



Walter Scott 1771-1832

Editing

This lesson has the following primary aims:

- To illustrate the importance of editing – their own work or that of others
- To engage pupils' critical thinking skills
- To introduce pupils to the process Scott's poems and novels went through from his first draft to final publication

Therefore, it can be split into two parts. The first involves the pupils writing and editing a short story inspired by an extract from Walter Scott. The second is a video about Walter Scott's process. These two parts can be done separately or together.

Please note that this workshop relies on pupils making errors when writing fast. This may cause a problem for some pupils who are self-conscious or who do not write by hand. These problems could be overcome by the teacher demonstrating their own work, with mistakes, to the class, and by using speech-to-text software for pupils who cannot or would prefer not to write by hand.

The Steps

Step 1

As the story prompt is about someone hurrying out of their home, the lesson begins with three discussion questions that ask the pupils about a time when they were in a hurry. This activity can be done in pairs and should only take a few minutes.

Step 2

A stanza from Walter Scott's poem, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, is included in the next three slides of the PowerPoint. The pupils should read this and work out what it means. You may choose to have them do this as a class, in groups, or individually. The stanza is as follows:

Why does fair Margaret so early awake?
And don her kirtle* so hastily;



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And the silken knots which in hurry she would make,
Why tremble her slender fingers to tie;
Why does she stop, and look often around,
As she glides down the secret stair;
And why does she pat the shaggy blood-hound,
As he rouses him up from his lair;
And though she passes the postern* alone,
Why is not the watchman's bugle* blown?

The meanings of the asterisked words are:

- * kirtle = a woman's dress that was tied on
- * postern = the back door (of a castle)
- * bugle = a brass instrument like a small trumpet

In this passage, a young woman sneaks out of the tower where she lives early in the morning. The stanza is full of suspense: where is she going and why? On slide 5, there are some discussion questions to prompt the pupils to think about what might happen next.

The full stanza is provided on slide 6 in case you would like to look at the stanza as a whole.

Step 3

Pupils should be given ten minutes to write a short story in response to the stanza, sharing where they think Margaret could be going. There will be plenty of time to edit the stories later; the important thing is that they get something down on paper at this point!

If possible, print out one copy of Appendix A for each pupil and ask them to write their stories on it. This appendix includes the poem, the definitions of the asterisked words, space for planning, and lines to write on. Later on, pupils will be asked to compare copies of their story so it is helpful if they all use the same template. Instructions are given on slide 7 of the PowerPoint.



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Step 4

Each pupil should be given one of their classmates' work. It is important at this stage not to lose track of who has written what. As pupils will have written different amounts, it is recommended that you pass on longer pieces of work to the students who are the fastest readers.

Pupils should also be given Appendix B. This instructs them to write out neatly the work they have just been given and to change three words and one punctuation mark as they do so. They should also correct any mistakes that they find. Inform the pupils that they have to make the required changes; this should prevent pupils from either saying that the work is perfect and needs no corrections, or that it is terrible and needs to be rewritten!

This step should take about ten minutes.

This editing process reflects two parts of Walter Scott's process. Firstly, his editors would make changes to his work. Secondly, his novels (but not his poems) were copied out before being sent to the printers to preserve his anonymity.

Instructions are also given in PowerPoint slide 9.

Step 5

On slide 11, there are some questions that encourage the pupils to think about the process that they have just undergone.

The work should be kept safely at this point.

Step 6

Watch the video about Walter Scott's writing and editing process. This explains how printing was done in the early nineteenth century and how both improvements and errors were made during the process. It ends with an explanation about the Edinburgh Editions of Scott's novels and poetry. This lesson has been created as part of the AHRC-funded Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott's Poetry: Engaging New Audiences, which includes a ten volume edition of Walter Scott's poetry.



Ask the pupils what they think about the video. You could ask them whether they think the process is different now.

Step 7

Pupils should look at their own original writing and the edited version. They should decide whether they like the suggested changes and come up with a version of their work that they are happy with.

They should then read their work to two other pupils (either in groups of three or in two sets of pairs) and ask for comments. This reflects the way in which people sent Walter Scott comments about his poetry after it was published. If they are given any good ideas, they can make final changes to their work.

They can then read their final version to their classmates or write it up neatly to hand in to you.

Curriculum for Excellence

LIT 3-02a	When I engage with others, I can make a relevant contribution, encourage others to contribute and acknowledge that they have the right to hold a different opinion. I can respond in ways appropriate to my role and use contributions to reflect on, clarify or adapt thinking.
LIT 3-23a	Throughout the writing process, I can review and edit my writing to ensure that it meets its purpose and communicates meaning at first reading.
LIT 3-21a	I enjoy creating texts of my choice and I am developing my own style. I can regularly select subject, purpose, format and resources to suit the needs of my audience.
SOC 3-02a	I can make links between my current and previous studies, and show my understanding of how people and events have contributed to the development of the Scottish nation.



