



Teaching about Scotland

This is one of a series of units for teaching about Scotland in German Secondary schools. All the materials were created by very motivated students in my Area Studies Scotland class, some with experience of teaching in a "Gymnasium". The materials can be tried out as they are, or altered as desired. They can also be combined. One basic idea behind them all is that both the teacher and the learners can develop the materials themselves, according to their own interests, and then even offer them to another class. For some of these units printed information material is needed, for example ferry timetables, but if you don't have this, it is no problem to print it out from the Internet. Useful websites are given.

Symbols and Festivals of Scotland 02

Target group and Aim.

The teaching unit is intended for a 10th grade class of a German Secondary school and covers two lessons.

The aim is to help the pupil get to know Scotland and gain an insight into Scottish culture. A knowledge of certain cultural facts, traditions, values and daily habits serves as a background for communication, but also helps promote general open-mindedness. After this unit, the pupils should be able to see the differences between German and Scottish festivals and, ideally, develop an understanding of and interest in Scottish culture.

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www.rampantscotland.com

Activities:

- creating posters on symbols of Scotland and Germany, with a discussion to follow
- assigning different Scottish festivals to a timeline on the board
- group work: reading a text about Christmas and answering questions
- home task internet research on Hogmanay

Media/Materials:

- poster paper
- overheads with pictures of different symbols and festivals of Scotland (All available at www.rampantscotland.com)
- cards with names of Scottish festivals
- text on Christmas in Scotland
- pictures of the Scottish and German flags

Part 1: **SYMBOLS OF SCOTLAND**

- class is divided into two groups
- each group gets a blank poster and felt-tip pens
- task: Write down or draw whatever comes to your mind when you hear... Scotland (group 1), Germany (group 2). For example food, clothing, symbols... (10 minutes)
- posters are pinned on the board
- question: What are the colours of the flags of the two countries?
- flags are pinned to the posters
- short discussion about what is still missing on the posters

Short talk on the most popular and important symbols of Scotland, with pictures on the overhead projector. We chose the Flag, the Thistle, Tartan, the Kilt and Bagpipes and have provided some information on the first three.

Information and pictures of all these symbols are available at www.visitscotland.com and www.rampantscotland.com.

1. The Saltire Flag

- the Scottish national flag is a white-on-blue saltire (a diagonal cross on a coloured background)
- it derives from the shape of the cross, on which Scotland's patron St. Andrew was crucified

History and Legend:

- 832 AD a battle was fought which led to the adoption of the saltire as Scotland's national flag
- King Angus Mac Fergus and his men were surrounded by a larger number of their enemies and fearing defeat the king led prayers for deliverance
- Angus believed he had seen a divine sign when above him in the blue sky he saw a great white cross like that of St. Andrew's
- the king vowed that if, with the saint's help, he gained victory, Andrew would thereafter be the patron Saint of Scotland and his cross the flag of Scotland
- obviously Angus did win

National Symbol:

- saltire has been regularly used since the 14th century although not always used on a blue background
- it wasn't until the 16th century that the plain white saltire on a blue field became established
- in the 17th century it continued to be used as a national symbol by the army and navy
- after the Union of the Crowns it was used in the first union flag in 1606
- after the Union of Parliaments in 1707 the widespread use of the Saltire declined
- only in the late 20th century was there a major use of it again
- it has now regained its status as the legally established national flag of Scotland

The official "Saltire Blue":

- in 2003 Scotland's politicians specified the precise shade of blue to be used on the Saltire
- this colour has the name Pantone 300 but it is only a recommendation so it is likely that the Saltires will continue to appear in a variety of shades

2. The Thistle

- perhaps the most identifiable symbol of Scotland
- it can be seen promoting the Scottishness of a wide variety of products, services and organisations

The Legend:

- a sleeping party of Scots warriors were almost set upon by an invading band of Vikings and were only saved when one of the attackers stepped on a wild thistle with his bare feet. His cries raised the alarm and the Scots defeated the Danes
- In gratitude the plant became known as the Guardian Thistle and was adopted as the symbol of Scotland
- There sadly is no evidence to back up the tale

The Thistle as Symbol:

- important Scottish symbol for more than 500 years
- first recognisable use was on silver coins issued in 1470
- from the early 16th century it was incorporated into the Royal Arms of Scotland

3. Tartan

- one of the nation's major "brands"
- instantly recognised all over the world as uniquely Scottish

The History:

- in earliest times Highlanders were known to wear clothes dyed with local plants, mosses and berries and woven into distinctive striped or checked patterns
- so the weave and the way it was worn tended to be dictated by the customs in a particular area rather than a family or clan
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4. The Kilt

5. Bagpipes

www.visitscotland.com and www.rampantscotland.com

Part 2: FESTIVALS OF SCOTLAND

- Draw a simple timeline across the board, from January to December
- Hand out the following seven cards: Up-Helly-Aa, Burns Night, Easter, Hunt the Gawk/Tailie Day, Guy Fawkes Night, Christmas and Hogmanay
- The pupils are supposed to guess the dates of the festivals and attach the cards to the timeline (5 minutes)
- If necessary, the dates can be corrected

Short talk on Up-Helly-Aa, Burns Night, Easter, Hunt the Gawk/Tailie Day and Guy Fawkes Night, showing pictures on transparencies:

Sources of information and transparencies:

www.visitscotland.com and www.rampantscotland.com

Last Tuesday in January - **Up-Helly-Aa:**

- a variety of fire festivals held on the Shetland Islands, the biggest is in Lerwick
- a procession of people dressed as Viking warriors and bearing torches pulls a Viking Galley to the Beach
- then Guizer Jarl (pronounced like German Gaiser), the main character in the celebration, calls for three cheers for the builders of the ship and finally the galley is set alight by 800 torches
- after the procession people celebrate at private parties

25 January - **Burns Night:**

- the 25th of January is the birthday of the famous Scottish poet Robert Burns
- the Burns Supper is a celebration of the life and poetry of Robert Burns and can either take place on the 25th of January or on any other day of the year
- the Burns Supper usually follows a standard format
- first the guests gather and mix as in any informal party, then the host says a few words welcoming everyone to the supper and officially opening the event
- when everybody is seated at the table, grace is said, usually using the Selkirk Grace
- supper starts with a soup course
- then the main course, a haggis, is brought in by the cook while somebody else plays the bagpipes and everybody stands up
- then the host or a talented guest recites Robert Burns "Address to a Haggis"
- at the line "An' cut you up wi' ready slicht" the haggis is opened
- then a whisky toast is proposed to the haggis and everybody sits down to enjoy the meal
- after that there may be a dessert course, cheese course or coffee
- when the table is cleared, various speeches and toasts are given, such as the "Loyal Toast" to the health of monarch, the "Immortal Memory" which is a short speech to remember some aspects of Burn's life and poetry, the "Toast to the Lassies" to thank the women who prepared the meal, and others
- finally the evening ends with everybody standing, holding hands and singing "Auld Lang Syne"

Variable Dates

- **Easter**

- similar traditions to Germany
- “hot cross buns” are baked, containing spices and dried fruit and a white pastry cross on top
- on Easter Monday painted, hard-boiled eggs are rolled down a hill

1 April - **Hunt the Gawk**

- people tell lies and play tricks to catch each other out
- today it is called “April Fool’s Day”
- hunting the gawk originally meant sending someone on a foolish errand

Taille Day

- paper tails are attached to the backs of unsuspecting people as a joke

5 November - **Guy Fawkes**

- Guy Fawkes Night or also called Bonfire Night is an annual event celebrated on the evening of the 5th November
- for some it is to celebrate the failure, for others the attempt of the gunpowder plot, in which a group of Catholic conspirators attempted to blow up the House of Parliament in 1605 to get rid of the Protestant King James I
- the celebrations involve fireworks and large bonfires in which “dummies” of Guy Fawkes are burnt

Christmas

Group work: This is a text on Christmas in Scotland which we pieced together ourselves from the sources given below. We would hand it out to groups of 4 to read and think about.

Like many ancient races, where winter days were short and the night long, Celts had celebrations around the time of the winter solstice to brighten up the darkest days and to beg their gods to allow the sun to return. In their mythology then Odin the gift-bringer swept across the night sky in a chariot drawn by horses. Later on the Christian church took over the festival and some of the traditions. For example the Yule log was burned in the fireplace and there was kissing under mistletoe (Druidic fertility rite) and the house was decorated with holly.

But during the Church Reformation in the 16th century these traditions were frowned upon by the Kirk which regarded Christmas as a popish festival and it was banned. There are records of people being punished for keeping ‘Yule’ as it was called in Scotland. Amazingly this joy-crushing attitude lasted for 400 years. Until the 1960s, Christmas Day was a normal working day for most people in Scotland. So if there is something specific Scottish about Christmas it is that it was not celebrated. The traditional Christmas celebrations (other than the religious festival) originated in the 19th century. Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s husband had a lot to do with it and so England and Scotland developed the same traditions from around that time.

Christmas in Scotland nowadays is a time for going to church, food, presents, parties, holidays and all sorts of other good things. It's a time for celebration. Planning for Christmas starts weeks before the events. Children are busy writing their Christmas lists to Santa Claus, parents are busy buying presents, cleaning the house and organising food for the great day.

Houses are decorated with tinsel, holly wreaths candles and decorations. Mistletoe is hung to catch a kiss from anyone who stands under it. The Christmas tree, decorated with baubles, takes pride of place in any household. On Christmas Eve (24th of December), children prepare for Santa Claus by hanging up their stockings in anticipation of their being filled with presents while they sleep. They leave out a small glass of whisky or milk for Santa along with a mince pie. They also leave out carrots for the reindeer - particularly Rudolph - the red-nosed reindeer that guides his sleigh through the dark skies. Then the children are ready to go to bed. In all the excitement children find it difficult to get to sleep. Some waken up VERY early in the morning. Christmas day finally arrives and is marked by screams of delight at the surprises Santa has left. Once the presents are opened, many people get ready to go to church. Christmas carols are sung during the hour long service.

On return, parents prepare the Christmas lunch while children play with their toys.

A traditional Christmas lunch will include - Starter: Scotch Broth or Smoked Salmon. Main course - Roast Turkey, Sage & Onion Stuffing, Chippolata Sausages, Roast Potatoes, Carrots, Brussel Sprouts. Dessert - Christmas Pudding and Brandy custard.

Christmas dinner is a time when families get together - grannies, grandpas, aunts, uncles, cousins. Once it is finished and the clearing up done, there is generally a party. People sing songs, dance or play games. All the preparation has been worth it. People go to bed happy yet exhausted. Christmas is over for another year!

Sources: www.electricscotland.com/christmas.htm, www.rampantscotland.com

Task: On the basis of this text, how would you compare Scottish and German Christmas traditions? For example, when do the children get their presents, who brings them, what is the traditional food, what is the traditional way to spend the 24th and the 25th etc.?

Which elements of these traditions do you find nicest? Strangest?

Hogmanay

Homework: Find out all you can about Hogmanay. What is it? How is it celebrated? Is there a similar festival in Germany?

See: www.rampantscotland.com, www.visitscotland.com and any other sources you can find.

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