# Walter Scott’s Short Poems: Notes for Teachers

Often people assume Walter Scott only wrote long narrative poems, but he also wrote shorter poems throughout his life and short pieces of verse also appear in his novels. This pack includes eight poems, which have been taken from *The Shorter Poems* and *Poetry from the Waverley Novels and Other Works.* Some of them are part of longer poems, but they should all be understandable as they are. Each poem has three comprehension questions and a question that can be used as a springboard for further thought or an additional activity. In addition to the eight poems, there are some theme-based questions which ask the students to find and discuss two or more of the poems.

These poems can be used in a variety of ways including:

* To introduce Walter Scott and his work
* In preparation for a unit on Walter Scott
* In preparation for a visit to Abbotsford
* To follow on from a visit to Abbotsford
* As stand-alone work for pupils
* As group work that leads to discussion, presentations, or a follow-on writing task
* As comparative poetry to be used alongside work from other poets

The editions used in this resource are: Scott, Walter, *The Shorter Poetry,* ed. by P. D. Garside and Gillian Hughes, The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott’s Poetry 7 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), and Scott, Walter, *Poetry from the Waverley Novels and Other Works,* ed. by David Hewitt, The Edinburgh Edition of Walter Scott’s Poetry 8 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2024).

# Walter Scott’s Short Poems: Answers

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| First lines | Answers |
| Birds of omen dark and foul | 1. Night-crow, raven, bat, owl
2. A sick man (or sick people)
3. They go back to their homes (caves, towers, clumps of ivy, old ruins)
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| Look not thou on Beauty’s charming | 1. You should not enjoy them (not look at beauty, not stand up and fight when kings get ready for war, not drink the wine, not speak when people are listening, not listen to songs, not take/spend money).
2. It means to be empty, to not be occupied with anything.
3. The speaker thinks that you should live a simple, quiet life OR The speaker is being sarcastic and thinks living a simple, quiet life is boring.
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| Of yore, in Old England, it was not thought good | 1. Twenty
2. Choose from: man, woman, child, dog, mouse, saw, chisel, screw
3. Answers include: the use of exaggeration (e.g. reading the Riot Act); frequent exclamation marks; referring to Alexandre’s ‘wonders’
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| The western breezes fan the brook | 1. He is watching his fishing hook on the water.
2. There is light wind (the wind is strong enough to be noticeable but the words ‘float’ and ‘dancing’ suggest that the wind is not strong enough to toss the hook about).
3. Wily means cunning (pupils can look this up in the word bank). It is likely that something bad will happen to the angler/the mermaid will trick him.
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| Soldier, wake–the day is peeping | 1. He needs to fight and win honour.
2. Honour (in this case) is the respect and admiration someone can gain from fighting well; the soldier needs to fight to get this honour.
3. The shields are the morning’s mirror. The morning is reflected in them.
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| Anna-Marie, love, up is the sun, | 1. He wants her to wake up (it’s implied to spend time with him).
2. Answers include: ‘singing free,’ ‘blythe horn,’ ‘merry from rock and from tree,’
3. Sleeping is better.
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| My heart’s in the Highlands, my heart is not here | 1. Pupils’ own choices.
2. There are deer and roe to chase (hunt).
3. There’s nothing there but vegetables and poor young men.
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| Fortune, you say, flies from us–She but circles | 1. A sea-bird
2. A small boat which has a fowler (bird hunter) on it
3. People’s luck changes; sometimes they are lucky, and sometimes they are unlucky.
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