

How did Robert Burns' poetry influence society?

Robert Burns was born in Alloway, Scotland, on the 25th of January in 1759. While greater known for his influence on society through poetry, Burns was also a tenant farmer and later, an excise collector. Burns made a large contribution to poetry in Scotland, where he is known as their national poet. Rather than favoring the title of national poet of Scotland, he constantly established his wish to be named a Scots Bard. Often in his poetry, he depicted different aspects of life as a farmer, traditional Scottish culture, and significant class distinctions at the time. Mainly, Robert Burns was influential through his poetry because of his ability to express and represent many perspectives of life through it. The poem 'To a Louse', written in the Habbie dialect, is an example of the reflection of different class distinctions, as the louse views all humans equally without comprehending social status contrasts. The ending extract of this poem depicts this idea visibly:

*"O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us,
An' foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
An' ev'n devotion!"*

The highlighted section of this extract can be loosely translated in English to: "Oh, would some Power give us the gift | To see ourselves as others see us!" The quotation suggests that people are incapable of interpreting what others think of them and there is no way of viewing the world as

a louse does.

Burns was well-known for his revolt against morality and orthodox religion. Because Burns rejected Calvinism and most orthodox religions, the main alternative to his belief in the 18th century was "a sentimental Deism." Some thought this belief was not elaborate enough to create and support intellectual poetry. Despite this, Burns became the national poet of Scotland, which challenged that idea. Furthermore, Burns most likely had a massive influence on the shift in society in Scotland because of his unique and different ideas.

As both a poet and song-writer, writing over 665 poems and songs altogether, Robert Burns greatly impacted society surrounding him. He was able to inherit and utilise traditional poetry and language, while also discussing his present-day experiences and perspectives on life. Because of the transition of poetry in that time, Burns' continued use of classic verse forms and language extended the literary traditions which he utilised in most of his work. An example of this can be found in "The Cotter's Saturday Night," where Burns uses the spenserian stanza:

*"My lov'd, much honour'd, much respected friend! a
No mercenary bard his homage pays; b
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end, a
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise: b
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays, b
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene; c
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways; b
What Aiken in a cottage would have been; c
Ah! tho his worth unknown, far happier there I ween!" c*

The spenserian stanza consists of 8 iambic pentameters and 1 'alexandrine.' The rhyming is structured in this way, which has been highlighted next to each line of the extract of the poem: *ababbcbcc*.

Though there are many challenged opinions on Burns' work, the positive view of this poet was his revolutionary standpoint on mainly social and political issues or topics. Additionally, Robert Burns was seen as a hero to many, because of his success. Burns was a struggling tenant farmer and excise collector formerly, but then became a well-known poet. His success could have been seen as a symbol of capability to become recognized or well-known for anyone. It could have also symbolized Scotland's potential future independence as a country.

Moreover, Robert Burns was influential in society through his poetry, providing inspiration for many people after him, as well as acting as a model and symbol for success. Robert Burns' poetry represented universal themes of nature and love, using traditional literary techniques. Burns' modern ideas are celebrated each year on January 25. Classically, people will have a 'Burns supper', consisting of haggis and whiskey. Another celebration of Robert Burns occurs globally at New Year, where the poem 'Auld Lang Syne' is recited. The poem is known for its clear expression of friendship. Overall, Burns has clearly created an impact on society through his poetry. Though he passed merely at the age of 37, his legacy lives on because of his incredible poetic ability to express various perspectives, stories, symbols, among much more.

References

- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robert-burns>
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