issue of English presence on BBC Alba, to find out what viewers themselves actually want from the channel. The participants had varying levels of fluency; from young learners to native speakers. Teachers of Gaelic were also asked for their opinions regarding the channel as an educational resource.

In contrast to the previous opinion that 'the essential *raison d'être* of the Gaelic channel ... is being undermined' by the presence of English, many of the participants, said when asked that it actually enriches the viewer experience; "Tha mi den bheachd gu bheil piosan beaga de Bheurla anns na programman ceart gu leòr. Bhiodh rudan ann nach fhaiceamaid agus daoine nach cluinneamaid air Alba nam biodh feum air Gàidhlig fad na h-ùine."<sup>2</sup> The same could be said of programmes such as *Eòrpa* that feature interviews in European languages. They are crucial to the interest and content of the programme – without them, the quality of programmes could be significantly reduced. The key phrase, however, is 'piosan beaga de Bheurla'; English in small doses. Some would argue that even in interviews and features, English has too much of a presence on the channel; 'There have been cases of 'Gaelic' programmes being conducted almost entirely through the medium of English.'<sup>3</sup> Although it is important to ensure that BBC Alba remains a channel dedicated first and foremost to Gaelic; removing other languages entirely risks parochialism and alienating the majority of the population from the channel – this would be a disastrous move.

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<sup>2</sup> Questionnaire Response, own research, from Mrs. S. MacKinnon, Translation: 'I am of the opinion that small pieces of English in the programmes are okay. There are things in them that people would not see or hear on 'Alba if it had to be in Gaelic all the time.'

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/tv-radio/experts-call-for-bbc-alba-subtitles-in-gaelic-1-3640233>, Experts Call for BBC Alba Subtitles in Gaelic, Dec. 21st 2014 – view of Andrew Lambourne

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Allowing the presence of other languages helps to maintain the diversity of Gaelic television, by providing opportunity for the same types of shows to be broadcast as you would expect to see on popular English channels. This is a strong argument in favour of allowing English – in fact *any* other language, to have a place on Gaelic television. Without it, the channel may not be able to provide sufficient variety to cater for as wide a range of viewers as possible. This, in turn, would inevitably have a negative impact on the channel's ratings and potentially its future – an undesirable outcome for both the channel and its viewers. For the Gaelic language, it could mean that one of its main reaches to people would be cut off, having a considerable negative impact on the future of Gaelic as a modern language.

As an educational resource, BBC Alba allows learners to hear a wide range of vocabulary and dialects which they may not otherwise be exposed to. It also gives a real-world context to the language – Gaelic is often seen as a language that is limited to usage within schools, however the channel has changed that and made language more accessible. A teacher of Gaelic was asked for their opinion on the issues of bilingualism on the channel, and its impact on the focus of Gaelic. She said that in her opinion<sup>4</sup>, options to replace the English with dubbing technologies, for example, could detract from the overall quality and feel of programmes. This is due to issues such as losing the natural flow and feel of the soundtrack. For this reason, many people, although sceptical of the presence of spoken English on the channel, appreciate that it can enhance the quality and variety of programmes available. Some, however, would argue in favour of dubbing – 'If a significant level of English language content is inevitable ... then Gaelic language audio through voice-over technology and/or

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<sup>4</sup> Questionnaire Response, own research, opinion of Miss M. Forbes

dubbing ... must be provided as essential.<sup>5</sup> As a way of ensuring that programmes keep the content and information that people provide, but with a Gaelic voice over that ensures Gaelic language is still prioritised. Of course, it could still be argued that bilingualism on the channel reduces the amount of Gaelic that viewers hear – a strong argument amongst educators and advocates in the language – however some programmes do choose to rectify this with Gaelic dubbing.

The majority of participants in my own research appeared significantly more concerned with the constant presence of English subtitling. Currently, the majority of programmes intended for adults on Alba have subtitles 'imposed on the majority of programmes for adults, with no opt-out opportunity.'<sup>6</sup>, for example the 'red-button' service. Here, there is a crucial difference in opinion between older and younger viewers. Older participants who had a greater degree of fluency indicated, when questioned, that they would like to have the choice as to whether or not they see subtitles. Many admit to reading them, even if they have no need for them, simply because they are there and the eye is drawn to them. For fluent speakers or advanced learners of the language, subtitles are a constant distraction; these groups have as much right of access to watch the channel in a language that they feel comfortable with as English speakers do – at present, the permanent presence of English does not allow for this. Although the availability of subtitling is fundamental to the accessibility of the channel, it should not be imposed on all viewers with no alternative, especially in circumstances where viewers feel it is of detriment to their language skills.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/tv-radio/experts-call-for-bbc-alba-subtitles-in-gaelic-1-3640233#ixzz46YcZ3TJ7>, *Experts Call for BBC Alba Subtitles in Gaelic*, Dec. 21st 2014 – view of Andrew Lambourne

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/tv-radio/experts-call-for-bbc-alba-subtitles-in-gaelic-1-3640233>, *Experts Call for BBC Alba Subtitles in Gaelic*, Dec. 21st 2014 – view of Lisa Storey

Researchers from Dublin City University appear to have reached the same conclusion on the issue;

*'ML [Minority Language] programming, which offers ML audio with English-language subtitles, does not represent a balanced linguistic compromise because the English subtitles, which audiences cannot help reading, override the ML audio content, changing an ostensibly Minority Language programme into an experience of processing primarily English-language content.'* - Dr Eithne O'Connell, Dublin City University<sup>7</sup>

This concisely summarises the criticisms of the permanence of English subtitling – it simply ‘does not represent a balanced linguistic compromise’. The young people who were asked their opinions on the issue said that they always found themselves reading subtitles and were not particularly bothered about having opportunity to turn them off – they found it more convenient to read in English. It is arguably amongst younger and learner viewers that this constant English presence becomes a ‘problem’ – people with some grounding in the language who are watching Gaelic television, but not listening, risk not learning or improving upon their language at all. Again, Dr. O’ Connell perfectly captures this; minority language programmes become ‘an experience of processing primarily English-language content.’ This is obviously of no benefit to viewers’ Gaelic whatsoever, especially people trying to develop fluency.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.gaidhlig.tv/page/2>, *Craoladh Gàidhlig – Rannsachadh Ùr – Fo Thiotalan Falaichte as Fheàrr*, 24th March 2016

In conclusion, although the presence of English is an asset to BBC Alba, not every viewer relies on it to understand what they are watching – this is especially true of English subtitling. Therefore, it is popular opinion that subtitling should be made optional to meet the needs of both those who do and do not require it. Furthermore, the participants who were asked had no objections to English being featured on the channel. Without its presence, the channel would not be what it is today and could be severely restricted as to the service it could provide. However, current service provision could be improved upon to ensure that this accessibility does not impinge on the needs of Gaelic-speaking viewers to have access to programming in their own language, in its own right. The viewers' objections are to a fundamental lack of choice – not to English.

**Word Count: 1,384**

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**Questionnaires (own research):**

Forbes, Mairi – Teacher of Gaelic, Advanced Learner (Gaelic)

Holliday, Dr. John – Advanced Learner (Gaelic)

MacKinnon, Sheila – Native Speaker (Gaelic)

Meek, Rhoda – Native Speaker (Gaelic)

Class S2/3 Fluent (Educated through primary GMU) class, Tìree High School (Gaelic)

**Spoken Interviews:**

Collier, Cailean – Native speaker (Gaelic)



## **Candidate E evidence**

### The theme of war and the effects of war in Iain C Smith's work

Iain Crichton Smith was born on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1928 in Glasgow. Both his mother and father were originally from the Isle of Lewis and this is where Smith was raised. Smith was a writer and during his successful career he wrote many short stories, both in English and Gaelic. Smith's work took many different themes, but a predominant theme in his work was war. This is evident in his short stories, 'A'dol dhachaigh' and 'Bùrn'. The theme of war is the main focus in both and he also deals with the effects that war has on the soldiers.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I will analyse the techniques used by Smith that effectively portray the theme of war and which make him a successful short story writer.

In 'A'dol dhachaigh', Smith tells the story of a soldier who is returning home from the war for the first time in many years. This story shows the thoughts and emotions the soldier had post-war as he is making the journey home by boat.

'Bùrn' focuses on a particular soldier, Iain, who is currently fighting in the First World War. Smith portrays how the soldier is feeling and the effects that the war is having on him. The story also focuses on the communication between Iain and the German soldier and how they tried to communicate without speaking the same language, and that this ultimately contributed to the death of the German soldier.

Firstly, Smith's imagery describes the battle scene and this portrays to the reader how horrific the war was. For example, in 'A'dol dhachaigh' Smith tells us how the soldier had to witness his companions dying dreadfully:

'Chunna mi mo chompanaich a'basachadh ann an stoirm fala.'<sup>2</sup>

This image highlights to the reader how appalling the war scene was and how horrible it would have been to have to have been a soldier that had to endure this constantly. This image provokes the reader to feel sadness for the soldier, which is a common trait in both stories. This image is effective because it portrays to the reader exactly what the soldiers would have been witnessing. This also highlights the atrocities of the war because it tells the reader of the violence and bloodshed of the war.

In addition to this, similar images can be found in 'Bùrn', as Smith again describes the tragic scenes of war surrounding the soldier as he witnessed bodies wasting away under the mud:

'Fon an t-salchar ud bha iomadh duine na laighe a'caiteamh air falbh anns a'phuinnsean'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poets/iain-crichton-smith>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ansgeulachdghoirid.com/PDF/A-Dol-Dhachaigh.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://ansgeulachdghoirid.com/PDF/Burn.pdf>

This powerful imagery emphasises to the reader that the war was a brutal place and for the soldiers that this was something so tragic yet they would have been witnessing it so often. Also, this highlights the brutality of the war and also the volume of the casualties. In addition to this, the fact that there was no burial for the dead soldiers and their corpses were just left rotting amongst the mud highlights the brutality of this war. Smith also leaves the soldiers without any names and this emphasises to the reader the inhumanity of the war.

Both images used by Smith in his stories are very powerful as they depict the harsh reality of the warzone and further emphasise the severity of the war, which they do so effectively.

Furthermore, Smith often uses colour in his short stories to further emphasise the images in the story. This can be seen as Smith repeatedly uses colour in 'A'dol dhachaigh':

'Nach geal na rionnagan anns an adhar. Nach geal a'ghealach.'<sup>2</sup>

This image suggests to the reader the peace that the soldier is hoping of when he returns home. We know this because the colour white has connotations of being peaceful, fresh and new. This image makes the reader think of a peaceful end to the war for the soldier and by repeating this use of colour here it helps to emphasise this.

Furthermore, Smith's use of colour can also be seen in 'Búrn'. For example:

'Bha aodann a'Ghearmailtich geal le eagal.'<sup>3</sup>

The use of colour here is effective as it adds emphasis and it helps the reader understand the fear that the German soldier is feeling not only because he is at war but because he is being faced by Iain who is aiming a gun at him.

Smith therefore effectively uses colour to further emphasise the images he portrays in his stories.

In addition to this, Smith also highlights the effects that the war can have on a soldier throughout both stories. In 'Búrn', Smith draws our attention to how the soldier is feeling extreme thirst and he does this through repetition:

'Chaidh a theanga timcheall a bhilean leis a'pathadh'<sup>3</sup>

This repetition throughout the story is particularly effective as it emphasises that the soldier is struggling and this provokes some sadness within the reader as we would find it hard to imagine this but it was so common for the soldier to deal with. This also links in with the title 'Búrn', as water would have been hard to come by during the war whereas nowadays it is something taken for granted

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ansgeulachdghoirid.com/PDF/A-Dol-Dhachaigh.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ansgeulachdghoirid.com/PDF/Burn.pdf>

Furthermore, the effects of war are also presented in 'A'dol dhachaigh'. Smith talks about how witnessing so much blood and death has left an impact on the soldier:

'Tha mo shuilean, saoilidh mi, air dath na fala, dearg, mar shuilean ainmhidh'<sup>2</sup>

This image indicates that all the death and blood that the soldier has witnessed throughout the war has left a huge impact on him. The soldier feels that he has seen so much killing that he has been permanently scarred and that the sight of blood and people dying is no longer shocking but it has become something ordinary and something that he has become so used to.

Smith has effectively portrayed in both short stories, the effects that war has on soldiers and both his use of repetition and imagery help to convey this effectively to the reader.

Another feature of Smith's work is the dramatic endings to both of these short stories. Throughout 'A'dol dhachaigh' we are told of the soldier's happiness and anticipation to be finally returning home after the war. However, there is no hint throughout the story of the unfortunate ending that that soldier faces. We do not find out until the sentence that the soldier was travelling on-board the 'lolaire' and by making it a short sentence this gives the ending a huge amount of impact:

'S math an t-ainm a thug iad oirre: An lolaire'<sup>2</sup>

This ending is particularly dramatic as throughout the rest of the story we share the soldier's joy to go back home, and it isn't until the very last sentence we find out that the soldier never reaches home and this conclusion is very heart-breaking for the reader as most people would know the story of the lolaire and its fate. This therefore makes a dramatic ending to the story as it is very unexpected and a major turning point in the story. This leaves the reader feeling sympathetic towards the soldier as the ending is unanticipated.

Similarly to this, Smith also has a startling ending to 'Bùrn'. Throughout the story we read about Iain and the German soldier becoming acquainted with one another despite the fact they struggle to communicate with each other due to the language barrier. This initially foreshadowed that the story would have a happy outcome as this is unusual for a war setting. However, it is in the final paragraph that Smith tells the reader that Iain shoots the German soldier through a complete misunderstanding, which is due to their lack of communication. Iain misunderstood the German reaching into his pocket to offer him a bottle of water for him reaching for a gun. This is a particularly striking ending as we did not expect this to be the outcome of the story and it is a particularly sad one. The very fact that Iain did not drink of the water when he was almost dying of thirst, suggests that he felt overcome by the dehumanizing effect that war had on you and the very water that keeps you alive is pouring out which seems to symbolise part of his own humanity being drained.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ansgeulachdghoirid.com/PDF/A-Dol-Dhachaigh.pdf>

This has therefore proved that Smith is very successful in achieving a dramatic and ironic ending to his short stories.

In addition to this, irony is also a very important technique used in Smith's writing. Smith achieves this in 'A'dol dhachaigh' in the final paragraph as the soldier is nearing home:

'S e an caiptean air an drochaid.....tha fios aige-san de tha e a'deanamh'<sup>2</sup>

From this, we know that the soldier has so much trust in the captain to get him home. However, the irony in this is that the boat that is meant to be bringing him home to safety and peace away from the war, is the boat that kills him just a few miles from home.

Similarly, irony is also a technique used by Smith in 'Bùrn' in the conclusion to the story:

'B'e botal airson burn a bha na lamhan'<sup>3</sup>

This tells us that Iain expected the German to take a gun out of his pocket but he instead took out a bottle of water. This is ironic as we would not expect this act of kindness in a war environment and we would almost assume that it would have been a gun, just as Iain did.

Smith effectively uses irony in both stories and this adds impact by giving a dramatic and unsuspecting twist to the story.

From this I can conclude that Iain Crichton Smith has successfully portrayed the theme of war in both his short stories, 'A'dol dhachaigh' and 'Bùrn'. In addition to this, Smith has also excellently conveyed the effects of war on a soldier in both these short stories. Smith achieved this through his use of many literary techniques such as irony, imagery, use of colour and by also giving dramatic conclusions to the stories and this therefore makes him a highly successful short story writer.

Total Word Count: 1590

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ansgeulachdghoirid.com/PDF/A-Dol-Dhachaigh.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://ansgeulachdghoirid.com/PDF/Burn.pdf>