



# ceumannan 5

## ceumannan 5

Notaichean an tidseir -  
Duan an Fhògarraich – Gillebrìde Mac 'Ille Mhaoil  
*Teacher's notes - The Refugee's Plea*

## Litreachas Duan an Fhògarraich – Gillebrìde Mac 'Ille Mhaoil

Immigration – forced or otherwise, has become both an emotive and contentious issue in recent years. It features highly in most political parties' agendas and almost every day in the media we see headlines about the migrant crisis; face distressing images of desperate people fleeing war torn countries making perilous journeys across the Mediterranean in flimsy inflatable boats, all in the hope of seeking assylum and a better, safer future in Europe.

In the first six months of 2017, the UN Migration Agency put the number of migrants entering Europe at 105, 134 – the overwhelming majority of whom made the journey by sea. In that same period, 2,357 people died or disappeared in the Mediterranean attempting to reach safety. Figures from previous years tend to show a distressingly similar pattern. Statistics, though, tend not to have a human face and despite figures in recent years, the world didn't really sit up and take notice until the 2nd of September 2015 when the body of little Alan Kurdi, a Syrian toddler, was washed up on a Turkish beach. Suddenly the migrant crisis had a name and a face. There was shock and outrage among the general populace that such horror could occur on the shores of Europe. Sadly, despite heightened public awareness, various appeals and an increase in humanitaitian aid, the crisis still continues.

But what becomes of the 'lucky' ones (those that do reach European shores alive)? Do they find sanctuary? Or is life a continued struggle to survive? Unfortunately, according to a report commissioned by The Refugee Council, the latter appears to be the case for many refugees arriving in Britain.

**“For people who have escaped war, torture and rape, being granted asylum in Britain should be a moment of immense relief, a time to finally stop running and instead to focus on rebuilding their shattered lives...**

**...Shockingly, quite the opposite is true. These forgotten refugees are being all but abandoned by the government which has just committed to protecting them. Quite simply, refugees are being left without refuge.”**

**Refugee Council**

Gillebrìde Mac 'Ille Mhaoil's song “Duan an Fhògarraich” is about a refugee who finds him/herself in just this kind of situation – destitute on the streets of a country in which s/he sought refuge. The piece deals effectively with the topical issues of immigration, homelessness, the injustice of povery in a rich society and people's attitutes towards the displaced.

Duan an Fhògarraich originally appeared in the book “Struileag: Shore to Shore Cladach gu Cladach” – an eclectic collection of poetry, song and essays by various artists commissioned by Kevin MacNeil on themes including home, exile, loss, displacement, identity and the Gaelic diaspora.



## Litreachas - Duan an Fhògarraich

### Curriculum links/CfE documentation

One of the purposes (capacities) of the Curriculum for Excellence is to help learners become responsible citizens. Below are some excerpts from Education Scotland documentation on this capacity that may be relevant to the study of this song.

Helping children and young people become responsible citizens with:

- respect for others
- commitment to participate responsibly in political, economic, social and cultural life

able to

- develop knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it
- understand different beliefs and cultures
- make informed choices and decisions
- develop informed, ethical views of complex issues

### (excerpt below from CfE documentation on Moral and Religious Education)

- explore and establish values such as wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity and engage in the development of and reflection upon their own moral values.
- develop their beliefs, attitudes, values and practices through reflection, discovery and critical evaluation.
- develop the skills of reflection, discernment, critical thinking and deciding how to act when making moral decisions.
- make a positive difference to the world by putting their beliefs and values into action.



## The Refugee's Plea (eadar-theangaichte leis a' bhàrd)

*You pass by in a hurry,  
And here I am sitting here without a penny in my pocket;  
All I did was look in your eyes,  
And you said very unkindly to me:*

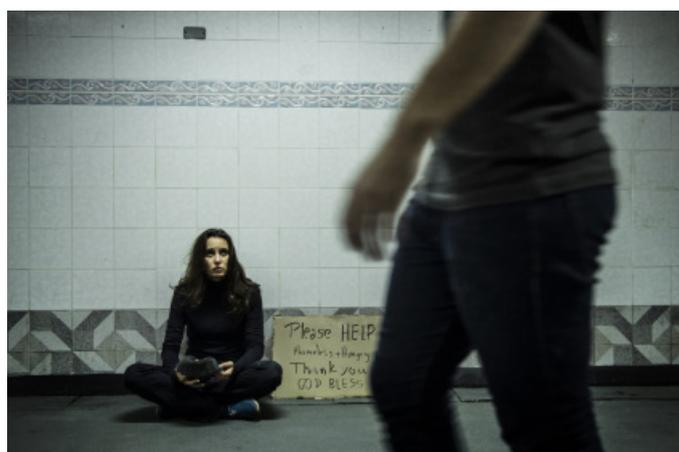
*'You have a cheek asking for anything of me –  
I woke early and left the house at the break of dawn,  
I worked and laboured to be as I am today –  
You'll not get a penny from me!'*

*To sleep, to wake, patience and peace,  
Kinship, kindness, an outstretched hand,  
Justice, a hearing, a chance in this land –  
These are the only things I need.*

*What a pity that you didn't speak to me on your way past –  
I hate and detest having to beg;  
I would tell you right now if you would willingly listen  
My story which has been drowned in a flood of tears.*

*In my country I was noble and respected  
But the war-cry was heard and the grief was never-ending;  
I ran away with my life, and I was left without sustenance,  
And I'm now a slave in a country that's cold to me.*

*To sleep, to wake, patience and peace,  
Kinship, kindness, an outstretched hand,  
Justice, a hearing, a chance in this land –  
These are the only things I need.*



**Obair 4 Freagairtean**

1. **Contrast** – One person is moving briskly and with purpose. This gives a sense of self-importance, sense of well-being, goals to achieve, confidence, and perhaps intolerance with anyone who disturbs or hinders this process. The other is sitting down, eyes down, dejected, low self-esteem, lack of movement and purpose, sense of hopelessness, etc. Contrast of movement on a metaphorical level – The passer-by is going somewhere in life whereas the refugee appears to be going nowhere, unable to move forwards with his/her life.
2. We can surmise from what refugee says in verse 4 (“**S truagh nach d’ bhruidhinn thu san dol seachad**”) that the passer-by and the refugee did not verbally communicate but instead spoke through their eyes and body language (“**...coimhead nad shùilean**”). This indicates the many ways we can communicate and send messages to each other. The refugee got a clear message from the passer-by as s/he detected disrespect, no sympathy or care. The passer-by appears to have looked at the refugee in a disdainful manner which left no doubt in the refugee’s mind as to how s/he was perceived.
3. a) The passer-by has worked hard to be where s/he is today. The assumption is that the refugee doesn’t deserve help because s/he isn’t working and that because s/he isn’t working s/he somehow has an easy life.

The passer-by appears to:

have no sympathy whatsoever for the refugee’s situation

be hard and to lack human empathy

be self-righteous & full of themselves

be immersed in his own world

believe that people deserve what they work for

believe the refugee was not worthy of any help as s/he did not work or appear to take responsibility for himself/herself.

b) Own responses

4. a) To sleep, to wake, patience, peace, kinship, kindness, an outstretched hand, justice, a hearing, a chance in this land. All of the needs mentioned are non-materialistic. This is significant and important to note.
- b) Communication (“**èisteachd**”) – someone to listen & speak to
- c) Own response
5. Own response but possibly something along the lines of the following:

As a metaphor, drowning in a flood of tears may seem somewhat clichéd. However, when we consider that this is a song about a refugee, the drowning metaphor has extra poignancy. We can assume that this refugee, like thousands of others, might have made a perilous sea journey to freedom – a journey in which many other fellow refugees will have lost their lives at sea.



6. His/her status was noble and respected.
7. War changed things and his/her life was threatened and grief was never-ending.
8. S/he has been left without sustenance.
9. Ironically s/he is no longer free — economically impoverished, alienated from his/her people, culture, and deprived of the basic necessities of life — totally dependant on others for their well-being and survival.
10. Own response.
11. Repetition reinforces the fact that s/he is deprived of the most basic things in life, without which life can become intolerable: “cadal, dusgadh, càirdeas, coibhneas” etc. The fact that the plea is repeated highlights the terrible circumstances in which the refugee finds him/herself.
12. a) Own response but could include the following:
  - Make the reader aware of the plight of refugees
  - Provide an insight into the circumstances of a refugee
  - Make the reader aware of the alienation and circumstances of some refugees
  - To heighten awareness of people who have to beg on the street
  - To spur the reader to take action to help those less fortunate
  - To prevent a reader from acting in the way that the passer-by did
- b) Own response
13. Own response

### Obair 5 Ceàird an sgrìobhaiche

1. a) Possible theme choices:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• war/cogadh (v5)</li> <li>• politics/poilitigs (v1,3,4,5)</li> <li>• contrast/iomsgaradh (v5)</li> <li>• exile/fògradh (v3,5)</li> <li>• homelessness/cion-dachaigh (v4)</li> <li>• loneliness/aonaranachd (v3,4)</li> <li>• homesickness/cianalas (v3,5)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• change/atharrachadh (v5)</li> <li>• injustice/ana-ceartas (v5)</li> <li>• social comment/beachd sòisealta (v4)</li> <li>• displacement/fuadachadh (v5)</li> <li>• poverty/bochdainn (v1)</li> <li>• loss/call (v1,3,4,5)</li> </ul>
--	--
- b) Own response



2. a) Relevant choices here will be:

- **Pathos** – a technique used to make the reader or audience feel sorrow or pity. In this song it is particularly effective. The plight of refugees is given a human voice and experience. We gain insight into the needs of other human beings who are often just seen as statistics, treated unfairly and discriminated against. The use of pathos may prick the conscience and change the views of some who may have mixed views on the somewhat contentious issue of immigration. The pathos of the song might result in making a reader think twice about a person they see begging on the street in future. It could also spur the reader into action to make a positive difference to the lives of refugees.
- **Dialogue** – the dialogue (spoken or otherwise) in the song is important. It gives us an insight into the characters very succinctly. The refugee communicates with eye contact but is ignored by the passer-by. Even though there is no actual dialogue between the two it is the unsaid that is exchanged in just a look that is more illuminating. Because neither speaks to the other, assumptions are made. The passer-by is assumed to be disdainful and uncaring. If there had been actual dialogue, the refugee may have had the chance to make the passer-by understand his real needs and to explain that he was once just like him/her – a hard working man/woman – that is, of course, if the refugee was able to speak/understand English.
- **Italics** – Verse two is printed in italics. It is the only verse in the song when we hear the ‘voice’ of the passer-by. The rest of the song is all spoken in the voice of the refugee. Italics are used here to distinguish and highlight the two different voices.
- **Metaphor** – “Mo sgeul-sa ‘s i fodh’ an tuil nan deòir”  
See answer to question 5.
- **Rhythm & Rhyme** – The rhythm and rhyme of a poem/song, or it’s ‘musicality’, can make it more pleasing to the ear; making it flow nicely. Sometimes writers use rhythm to create a particular effect. “Duan an Fhògarraich” is a series of quatrains in structure.

The rhythm of the piece is particularly evident in verse three, which is repeated again at the end of the poem and even more obvious when listening to the song. Most of the things the refugee pleads for have two syllables and, where there are two syllables, the stress is always on the first one (see bold font in quotation below). This has the effect of stretching and stressing these words; making them stand out. These are of course the things that are most important to the refugee and so the poet highlights them like this. The last words of each line also have the same pattern as they are all monosyllabic and have long and rhyming vowel sounds (*sìth, sìnt’ tìr, dhìth*). The rhythm and rhyme enhances the list-like nature of the pleas.

**Cadal, dùsgadh, foighidinn is sìth,**  
**Càirdeas, coibhneas, do làmh-sa dhomh sìnt’,**  
**Ceartas, èisteachd, cothrom anns an tìr,**  
 A-mhàin na nithean tha mi ‘m dhìth.

The rhythm of this ‘chorus’ may possibly have been created by the poet to echo the rhythm of the footsteps of the people who pass by and ignore him on the street.

The rest of the piece (as a text) has no obvious rhythm or rhyme scheme but in stanzas 4 and 5 the last words of lines 2-4 rhyme or have very similar vowel sounds (dhòigh, deòin, deòir and buan, tuar, fuar)



Despite the absence of obvious rhythm across the piece as a whole, when it is listened to in song version the poem has quite a melancholic feel – reflecting the sadness of the situation and the misery of the refugee – thus creating a pathos effect, where the reader/listener feels sympathy for the refugee.

- Repetition – see answer to question 11
- b) Responses dependant on group/class discussion
- 3. The mood of the poem/song is melancholic.  
This is created by the use of pathos, the rhythm and rhyme structure and by the repetition of the refugee’s pleas.

### **Obair Adhartach**

Mus tòisich sgoilearan air aiste, bhiodh e feumail mìneachadh a dhèanamh dhaibh air an diofar eadar neach-imrich agus fògarrach.

## **Dè 's urrainn dhomh fhìn a dhèanamh?**

ceanglaichean feumail

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/refutea>

<http://www.refugee-action.org.uk/support-us/>

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/get-involved>

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/donate/child-refugees>

<http://www.tearfund.org/refugeecrisis>

<https://www.scotland.shelter.org.uk>

