

# The Influence of Robert Burns' Poetry

Robert Burns is most notable for being regarded as the national poet of Scotland. He wrote in a pseudo-romantic style with lovely prose that also had a lyrical quality.

He was born on January 25th, 1759, to Agnes Broun and Willam Burns in the village of Alloway, Scotland. Both of his parents were tenant farmers who earned a meager wage. Despite this, they ensured that their son was given a proper education which gave him a great appreciation and aptitude for the written word. He acquired a proficient knowledge of French literature, as well as some Latin. Further, he had read most of the important 18th-century English writers including Shakespeare, Milton, and Dryden.

By the age of 15, Robert Burns had become a very important worker at Mount Oliphant. During the harvest of 1774 he was aided by Nelly Kilpatrick who helped inspire his first attempt at poetry, titled 'Handsome Nell'. The poem is composed of seven stanzas and is a reflection of his life, as at 15 he met his first love 'Handsome Nell'.

In 1786, due to his farm failing - and a multitude of other misfortunes - he was forced to consider relocating to Jamaica. Through his crisis, he published a volume of his poems at the nearby town of Kilmarnock. The volume was titled "Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect". It was an instantaneous success. This allowed him to stay in Scotland. The book was acclaimed by several Edinburgh critics, which led him to set out there.

After relocating, Burns continued to write sensational songs and poems such as "A Red, Red Rose" which went on to mold modern songwriters such as Bob Dylan. Dylan has stated that his biggest creative inspiration was from the song "A Red, Red Rose", and it had a large impact on his life. "Tam O' Shanter", another of Burns' poems, is speculated to be the inspiration behind Michael Jackson's cult-classic song 'Thriller'. In the 1990s, Jackson even recorded 12 of Burn's well known poems in an unreleased album, originally intended to be part of a musical. However, it was never realized due to the deaths of director Gene Kelly and producer Anthony Perkins.

In the literary world, the line "the best laid schemes o' mice an men / gang aft agley" in "To a Mouse" was used by John Steinbeck in the title of his world-renowned 1937 work, "Of Mice and Men". This wasn't a unique incident. The 1951 J.D. Salinger Bildungsroman "The Catcher in the Rye" is named for the misinterpretation "Comin' Thro' the Rye" by the protagonist Holden Caulfield. It is directly mentioned several times in the book after a little boy sings it.

To much surprise, Tommy Hilfiger discovered a family secret only after reaching his twenties: he is the great, great, great nephew of Robert Burns. It brought great shame to the family as they thought of him as "a womanizer and a boozier." Since his discovery he has publicly embraced his Scottish heritage in his all-American clothing by including an abundance of plaid, plaid, plaid.

Although making a career as a poet, the impact of Burns' poetry reaches farther than just the creative arts. In his "Address To A Haggis" Burns describes seeing its 'gushing entrails bright' as a 'glorious sight'. Contrastingly and with humor, he bitterly describes 'French ragout' and a 'fricassee' that made people 'spew'. Haggis is the national dish of Scotland, and his glorification of it is credited as very important in its popularization. In fact, Robert Burns Day is observed annually on his birthday in recognition.

Sadly, on July 21st, 1796, Burns died at the age of 37 in Dumfries, Scotland. His funeral

took place four days later on the 25th (the same day his son Maxwell was born) in St. Michael's Churchyard. However, his body was eventually moved in 1817 to 'The Burns Mausoleum', to be later joined by his wife, Jean, in 1834.

In summary, Burns' work has left an impact so great it spans beyond just his field or even his lifetime. And even past now artists, politicians, and with them the world, will continue to be shaped by his legacy.