The Rhymachine of Rufus McLean



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Nelson Literacy Directions

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The Rhymachine of Rufus McLean

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Meet the Characters

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Rufus McLean

An inventor.



Fingus the Wee

A sheep-stealer.



Bogie Duntroon

A haggis-smuggler.



Lochless McDilly

A would-be restaurant owner.



Macrascal, McSlimy, MacSnortle, McCrackle and Campbell

The other Highland lairds.

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POSTCARD

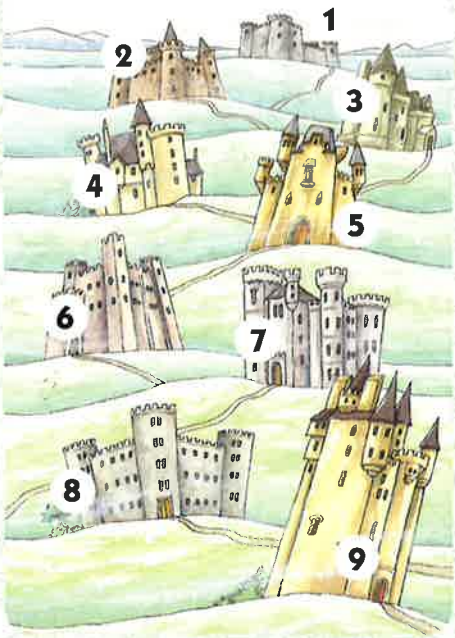
Dear Reader

On a dark Scottish night, the dastardly Highland lairds have their usual agenda of haggis-rustling, pick-sporraning and oatcake-smuggling ruined by some unwelcome news. They are required to do something they never expected – and they will need some serious help to accomplish their awful task!

Quentin Flynn
Author

The Scottish Highlands

1. Castle Campbell
2. Castle McCrackle
3. Castle MacSnortle
4. Castle McSlimy
5. Castle McLean
6. Castle Wee
7. Castle McDilly
8. Castle Duntroon
9. Castle Macrascal



1 A Highland Gathering

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Wee:
SMALL *or* little

Wallydraigle:
A FEEBLE, *weak*
PERSON

Fingus the Wee raised one quivering eyebrow impossibly high, fixing the target of his taunt with an eye so bloodshot it matched the red of his clan tartan.

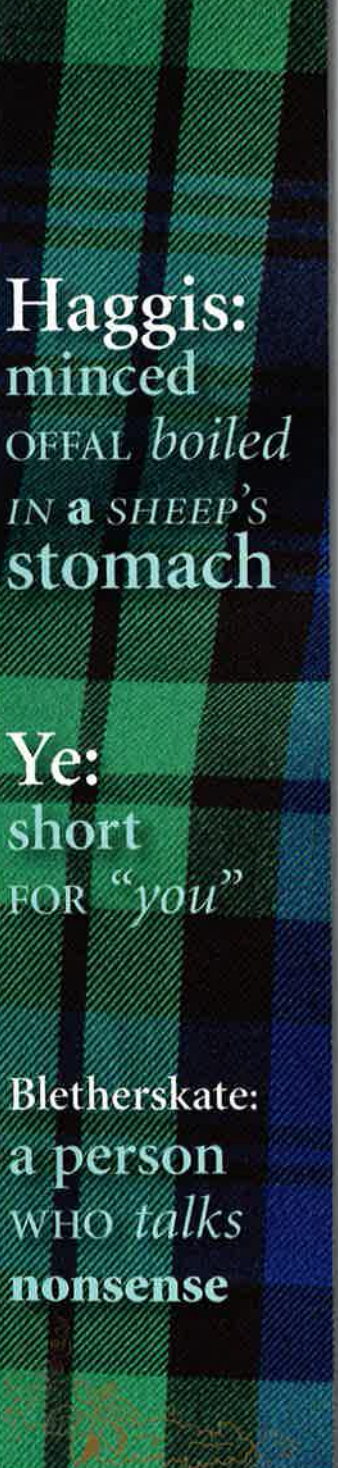
"OCH, BOGIE, YOU'RE A WALLYDRAIGLE!" he roared, with a drizzle of spit and splutter that rained over the rough wooden table.

Fingus the Wee, the shortest and fiercest sheep-stealer north of the River Spey in Scotland, stood one-and-a-half magnificent metres tall, and sported a mane of black hair like the scorched head of a woolly mammoth.



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It was 1746 and Fingus the Wee was engaging in his favourite Highland sport – trading insults across the table with his red-bearded, six-foot-tall, haggis-smuggling cousin, Bogie Duntroon.

Bogie's retort echoed around the soot-stained walls of the banquet chamber in which he, Fingus the Wee, and seven other fearsomely frowning Scotsmen were feasting on deliciously stinky smoked herrings and lumpy, warm porridge.

"A wallydraigle? Weak, am I? Ye ... ye ... bletherskate!"

Bogie snorted so furiously that green slime sprayed all over Fingus's hair. His fishy breath threatened to blow out the

thick, spluttering candle casting shadows across the other diners devouring their dinner.

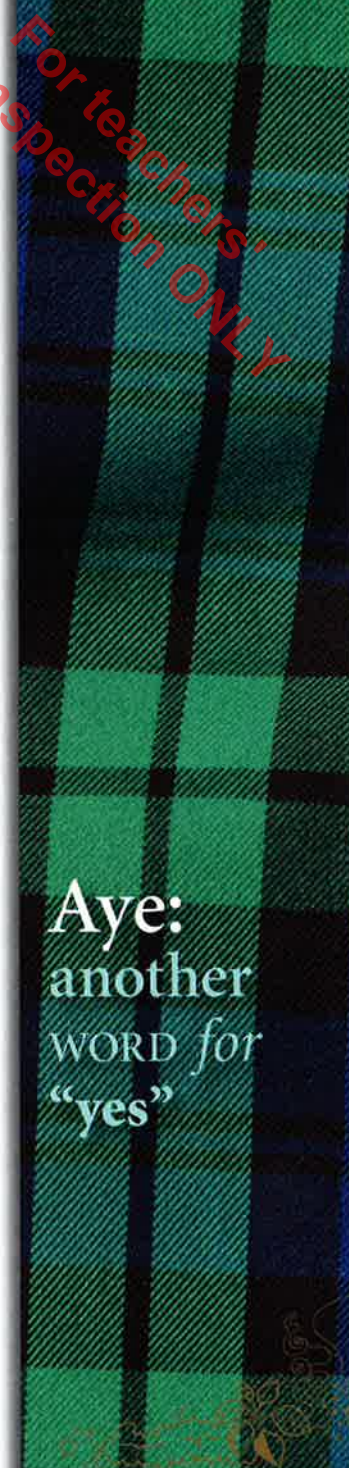
Bogie turned to a ferocious black-haired man on his left, Rufus McLean, who was hungrily elbowing his way towards the porridge bowl: "Rufus!" he said, poking his neighbour.

Only a brave man would do that to Rufus McLean, especially when he was armed with a particularly squiffy herring.

"I've heard our enemies, the cowardly English soldiers, have been comin' to me wee cousin Fingus on their hands an' knees!" said Bogie, stroking his red beard thoughtfully.

"Oh, aye?" burped Rufus.

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His heavy, black eyebrows furrowed in concentration. "Hands and knees?"

Rufus McLean was the cleverest of the chieftains when it came to inventing machines to cut gold coins in half to double his money, or to fill rolls of roast beef with stones so they could charge the English more for them, but he was a little slow to get jokes. He was the one who always needed them explained.

Fingus the Wee broke in, glaring at Bogie. "Aye?" he blustered, suddenly suspicious of his cousin's incessant teasing. "What's wrong with that?" If there was anything guaranteed to ignite the Wee's fiery temper, it was a joke about his height. He shoved his wooden bowl of porridge to one side, ready to lunge at Bogie. Bogie didn't blink.

"They've been on their hands an' knees, peerin' under his bed, asking him to come out an' fight like a man!" hooted Bogie.

The table erupted in laughter. Fingus's face relaxed and he grinned into his bowl of smoked fish and porridge.

"Right unfriendly, them English," growled Rufus, spitting out a herring bone.

"Oh, aye?" chomped Fingus across the table, crunching his way through a fish tail.

"Aye," nodded Rufus. "I went doon to London one night."

"And?" queried Bogie.

"They spent the whole night bangin' on the doors an' the walls an' the ceilin' o' me room," Rufus continued, through a mouthful of mangled fish guts.

"Really?" whistled Fingus.

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Doon: down