



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 of Scotland

Target group and Aim.

The unit is intended for pupils in higher classes of a German secondary school, with a fairly good command of English, and covers two lessons (90 minutes). The aim is two-fold: to teach more about Scotland within the framework of an Area Studies Scotland project, and to make young people more aware of symbols in shaping national identity.

I would budget for at least an hour, one and a half would be preferable.

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Introduction

Why would it be a good idea to teach something like the symbols of Scotland in the 11th or 12th grade?

First of all, it could be fun! When I first went to Scotland, I became aware of the colourful flags, then saw the lovely purple thistle symbol everywhere and

gradually found more and more symbols: heather, tartan, the kilt, the bagpipes, sheep, Nessie, William Wallace and so on. The more I found out about these symbols, the more my eyes learned to look out for them. Why? Well, behind each and every symbol I found stories and legends, something I have always liked, especially as a child when someone told me them.

So with each symbol, I learned something about the country, its history, its values and got to know the people by talking to them about something they enjoyed talking about and took pride in.

What better way to learn more about a country, not just the language but the culture in which it is used, and bring both language and country to life?

This is what I had in mind when I chose the symbols of Scotland as the topic of a unit. Here language is used for storytelling and communicating person to person, something far removed from soulless book and text learning.

The outline of a lesson

1) Introduction

Put various pictures of different symbols on the board and ask students to go from picture to picture and write down anything they associate with the symbols, underneath the picture. It is easy to find pictures as these symbols are truly ubiquitous, even on the Internet, e.g.

www.RampantScotland.com or www.VisitScotland.com

5 minutes should be enough for this, and another 5 minutes for everyone to look and see what the others have written.

2) Gathering information

Ask students to choose one symbol they would like to learn more about. Provide them with the material they need. Some **sample** material is given below. Of course this material can be altered (reduced, for example) and completely different texts chosen to suit the class.

They need some time to work through the material (at least 10 minutes, depending on the length and complexity of the texts).

They can share and discuss the information with other students who have read about the same symbol (5 minutes).

A selection of symbols:

NB: The source of each picture is given later with the corresponding text.

The Lion Rampant and the Saltire



The Royal Crest









A replica of the Stone of Destiny in front of the Chapel on Moot Hill



The bagpipes

The texts for the symbols

The Saltire:

There are various versions of the tale to be found in the older Scottish historians. They are generally agreed, however, that an army of the Picts under their King Angus (or Hungus) aided by a contingent of the Scots was invading Lothian (then and for long afterwards Northumbrian territory), and found itself surrounded by an overwhelming force of the Angles under their leader Athelstan. King Angus and his host prayed earnestly for deliverance to God and the saints. That night St. Andrew (the Patron Saint of Scotland) appeared to the king and promised him victory.

Next day, when battle was joined, the vision of a white saltire (the diagonal cross on which the Apostle had been martyred) was seen by all against the blue sky. This so encouraged the Picts and Scots and affrighted their adversaries that the former won a signal victory.

In the pursuit, so the tradition goes on, the Northumbrian leader Athelstan was slain at the crossing of the Peffer or Cogtail Burn, the site of which is marked by Athelstaneford Mains Farm, about half a mile south-east of the village.

The Saltire is also known as the Saint Andrew' s Cross.

Source: <http://www.scotlandsource.com/about/ctva2b.htm>:

The Rampant Lion:

The lion has been used as a heraldic device by the Kings of Scotland since William I of Scotland in the 12th century. The Rampant Lion appears to have been used first by Alexander II (1214-1249). The rampant lion stands erect, on its hind legs, with its head in profile and forelegs extended.

Traditionally, in Scotland, the Scottish Royal Standard is only used by Her Majesty the Queen in her capacity as Queen of Scots. However, outside of Scotland, this flag tends to be used as a second national flag.

Source: <http://www.darachweb.com/flags/ScottishLion.html>

The Royal Crest:

King James I was the first Scottish monarch to use a unicorn, a symbol of purity, as part of his coat of arms. It is now part of the present-day coat of arms of the monarch.

This magnificent coat of arms has been recreated in Edinburgh Castle. It was originally designed for King James VI (James I of the United Kingdom) who was born in the castle. As you can see, the monarch still had claims on parts of France. In heraldic terms, this has been perpetuated to this day in the Royal coat of arms which includes a panel with the French "fleur de lys".

This representation of the royal coat of arms is on the wall of the High Court in Glasgow. The royal motto of "Nemo me impune lacessit" (nobody harms me with impunity) is often translated into Scots as "Wha daur meddle wi' me?"

Source: http://www.rampantscotland.com/symbols/blsymbols_crests.htm

The Honours of Scotland

The Scottish Crown Jewels, known as the Honours of Scotland, are the oldest regalia in the British Isles. They comprise a crown, a sword and a sceptre, all of which date from the 15th and 16th centuries. Together with the Stone of Destiny, these symbols of Scottish nationhood are on permanent public display at Edinburgh Castle.

(.....) The Honours have had a rather chequered history. They were first used together in 1543 for the coronation of the infant Mary, Queen of Scots and then at the coronations of James VI in 1567, Charles I in 1633 and Charles II in 1651. Charles II was in fact the last sovereign to receive the Honours and during the British civil wars of the mid 17th century, they lay buried in Kinneff parish church for nine years to avoid being destroyed as their English counterparts had been at the hands of Oliver Cromwell. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, they were used at sittings of the Scottish Parliament to represent the monarch (resident in London in 1603 following the Union of the Crowns). After the Treaty of Union in 1707 removed Scotland's independent parliament, the Honours were considered redundant and were duly locked away in a chest in Edinburgh Castle where they were literally forgotten about for the next hundred or so years. They did not come to light again until 1818 when, under pressure from Sir Walter Scott, a detailed search of the castle uncovered the box and they have remained in the castle ever since.

Source: http://www.visitscotland.com/aboutscotland/UniquelyScottish/Honours_ofScotland

The Kilt and Tartan:

The tartan kilt has long been the most recognisable cultural tradition of the Highland Scots. Therefore, it surprises most people that many of the most recognisable features and traditions associated with the wearing of the kilt have, in fact, been developed in the nineteenth century, not by Scottish Highlanders, but by the Nobles of England and Scotland.

There is much evidence that many of the more recognisable tartans seen today are in fact creations of Scottish and English tailors during the reign of Queen Victoria. Despite this, it has generally been accepted that the basic concepts of the tartan and the wearing of the kilt do indeed have their origin in the history of the early Scottish and Irish clans, or families. It has been demonstrated that certain clans did aspire to a certain uniformity of design for their garments as early as the tenth and eleventh centuries.

The kilt, or philabeg to use its older Gaelic name, that has now become the standard dress for all "Highlanders", has its origin in an older garment called the belted plaid. The Gaelic word for tartan is breacan, meaning partially col-

ored or speckled, and every tartan today features a multicolored arrangement of stripes and checks. These patterns, or sett's, are used to identify the clan, family, or regiment with which the wearer is associated. Although the kilt is the most recognisable of the tartans, it also manifests itself in the form of trews (trousers), shawls, and skirts.

(.....)

After 1688, and the fall of the Stuart clan, and subsequent rise in the spread of Jacobism, the English government felt the need to take a more active interest in the Highland affairs. In 1707, The Act of Union took place, and succeeded in temporarily uniting the political factions and clans that were universally opposed to the Act. The tartan came into its own as a symbol of active nationalism and was seen by the ruling classes to be garb of extremism. It is also believed that this act of parliament succeeded in uniting, to some extent, the Scottish Highlands and Lowlands, as the wearing of the tartan spread from the Highlands to the Lowlands, previously not known for their wearing of the tartan.

(.....)

During the eighteen hundreds, the wearing of the belted plaid began to be exchanged for that of the kilt. The belted plaid, being a one-piece six-foot tall cloth, belted about the waist with the remainder being worn up about the shoulder, was proving to be somewhat inconvenient to wear. A "new", little kilt design became popular, and it consisted of a plaid which had the traditional pleats permanently sewn in place, and separated the lower from the upper half, allowing the upper section to be removed when it became convenient.

By 1746, the Government, weary of being called to quell Highland uprising, enacted a law making it illegal for Highlanders to own or possess arms. A year later, the Dress Act restricted the wearing of Highland clothes. Any form of plaid, philbeag, belted plaid, trews, shoulder belt, or little kilt were not to be worn in public. Punishment for a first offence was a six-month imprisonment, a second offence earned the wearer a seven-year exile to an overseas work farm. Even the Bagpipes were outlawed, being considered an instrument of war. Only those individuals in the army were permitted to wear the plaid, and as a result, it is told that many Highlanders enlisted simply to be allowed to wear their more comfortable traditional dress.

By the time the Dress Act was repealed in 1783, the fabric of Celtic life had been forever altered. The Dress Act had succeeded in altering Highland Society to the extent that many of the old traditions and customs had been lost forever. In spite of the many efforts to revive the traditions, wearing the plaid had become seen as only a nationalistic statement, and was no longer considered a way of life for Highlanders.

(.....)

Source: <http://www.majestictech.com/The-celtic-net/kilthistory.html>

The Thistle:

How, you may ask, did such a thorny flower become a national emblem ?
Well, so the story goes, a very long time ago when Scotland was ravaged by

Viking invaders, a group of Scottish fighting men were resting overnight in a field. Unknown to them, a raiding party was preparing to attack this group of Scots, under cover of darkness. As the attacking Vikings approached the encamped Scots, they stood on a patch of thistles with their bare feet and, of course, let out cries of pain as the thorns dug deep into the soles and toes.

The Scots, having been awakened by this rammy, were able to fight off the attackers. So, from that day, the thistle has been adopted as Scotland ' s National Emblem.

(Well, can you think of a better explanation !)

Nowadays, the Thistle is widely used to signify the "Scottishness " of countless products, services, organisations etc., and can be seen everywhere.

Source: <http://www.scotlandsource.com/about/ctva2d.htm>

The Stone of Destiny:

Legend says that the Stone of Destiny was used as a pillow by Jacob in biblical times. It was believed to have been brought to Scotland in the 9th century. (Other experts suggest it was quarried in the Oban area). It was used as part of the crowning ceremonies of the kings of Dalriada, in the west of Scotland (now Argyll).

When Kenneth I, the 36th King of Dalriada moved his capital to Scone from western Scotland around 840 AD, the Stone of Destiny was moved there too. Coronations of Scottish kings took place at Moot Hill at Scone Palace. There is now only a replica of the stone there.

John Balliol was the last Scottish king to be crowned on the stone at Scone in 1292.

The Stone was taken from Scone by King Edward I of England in 1296 and remained under the Coronation Throne at Westminster Abbey in London for 700 years. However, there have always been theories that the Scots did not hand over the real stone!

On December 25, 1950 a group of Scottish Nationalists removed the Stone and brought it back to Scotland where it remained for four months before it was returned. Or was it? There have been suggestions that a copy was returned, compounding the earlier stories about substitution.

The stone finally came back to Scotland on St Andrew's Day, 30 November 1996, and is housed beside the other Honours of Scotland in Edinburgh Castle. Historic Scotland examined the stone on its arrival and pronounced that it was "probably" the original stone from Dalriada.

In the event of a future coronation of a British monarch, the Stone of Destiny is to be temporarily replaced under the Coronation Throne at Westminster Abbey.

Source: <http://www.rampantscotland.com/know/blknow16.htm>

The Bagpipes:

The Dark Ages have left us practically nothing regarding bagpipes or their position in societies. Prior to the 12th century, only a few Pictish and Irish stone carvings record the continued existence of bagpipes during this time.

When they were first introduced to the British Isles is debatable. Findings of statuettes of bagpipers in Roman era archaeological digs in England could indicate a diffusion of the bag technology from that vector. Ireland has references going back at least to the Middle Ages, as well as the stone carvings previously mentioned which date back to the 8th century. An explosion of popularity seems to have occurred from around the 12th century; the tune used by Robert Burns for "Scots Wha Hae", "Hey Tutti Taiti", is traditionally said to have been the tune played as Robert the Bruce's troops marched to the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. During the 12th century, Europe underwent a flourishing of art and culture as her horizons were being expanded with the crusades. The bagpipes were no exception, and many of Europe's unique bagpipes began to develop around this time. (.....) In Britain, pipers became part of the travelling minstrel class, acting as carriers of news, gossip and music around the country. In the Scottish Highlands, the pipers started to displace the harpers, the chief Celtic musicians since Roman times, round about the 16th century.

With the growth of the British Empire, often spearheaded by Highland regiments of the British Army, the Great Highland Bagpipe was diffused and has become well-known world-wide. This surge in popularity, boosted by the huge numbers of pipers trained for the two World Wars in the 20th century, coincided with a decline in the popularity of many traditional forms of bagpipe throughout Europe, which began to be displaced by instruments from the classical tradition and later by gramophone and radio.

In the modern era the use of bagpipes has become a common tradition for military funerals and memorials in the anglophone world, and they are often used at the funerals of high-ranking civilian public officials as well. Weddings, dances and parties are also venues for piping, in fact any social event, that can be given a lift by the addition of this unique instrumental music.

In more recent years, often driven by revivals of native folk music and dance, many types of bagpipes have resurged in popularity, and in many cases instruments that were on the brink of extinction have become extremely popular. (.....)

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bagpipe>

Ideas for other symbols

As said above, there are many more symbols of Scotland, which might appeal more to a particular class or age group e.g. heroic/tragic historic figures like William Wallace and Robert the Bruce, or Bonnie Prince Charlie and Flora Macdonald, or the legends behind the Loch Ness monster and white heather.

See for example:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loch_Ness_Monster

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/bruce_robert_the.shtml

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/independence/features_independence_wallace.shtml

3) Sharing information

Give the students small picture tags to stick on their pullover, blouse etc.

Reorganize the classroom as in a café, so that the students can move about freely and sit down and talk with the “expert” on whatever other symbols they are interested in.

Encourage them to change partners about 2 or 3 times.

4) Recap

Ask the students to add what they have learnt about the symbols on the board. Give them time to read and think.

The lesson can be rounded off with a quick game of “noughts and crosses” or picture puzzles of the symbols.

Better still: having talked about ‘their’ symbols in a kind of café it would be nice to have some Scottish shortbread (a sweet buttery biscuit) and tea ... 😊

5) Follow up

Discussion:

What function do you think the many different symbols have for Scotland?

Why is it important for a nation to have symbols? Which symbols of your own country can you think of and what do they mean for you?

Give the students 5 minutes to think about it alone, another 5-10 minutes to talk about their ideas with a partner. Then organize a chaired discussion on the topic.

6) Homework

Ask them to write a short text on two of their favourite symbols of Scotland, saying why they chose these particular ones.

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