ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON'S
***STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE* in Scots**
***Unco Case o Dr Jekyll an Mr Hyde*, by James P Spence**

Scots: Background

At one time, Scots was the principal language of northern Britain – a language used in every way, from literature, politics and business, to the everyday banter of people in the street.

With the Union of the Crowns in 1603, and the Union of the Parliaments in 1707, southern English became the main language of Britain, and gradually Scots stopped being used in an official way.

The Scots language was never standardised, which means (if you compare it with all the dictionaries and books of grammar we have for English) that there wasn't one singular version of Scots set down in writing as an official standard for "correct" speech or writing.

Think of all the versions of English that are spoken. There are slang and informal words, there is jargon, there are different regional dialects. But there is also a Standard English that you are taught in school and that is understood by everyone. Standardisation didn't happen with Scots because of the effects of Scotland's political union with England.

Scots Today

The Scots language, as it is now, exists as lots of different dialects of Scots that are spoken in different areas.

Different Scots-speaking regions use different vocabulary.
For example, the word "fright" is "gliff" in the Scottish Borders, "fricht" in Fife, and "fleg" in other parts including the northeast of Scotland.

The word "unco" in the title *Unco Case o Dr Jekyll an Mr Hyde* can mean "very" in some parts of Scotland (think of the line from Robert Burns's poem "*Tam o Shanter*", "feelin fou and unco happy" – meaning "feeling a bit drunk and very happy") but in other areas, and in this book, it means "strange".

The word "trauchle" can mean "trudge" in some parts of Scotland but in other areas, and in this book, it means "worry".

Different Scots-speaking regions also have different accents. In other words they may use the same words but pronounce them differently.

For example, the word "two" is pronounced "twae" in the Scottish Borders, but "twa" (to rhyme with saw) in Fife and further north.

In Glasgow the word "one" might be pronounced "yin" or "wan", but in Dundee you will hear "ane".

***Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in Scots**

In translating Robert Louis Stevenson's story into Scots, the writer of *Unco Case o Dr Jekyll an Mr Hyde*, James P Spence, drew mostly on the Borders dialect of Scots, because it was the Scots of his upbringing in Jedburgh. However, to give the translation the broadest appeal to Scots speakers nationally, he used some commonly used Scots words from all over Scotland.

Discussion: Language, dialect or slang?

Most dictionaries say that a *dialect* is a regional variation from the standard language. However, as we have seen, the Scots *language* was never given a recorded, official written standard, so it is sometimes hard for us to say what are the standard Scots words and what are the dialectal variations. Sometimes even language experts will argue about what makes a dialect distinct from a language, so it can be an interesting subject to debate!

A *slang* word can be an informal word, perhaps only used by a small section of the population. Sometimes distinguishing slang from dialect can be difficult.

A good way to tell the difference between a slang word and a word that is from the Scots language, or a regional dialect of Scots, is to think about whether it is a "traditional" Scots word or a more modern word that is used informally all over the country. With the many media and means of communication we have now, slang words can originate from anywhere in the world. Some slang words are popular for a short while and then disappear from use.

Discuss with your teacher the difference between slang words and regional dialect words. What words do you use that are not Standard English?

What Scots words can you think of that you and your friends and family regularly use?

What words can you think of that you would pronounce in a different way to an English person – or even to someone from another Scottish region?

Exercise 1: Back to English

In your own words, can you translate the following phrases fron *Unco Case o Dr Jekyll an Mr Hyde* back into English? If you don't know the meaning of the word can you guess from the way it sounds or looks?

Chapter 1: Story o the Door

1 It's claggit in ma heid wi an awfie unco story.

2 A wee man whae wis hirplin.

Chapter 2: Search fur Mr Hyde

3 The muckle field o lantrens o a hoolit city.

4 Even in heez dwams that gadgie hid nae fizzog.

5 Hyde skrunkit back wi a sair gowpit in-braith.

6 Wi an ootlandish lick, hae hid scooted awa intae the hoose.

Chapter 3: Dr Jekyll wis fair at lown

7 Dr Jekyll wis fair at lown.

8 Ah'm gey sairlie fankled.

Chapter 4: The Carew murther case

9 Hyde lowpit oot o aw gumption an skelped him tae the grund.

Chapter 5: Incident o the letter

10 Hyde's rooms wur daikered wi fantoosh furnitur an guid taste.

Chapter 6: Remairkable Incident o Dr Lanyon

11 It chittered the verrra bluid o the gentlemen ablow!

Chapter 7: Incident at the windae

12 Whit a gowk ye must hiv thowt iz.

Chapter 8: The lest nicht

13 The breengers, scunnert bae their ain rammy an the lown that follaed, stuid back an keeked in.

Chapter 9: Dr Lanyon's narrative

14 Ma life is shooglt tae the foonds.

Chapter 10: Henry Jekyll's statement o the case

15 An ugsome seik feelin an the maist deidlie hotterin.

16 Ah birled, wabbit in baith body an mind.

Exercise 2: Match the Words

The following Scots words appear in *Unco Case o Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Can you work out their English meaning? Either work them out for yourself, or match them up with the correct definitions in the list of words opposite.

Scots Words

1. Gey.
2. Dour.
3. Thole.
4. Stoorie.
5. Cleek.
6. Kizzen.
7. Danders.
8. Breengin.
9. Forrit.
10. Ugsome.
11. Ramstam.
12. Champit.
13. Off the gley.
14. Scunnersome.
15. Jouk.
16. Kerfuffle.
17. Glaikit.
18. Trokins.
19. Mal-grace
20. Hurlie-barra.
21. Glowered.
22. Gallus.
23. Callant.
24. Gutsie.
25. Lown.
26. Howk.
27. Impident.
28. Bampot.
29. Kinnlin.
30. Foondert.
31. Gloamin.
32. Rived.
33. Steekit.
34. Gliffed.
35. Clyped.
36. Dumfoonerin.
37. Lum hat.
38. Faisible.
39. Chittered.
40. Chimley-lug.
41. Yowes.
42. Swicked.
43. Message-lines.
44. Smit.
45. Puzzent runt.
46. Bauchled.
47. Hurl.
48. Blootert.
49. Cowp.
50. Jag.
51. Bieldit.
52. Sowls.
53. Jummle.
54. Mixter-maxter.
55. Gibbet.

List of definitions

1. Boy.
2. Firewood (wood, cut very small)
3. Dusty.
4. Souls.
5. Shielded, sheltered,
6. Mad person.
7. Peace, at rest.
8. Shocked.
9. Cheeky.
10. Spill.
11. Dig.
12. Injection.
13. Gallows.
14. Poisoned dwarf.
15. Wanders.
16. Bustling (forcefully, carelessly).
17. Wheelbarrow.
18. Tore.
19. Bewildering, astonishing.
20. Drive, ride.
21. Jumble, mix.
22. Loathsome, troublesome.
23. Hook.
24. To put up with.
25. Surly.
26. Faint, pass-out.
27. Very.
28. Cousin.
29. Ugly, loathsome.
30. Ignorant, stupid.
31. Greedy.
32. Frowned, studied.
33. Mixed-up.
34. Infection, illness.
35. Forward.
36. Dodge, avoid.
37. Shut.
38. Business.
39. Disgrace.
40. Stamped, mashed.
41. Brave, very confident.
42. Twilight.
43. Argument, fight, dust-up.
44. Respectable.
45. Top-hat.
46. Rush headlong.
47. Shivering.
48. Fire-side.
49. Young female sheep.
50. Blabbed, spilled the beans.
51. Tricked.
52. Shopping-list.
53. Out of shape, distorted.
54. Thumped hard.
55. Far from normal.

Answers

Exercise 1

Note – these are translations of the Scots words James P Spence has used, rather than excerpts from the English adapation of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Alan Grant. It might be interesting to compare the Scots and English books side by side.

If you have a different dialect of Scots than is used here, it might be fun to translate the following sentences into the Scots tongue that you use.

1 It's claggit in ma heid wi an awfie unco story.
It is stuck in my mind with a very strange story.
2 A wee man whae wis hirplin.
A small man who was limping.
3 The muckle field o lantrens o a hoolit city.
The big field of lanterns of an owl city. [Note – "owl city" is used metaphorically here to mean a nocturnal city – a city that was still busy in the middle of the night.]
4 Even in heez dwams that gadgie hid nae fizzog.
Even in his dreams the man had no face.
5 Hyde skrunkit back wi a sair gowpit in-braith.
Hyde shrank back with a sharp intake of breath.
6 Wi an ootlandish lick, hae hid scooted awa intae the hoose.
With extraordinary speed he zipped into the house.
7 Dr Jekyll wis fair at lown.
Dr Jekyll was very at peace.
8 Ah'm gey sairlie fankled.
I am very badly tangled [i.e. metaphorically tangled in a situation].
9 Hyde lowpit oot o aw gumption an skelped him tae the grund.
Hyde lost his senses and thumped him to the ground.
10 It chittered the verrra bluid o the gentlemen ablow!
It chilled the very blood of the gentlemen below!
11 Hyde's rooms wur daikered wi fantoosh furnitur an guid taste.
Hyde's rooms were decorated with fancy furniture and in good taste.
12 Whit a gowk ye must hiv thowt iz.
What a fool you must have thought me.
13 The breengers, scunnert bae their ain rammy an the lown that follaed, stuid back an keeked in.
The invaders, disgusted by their own riot and the peace that followed, stood back and looked in.
14 Ma life is shooglt tae the foonds.
My life is shaken to the foundations.
15 An ugsome seik feelin an the maist deidlie hotterin
A loathsome sick feeling and the most deadly shaking.
16 Ah birled, wabbit in baith body an mind.
I spun [was dizzy], tired in both body and mind.

ANSWERS

Exercise 2

The correct order:

1. Gey.
2. Dour.
3. Thole.
4. Stoorie.
5. Cleek.
6. Kizzen.
7. Danders.
8. Breengin.
9. Forrit.
10. Ugsome.
11. Ramstam.
12. Champit.
13. Off the gley.
14. Scunnersome.
15. Jouk.
16. Kerfuffle.
17. Glaikit.
18. Trokins.
19. Mal-grace.
20. Hurlie-barra.
21. Glowered.
22. Gallus.
23. Callant.
24. Gutsie.
25. Lown.
26. Howk.
27. Impident.
28. Bampot.
29. Kinnlin.
30. Foondert.
31. Gloamin.
32. Rived.
33. Steekit.
34. Gliffed.
35. Clyped.
36. Dumfoonerin.
37. Lum hat.
38. Faisible.
39. Chittered.
40. Chimley-lug.
41. Yowes.
42. Swicked.
43. Message-lines.
44. Smit.
45. Puzzent runt.
46. Bauchled.
47. Hurl.
48. Blootert.
49. Cowp.
50. Jag.
51. Bieldit.
52. Sowls.
53. Jummle.
54. Mixter-maxter.
55. Gibbet.

27. Very.
25. Surly.
24. To put up with.
3. Dusty.
23. Hook.
28. Cousin
15. Wanders.
16. Bustling (forcefully, carelessly)
35. Forward.
29. Ugly, loathsome.
46. Rush headlong.
40. Stamped, mashed.
55. Far from normal.
22. Loathsome, troublesome.
36. Dodge, avoid.
43. Argument, fight, dust-up.
30. Ignorant, stupid.
38. Business.
39. Disgrace.
17. Wheelbarrow.
32. Frowned, studied.
41. Brave, very confident.
1. Boy.
31. Greedy.
7. Peace, at rest.
11. Dig.
9. Cheeky.
6. Mad person.
2. Firewood (wood cut very small)
26. Faint, pass-out.
42. Twilight.
18. Tore.
37. Shut.
8. Shocked.
50. Blabbed, spilled the beans.
19. Bewildering.
45. Top-hat.
44. Respectable.
47. Shivered.
48. Fire-side.
49. Young female sheep.
51. Tricked.
52. Shopping-list.
34. Infection, illness.
14. Poisoned dwarf.
53. Out of shape, distorted.
20. Drive, ride.
54. Thumped hard.
10. Spill.
12. Injection.
5. Shielded, sheltered
4. Souls.
21. Jumble, mix.
33. Mixed up.
13. Gallows.