



ceumannan ⁵

ceumannan 5

Notaichean an tidseir - Am Bodach
Teacher's notes - Am Bodach

Litreachas - Am Bodach

'S e bana-bhàrd a th' ann an Anna Frater. Rugadh i ann an Steòrnabhagh ann an 1967 agus thogadh i ann am Pabail Uarach ann an sgìre na Rubha, Eilean Leòdhais. 'S i Gàidhlig a' chiad chànan a bha aice a' fàs suas. Thàinig a' chiad leabhar bàrdachd aice — *Fon t-Slige* — a-mach ann an 1995. Tha Frater a-nis a' teagasg litreachas na Gàidhlig aig Oilthigh na Gàidhealtachd agus nan Eilean. Thàinig "*Cridhe Creige*", an leabhar ùr bàrdachd aice, a-mach anns an Dàmhair 2017.

Am Bodach

(eadar-theangachadh leis a' bhana-bhàrd)

Your bones are weakening, old man,
and your voice is getting faint
and hoarse,
although you do not talk
as much as you used to.
A strong heart inside you yet,
and a ceaseless imagination ...
how else could you think
that you would receive attention
and a new pair of lungs
when younger and stronger folk
want them for themselves
and shout for them
in loud voices?

You lie tied to the machine
that keeps a breath
in your poor breast;
strange faces at your bedside
waiting for your brain-death
so that your place can be filled
by another wretch.

Don't close your eyes just yet,
struggle against the peace of death
and your heirs will come to your aid.

le Anna Frater



Freagairtean (NB Answers are neither set nor exhaustive)

Obair 2

NB: Ged nach eil “**na do bhroilleach bhoichd**” agus “**innchinn**” àbhaisteach a thaobh gràmair/litreachaidh, cha deach an atharrachadh le Stòrlann. Tha a’ bhàrdachd air a clò-bhualadh le Stòrlann a rèir bàrdachd thùsail a’ bhana-bhàird.

Obair 3 Leughadh

- Frail and lonely old man lying in a hospital bed, surrounded by strangers and connected to machines to keep him alive.
- Pupil’s own choice.
- Pity, sadness, anger?
- There is defiance, strength and hope in the last stanza in comparison with the weakness and acceptance of the inevitable in previous ones.

Obair 4 Smaoinich

Old man is symbolic of the Gaelic language and its struggle to survive against the odds.

Obair 5 Ceistean

- Bones:** A symbol for the *Sàr Ghàidheal* who had kept Gaelic alive through generations. The traditional Gaelic community, like the old man’s bones, has now been weakened through societal changes. Bones could also represent the essence or framework of the language on which everything hangs – the culture, the music, the traditions.

Voice: Gaelic language growing rusty, weak and faint in an English dominant society: “**do ghuth a’ fàs fann**” “**leis an tùchadh,**” The Old man’s voice, like Gaelic, has lost its force and been weakened. The old man doesn’t talk as much as he used to: “**ged nach eil thu a’ dèanamh uimhir de chòmhradh ’s a chleachd thu.**” This could mean that Gaelic is far less used than it once was. The less it is used, the weaker and rustier it becomes. The old man may not have many people in his life to talk to and, likewise, with regard to Gaelic it could be said that there are less opportunities than there once were for Gaelic to be spoken as the number of speakers decline.

Heart: Strong heart representative of the strong Gaelic culture/history that still exists. The heart is the organ that powers the body and keeps it going. It can also be seen as the organ of emotion and passion – passion and emotion the poet clearly has for Gaelic.

Imagination: Possibly the rich heritage of Gaelic: the arts, music, song and literature that exists in Gaelic.

Lungs: Possibly Government support/initiatives – the development that Gaelic needs to increase its number of speakers. Possibly the next generation that can breathe life into the language and keep it alive. Lungs reminiscent possibly of a line in Ruaraidh MacThòmais’ poem “Anns a’ Bhalbh Mhadainn”. MacThòmais talks of the breath of the Gael struggling to come to the surface of a suffocating blanket of snow (symbolic of the suffocating of Gaelic by the English language and culture): “**s gun tuiginn gu robh anail a’ Ghàidheil a’ tighinn am mullach.**”



2. Allusion to the decline of the language. Gaelic is spoken much less often than it once was. The number of Gaelic speakers has decreased.
3.
 - a. *Younger and stronger folk* could be representative of English or of any other cause or language competing for funding. Voices could possibly represent any body opposed to the regeneration of Gaelic. There are many strong opinions regularly in the media as to whether Gaelic is worth saving and worth the money that is deemed to be spent on it.
 - b. Pupil's own views
4.
 - a. Ventilator symbolic of the support that Gaelic is receiving from government initiatives – only just enough to keep 'him' alive but not enough to let 'him' really live.
 - b. Strange faces: English language and culture? A new and very different society and culture to one the old man knew in his youth. Faces could also represent the people (the government and other bodies) who should be doing more to keep Gaelic alive.
 - c. The poet might be suggesting that these bodies/people generally have no knowledge of, nor affection for, the language and will be relieved when Gaelic dies so they can use funding for something else more 'worthwhile': **“s gum faod iad d’ àite a thoirt seachad do thruaghan eile.”**
5. *Oghaichean* are the new generation of Gaelic speakers who will prevent Gaelic from dying out: children in GM education and anyone else learning Gaelic.
6. Contrast is used to further highlight the plight of Gaelic. The old man is growing weaker, **“do chnàmhan a’ fàs lag,”** while the young ones are strong, **“feadhainn nas òige ’s nas làidire”**. The old man's voice is weak, **“do ghuth a’ fàs fann leis an tùchadh,”** while the younger folk shout in loud voices, **“ag èigheachd ... ann an guthan àrd”**. The old man has still a strong heart and imagination but this is in contrast with his weak voice, body and lungs.
7. The old man as a symbol for Gaelic is very fitting and effective. There are many similarities between the two.

The old man is weakening (**“a’ fàs lag”**), like the language. The old man is isolated and alone:

“aodainn choimhich aig do leabaidh”

He is in a poor state of health, kept barely alive by a machine:

“air do cheangal

ris an inneal a chumas anail

na do bhroilleach bhoichd;”

We feel sympathy for the old man in his poor state of health and lonely situation and so this sympathy is transferred effectively and cleverly to make us feel sorry for the state of Gaelic. He, like many older people, doesn't have family or friends to talk to:

“ged nach eil thu a’ dèanamh

uimhir de chòmhradh ’s a chleachd thu.”

This is symbolic of the dwindling numbers of Gaelic speakers.

The old man is maybe not a priority for the NHS system or society; just like Gaelic is not



sometimes seen as a priority amongst the many other things that require help and monetary support:

“ciamar a rèisd a shaoileadh tu

gum faigheadh tusa altram

...

nuair a tha feadhainn nas òige 's nas làidire

gan iarraidh dhaibh fhèin”

And yet, although the end seems near for the old man he is urged to be stong and fight against death and that the younger generation will come to his aid:

“Na dùin do shùilean fhathast

...

’s thig d’ oghaichean gad dhìon.”

We can see that hope is not lost. There is something worth living for (‘heirs/grandchildren/future generations’):

“cuir spàirn ort fhèin an aghaidh sàmhachd a’ bhàis”

Similarly our conscience is being pricked by the poet with regards to Gaelic. We must fight to keep Gaelic alive. It might not be an easy or a peaceful fight, as is so often the case with regards the political position of Gaelic in such an English dominant society, but it is certainly one that is worthwhile.

8. Positive and hopeful. The final stanza of the poem might be seen as reminiscent of Dylan Thomas’ poem *Do not go gentle into that good night* (the final line being: “Rage, rage against the dying of the light.”) where Thomas implores his dying father to fight against death. Similarly Frater, makes an impassioned plea to the old man:

“Na dùin do shùilean fhathast

cuir spàirn ort fhèin an aghaidh sàmhachd a’ bhàis

’s thig d’ oghaichean gad dhìon.”

This is a strong invocation to live boldly and fight. The poem’s meaning is life affirming. It ends on a positive note convincing us that Gaelic doesn’t need to die but that we (the next generation of Gaels) must fight to save it and value our history, language, culture and traditions. Frater has a more positive outlook in this poem compared with her poem *Ar Cànan ’s ar Clò*, for example.

9. To highlight the plight of Gaelic. To make us sit up and take notice, to understand how she feels about her native language and culture. Frater is also trying to encourage people to continue to use/learn Gaelic and to see it as something that is important and valid in today’s modern world.
10. Pupil’s own personal response.
11. Pupil’s own personal response.

