

Empty Vessel by Hugh MacDiarmid

I met ayont the cairney
A lass wi tousie hair
Singin till a bairnie
That was nae langer there.

Wunds wi warlds to swing
Dinna sing sae sweet,
The licht that bends owre aa thing
Is less ta'en up wi'it.

Learning Resources

Reading

Read the poem and listen to the audio file.

If there are unfamiliar words, try to work out what they mean according to their context, or look them up using a Scots dictionary – you can use an online Scots dictionary at www.dsl.ac.uk.

Understanding

- A. In the first stanza the poet tells of a strange meeting.
1. Whom did he meet?
 2. Where did he meet her?
 3. To whom was she singing?
 4. What might have happened?
- B. In the second stanza the poet thinks about the girl.
1. What does he compare her singing to?
 2. What is she 'taen up with'?
 3. How do you think she feels about what has happened to her?
 4. What do you think the poet is going to do?