



Bairns by Betty Allan

Fit is it we hiv against bairns?
Fit hairm hiv they deen us ava?
Haein brocht them aa intae this ill-trickit warld
Div we nae really want them at aa?

Fit wey div we leave them perplexed
Fan they need tae ken fit's fit, for sure?
Fit wey, fan they maist need tae be understood
Dis some big body aye slam the door?

Vietnamese bairns were fried we napalm.
Some governments stairve bairns at will.
Sooth African bairnies were shot doon or jiled.
Nicaraguans train bairns tae kill.

There's Scots bairnies butchered an bruised;
Bairns, tortured again an again,
Lie wauknife an wait for that fit on the stair
That brings the unspeakable pain.

An we never let on that we ken!
Fit is it we hiv against bairns?



Learner resources

Reading/Listening

Read and/or listen to the poem and think about the images and emotions it conjures up in your mind.

Note any unfamiliar words or phrases and try to work out what they mean. You can use the [Scots Dictionary for Schools app](#) or the online Scots dictionary at dsl.ac.uk.

The poem suggests it is important that children learn what's what. It can be argued that growing up is all about learning 'what's what' (fit's fit).

Task

Discuss: Who has the main responsibility for teaching children 'what's what?' Why?



Analysis

'Ill-trickit world'

Task 1:

What does 'ill-trickit' mean when used here?

Task 2:

If a person was described as 'ill-trickit', what do you think the word would mean in that particular context?

'Fit' is the North East Scots/Doric word for 'what'. Think about the phrase 'Tae ken fit's fit'.

Task 3:

Explain in your own words the meaning of this phrase.

Task 4:

Imagine you are a parent. Consider some of the important things you would try to teach or show a child of yours.

- A) What do you think the final aim of a caring parent is?
- B) What hopes do you think a caring parent might have for his/her child?

Task 5:

In an 'ill-trickit life', of course, things do not always work out this way. Not all children are well-treated or cared for as well as we might like.

- A) What evidence is there in the poem to support this idea?
- B) What reasons lie behind the different types of ill-treatment or lack of proper care?



Writing

The poem paints a picture of a world which has forgotten the joy children can bring to everyone in the things they do and say. Children are our future.

Task

Write a poem to remind us of all the good things about children, entitled *Where wid we be withoot bairns?*