

Museums
& Galleries
Edinburgh

Writers'
Museum

EARLY AND FIRST LEVEL



THE WRITERS' MUSEUM

Early and First level

Featuring three famous 'Scottish Super Stars'
**ROBERT BURNS, SIR WALTER SCOTT
& ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON**



Door lintel and a brief history of the building

- Lady Stair's House is nearly 400 years old! It is built from sandstone.
- This was once a great house sitting in a prestigious area of Edinburgh's old town.
- Many people have lived here and the close was previously called 'Lady Gray's Close' in honour of Lady Gray who lived here until the 18th century.
- The building you can see today is not the same as it was - by the 1890s the house was in a bad condition and was almost pulled down!
- Restoration saved most of the building but the north, south and west wings were demolished because they were dangerous.



- The Lintel above the front door is dated 1622.
(The Lintel is exactly above the front door of the building on the outside)
- Carved onto this are the initials **WG** for William Gray and **GS** for his wife Geida Smith.
- Sir William Gray of Pittendrum [**WG**] had the house built in 1622 and lived in it with his wife, Geida Smith [**GS**]. Geida was the Lady Gray - the Close was originally named after.
- To the left of William's initials, there are three letters intertwined: **W G S**.
- The banner/ motto says: '**Feare the Lord and Depart from Evile**'.
- In the middle of the lintel is an escutcheon (this is a shield or emblem bearing a coat of arms). On the left of this is a lion rampant, a saltire on the right and in the top right corner a crescent moon.
- To the left by William's initials is a star and by Geida's there is a flower.

Questions

Can you see any numbers? Can you see any letters / sounds?

1622 / Feare the Lord and Depart from Evile / W G S.

Why do you think there are letters?

Letters are the initials of the people who lived here when the house was built.

What could the number mean?

It is the year the house was built.
This is the year 2018 / 2019 / 2020 (as relevant).

What is the animal on the top of the front door?

A lion rampant.

Can you ROAR like a lion?

Can you strike a pose like the lion?

NEXT PAGE - THIS WILL LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT THE OUTSIDE BUILDING OF THE MUSEUM



OUTSIDE

The building and surrounding area

- Looking at the commemorative plaque on the side of the building is important - it shows the date that the house was built (**1622**) and the date it was restored (**1897**).
- Clearly visible are the letters **R** and **S** (the letters are repeated many times, both inside and outside the museum).
- **S** is for Lady Stair who lived in the house from 1719 until 1731 (the house and close were renamed at this point to 'Lady Stair's House' and 'Lady Stair's Close' and have remained so to date).
- **R** is for Lord Roseberry who bought the house in 1895 saving it from the clearance schemes which tore down many buildings in the Old Town.



Questions

Can you see the letters on the plaque?

What are they?

R and S.

Can you see the same numbers as on the lintel? Can you see any other numbers?

1622 and 1897.

There are lots more 'R's and 'S's on the building – can you spot them?

On the down pipes / the balcony / the side of the building.

When you go inside the museum - look out for more 'R's and 'S's.

THE WRITERS' MUSEUM CELEBRATES THE LIVES OF ROBERT BURNS, SIR WALTER SCOTT AND ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.
IN THE COLLECTION ARE PORTRAITS, RARE BOOKS AND PERSONAL OBJECTS.



Robert Louis Stevenson

HEADING INTO THE MUSEUM: HAZARD! PLEASE WATCH THE STEP!

As you enter the museum the front door has a step.

Heading down - there are 6 uneven stairs and low ceiling height in places.

These rooms were originally the kitchen and servant rooms. There are many family photographs, a tartan scarf, a telescope, lock of hair and books.

- Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh on the 13th of November 1850.
- He would be 170 years old if he was still alive today! (*at time of writing in 2020*).
- But he died when he was only 44 years old, on the 3rd of December 1894.
- Robert Louis Stevenson was a Scottish novelist, poet, essayist and travel writer. He wrote a huge amount! He used a lot of Scots in his writing.
- Some of his best loved books: *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *A Child's Garden of Verses* and many more.
- On the right-hand side of the room as you enter there are lots of photos of RLS growing up. The first picture in the series is of him and his mother, Margaret. He was aged 4 in this photograph.
- In this photograph RLS is wearing a dress and has hair in a chin length style. Picture taken 1854.

- It wasn't until the 1920s that this tradition was phased out.
- 'Breeching' was a rite of passage for boys and generally happened between 4 and 8 years old. This was the process of boys graduating from dresses to trousers - this tradition could have come about because it made potty training easier and it phased out in the 1920s

Optional extra:

Scots version of nursery rhyme – Heads, shoulders, knees and toes (and eyes and ears and mouth and nose)!

*Heid, shooders, knaps and taes,
Knaps and taes,
Heid, shooders, knaps and taes,
Knaps and taes,*

*And een and lugs and mooth and claes,
Heid, shooders, knaps and taes, knaps and taes.*

Questions

Who do you think is in this photograph?

Is the child a boy or a girl? Why do you think that?

A boy.

Does the child look happy?

Who do you think the lady could be?

Robert Louis Stevenson and his mother.

How many people do you think are in RLS' family? How many people are there in your family?

Do you think this photo is a new one or is it an old one? Why do you think that?

Do boys wear dresses when they are little now?

What colour do you think the dress might be?

What is your favourite colour?

What other things in this room can tell you things about what Robert Louis Stevenson was like as a child? What he liked? What he played with?



Tusitala - teller of tales

The Lamplighter

(a poem from 'A Child's Garden of Verses')

*My tea is nearly ready and the sun has left the sky;
It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
For every night at teatime and before you take your seat,
With lantern and with ladder he comes posting up the street.
Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea,
And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do,
Oh Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with you!
For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more;
And O! before you hurry with ladder and with light,
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him tonight!*

Robert Louis Stevenson

HEADING INTO THE MUSEUM: HAZARD! PLEASE WATCH THE STEP! *There are 3 steps down.*

There are some interesting artefacts in this room from Robert Louis Stevenson's time in Samoa and some items from his Edinburgh life too. Look out for: his wardrobe, made by the infamous Deacon Brodie whose double life may have inspired the novel, 'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde', his riding gear, a pillow he used in Samoa, printing machinery, some mother of pearl shells, some fans and some household items (plates and glasses).

Optional extra:

Reading the poem with the children in the museum is an optional extra.

The Lamplighter

(a poem from 'A Child's Garden of Verses')

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It's time to take the window to see Leerie going by;
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And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be;
But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do,
Oh Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with you!*

*For we are very lucky, with a lamp before the door,
And Leerie stops to light it as he lights so many more;
And O! before you hurry with ladder and with light,
O Leerie, see a little child and nod to him tonight!*

Questions about the poem:

Who is the narrator for this poem? What is a leerie? Why were there leeries?

No electricity - lighting the street lamps for people.

Why is he interested in the leerie? What job would you like to do when you are grown up?



Questions

What do you think 'teller of tales' means?

This was a name that the Chief gave to Stevenson - why do you think the Chief in Samoa called Stevenson this?

Do you think that the Chief liked the stories Stevenson made up? Why?

What do you think this pillow is made from?

Do you think it looks comfortable?

Would you like a pillow like this?

Can you see RLS riding boots, crop and cap?

What do you think these were for?

Do you think he had small feet or big feet?

When do you think he would wear them? Horse riding.

What noise does this animal make?

Can you NEIGH like a horse?



ROOM 2

The Great Hall

HAZARD! PLEASE WATCH THE STEP! *There are 3 steps down.*

Head back up towards the front door (up 6 steps) from the front door there are 11 further stairs - again, these are uneven and irregular.

Before going up the stairs - **ask the children what they can notice as they are carefully going upstairs.** There are the letters R and S again and there are also flowers and thistles in a repeated pattern. **Why do they think there might be flowers and thistles? What kind of flower could it be?**

Go through the glass door on the left-hand side of the stairs on a small landing.

This room is the Great Hall. In the middle of this room is a space for temporary exhibitions, there may be a temporary exhibition on the day of your trip. Originally, the Great Hall used to be, the dining room and a bedroom. The shop for the Writers' Museum is on this level. There are pocket money items available to buy.

Questions

Get the children to look up at the ceiling. What can you see?
R and S.

Looking at the fireplace. What shape is above the fireplace?
Battlements.

Where would you normally see that shape?
On a castle.

Can you draw that shape in the air with your finger?

How high is the fireplace? Is it taller or smaller than you?

Who can see the biggest window in the room?

What shape is this window? What shape is each pane of glass? How many panes of glass is the window made up of?
44 panes of glass.

Look at the busts of the writers – can you work out which bust belongs to which writer?

What do you think of them? Do you like them?

Is there anything else you can work out about the writers?

Do the busts look like the portraits of the writers that you have seen / will see as you go around the museum?



CHALLENGE! Can you count how many panes of glass there are altogether?



Sir Walter

Sir Walter Scott

Introduction to the next amazing Scottish writer - **Sir Walter Scott**.

The Walter Scott collection begins in the Great Hall, this includes his desk, a model of the Scott Monument and some paintings.

The rest of the Scott collection is upstairs - the staircase for this room is just off the Great Hall and is a narrow and uneven staircase with a fantastic history.

Questions

- Sir Walter Scott was born in Edinburgh on the 15th of August 1771.
- He would be 249 years old if he was still alive today! (at time of writing in 2020).
- He died when he was 61 years old (a good old age) on the 21st of September 1832.
- Out of the three writers in this museum, Scott lived the longest.
- Sir Walter Scott was a Scottish novelist - he invented a new kind of storybook called the Historical novel. He wrote lots and lots of books, poems and essays. He used **Scots** in his writing.
- He also had another job as Clerk of Session and Sheriff Depute of Selkirkshire whilst writing and editing!
- By the 1820s Scott was possibly one of the most famous of living Scotsmen.

- **Sir Walter Scott wrote a series of books called 'Waverley', can anyone think of anything in Edinburgh called Waverley?** Waverley railway station / Waverley Bridge / Waverley court - these were named after his books.
- **Has anyone ever been to Princes Street Gardens or along Princes Street? - have they seen a big statue?** (like the model of the statue which is on display here)?
- **Does anyone know what it is called?** The Scott Monument.
- **If you look closely at the model of the monument - what animal is sitting with Scott?** This is Scott's favourite dog called, 'Maida'.

Can you WOOF like a dog?





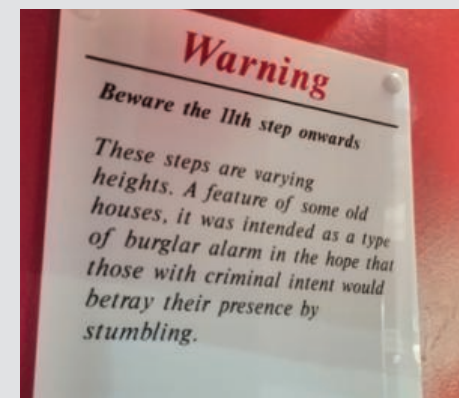
STAIRS

The Burglar Stairs

HAZARD! PLEASE WATCH THE STEP!

Head up the steps but please take care – these steps were deliberately made uneven and of different heights.

- At the top of the staircase on the right-hand side is a small room - this is the Scott room. It is very small but has some lovely artefacts in it.
- This room would probably have been a bedroom.
- Although the blinds are down for conservation reasons, it offers a wonderful view over Princes Street Gardens and beyond - it would have been a nice room.



The burglar alarm

This staircase was part of the old house. It was made deliberately uneven - with steps of varying heights. This was a common feature in old houses, it was intended as a type of burglar alarm!

The idea was that the intruder would trip - not expecting the varying heights and make a noise. This noise would alert the household and the intruder would be caught.

CHALLENGE! Can you all sneak up the stairs without making a sound?



Sir Walter Scott

Questions

- Please do not touch - look with your eyes and not your hands!
- If everyone was to touch this - it would not last very long. By not touching you are helping to conserve this piece.

What is this?

A rocking horse.

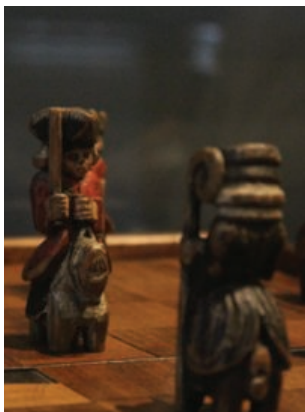
What is it made from?

Wood.

Is it old or new?

Old - a well-used and well-loved toy.

Why do you think this?



What are rocking horses made from now? Do they look like this one?

- Look at the padded seat part - under here there were important papers from his father's work, helping to keep the seat comfy.

Can you see the head?

Can you see the footrests? If you look carefully over the top of the rocking horse you will see that one footrest is higher than the other? **Why do you think this might be?**

- Sir Walter Scott was very poorly as a child - he had an illness called Polio. This caused Scott to be lame in one leg. He was often in the countryside to improve his health (in the Scottish Borders) where he eventually lived.

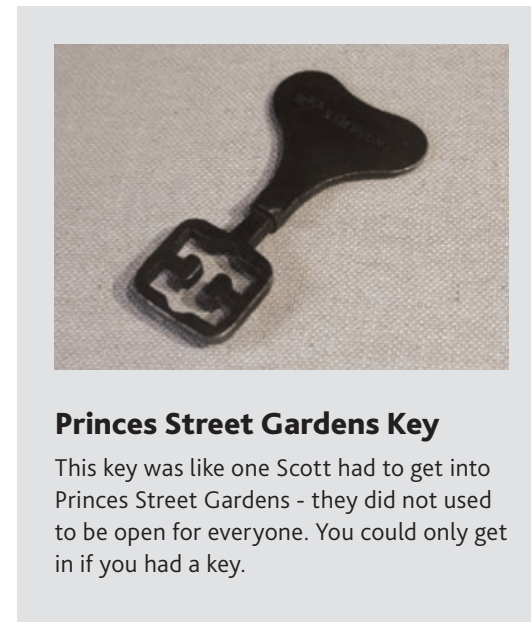
What other games can you see in the room?

Chess.

Look at the faces of the pieces. Do you like them?

- Look at Walter Scott's slippers - these were made for him because some of his friends saw his slippers and thought they were awful.

What colour are they? Do you have slippers?



Princes Street Gardens Key

This key was like one Scott had to get into Princes Street Gardens - they did not used to be open for everyone. You could only get in if you had a key.





To a Mouse (verse one)

by Robert Burns

*Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring pattle"*

Robert Burns

From the Great Hall go up the three steps and head right. There are 2 rooms about Burns. The statue of Burns that the children are looking for is in a window space in the hallway before you get into the Burns rooms - so keep your eyes open! There are many sculptures, artefacts and paintings to see.

- Robert Burns was born in Alloway on the 25th of January 1759.
- He would be 262 years old if he was still alive today! (*at time of writing in 2020*).
- He died when only 37 years old, on the 21st of July, 1796.
- He lived in Edinburgh for a short while (in a house very close to this museum- unfortunately no longer there because it was cleared away).
- Burns is often referred to as Scotland's National Bard, his poetry and songs are known and loved all over the world. His birthday is celebrated widely as 'Burns Night' and traditionally many people sing 'Auld Lang Syne' to welcome the new year in.
- Burns was a champion of **Scots** and used Scots in most of his writing.

Optional extra: *To a Mouse (verse one) by Robert Burns (read aloud)*

*Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie, (Small, sleek, cowering, timorous beast,)
O, what a panic's in thy breastie! (Oh, what panic is in your breast!]
Thou need na start awa sae hasty, (You need not start away so hasty)
Wi' bickering brattle! (With a hurrying scamper!]
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee, (I would be loath to run and chase you,)
Wi' murd'ring pattle" (With a murderous spade.)*

Burns and Scott

- The lives of Burns and Scott overlapped a little and there is a fantastic painting hanging over the fireplace in the first room you will enter. This is an oil painting by William Borthwick Johnstone (1856).
- Scott is the young, blonde haired boy, sitting on the bottom left of the painting, Burns is third from the left, standing in the doorway and many eyes are upon him. The people in the painting are named along the edge of the frame.

Can you notice anything else in the painting which is interesting?



Cutlery set, including knife, fork and sugar tongs (above)

What are they made from?
Wood and metal.

Are they the same as the ones you use in school and at home?



Traditional and old Scottish drinking vessel (left)

What do you think a quich is for? What is it made from?
Wood.

Can you say it together, quich?



Robert Burns

Can you spot the R and S on the fireplace in this room?

WARNING: There is a plaster cast copy of Robert Burns skull in the far display cabinet in this room.

Questions

This was Burns' writing desk, used by the poet during his life. Is it like your desk at school? What is it made out of?
Wood with green inlay.

Looking at the pictures of Robert Burns in the room and the sculptures, what do you think he looked like? What colour hair? What colour eyes? Do you think he was a tall man or a small man? Why do you think that?

Why are there no photographs of Burns?

Burns lived pre-photography, it was still to be invented.

Do you think that the paintings tell us accurately what Robert looked like?

How could we work this out?

By looking at all the pictures of Robert you will notice there

is a lot of similarities in their depiction of him - he has dark eyes and dark hair etc.

Looking at the pictures in this room - what kind of job do you think Robert Burns did?

He was a farmer for much of his life.

CHALLENGE! Can you count how many sculptures you can find of Robert Burns in both rooms and the hall?
(4)

Optional extra:

Read the story book: *My Luv'e's Like a Red, Red Rose* illustrated by Ruchi Mhasane - this is a lovely edition which tell the story of a mother's love.

When you get back to school can you write a poem or story about the museum?

Can you use some Scots words in your writing?



Robert Burns funeral picture (above)

This picture is in the middle of the wall opposite the windows.

In this picture it shows thousands of people lining the streets of Dumfries for the funeral procession (25th July 1796 just 4 days after he died) of this much-loved poet.

The procession was led by the Dumfries Royal Volunteers, a regiment that Burns helped to form in 1795 (January) when France threatened to invade Britain.

'Sword Stick' (below)

This looks like a walking cane but inside it hides a sword! Probably useful for Robert when he was working as an excise man.

This job involved checking people had paid the right amount of tax on items they were bringing into the county. Not an easy job.

