

2 Fighting for Freedom

How has Scotland shaped the Highland hero?

1 The figure of the Highland hero

A. Read the text. What are the Highlander's main qualities, according to the journalist?

B. Go further. Does the image of the Scottish hero match your idea of what a hero should be? Why (not)?

The Scottish hero has a different, very distinct appeal than other heroes. As a writer and a reader, there's nothing more intriguing than a Highland hero. It's association by terrain, by culture, and by sound. Scotland is a land of rugged¹, timeless beauty and windswept moors², resilient³ against centuries of subjugation⁴. The terrain makes Scottish heroes hard, tough and robust. Their culture makes them proud, fearless and loyal. In my opinion, a Highlander is the ultimate alpha male, confident in his own power and appreciative of the strength in his woman... His deep, melodic burr⁵ doesn't hurt his appeal either. Other writers agree that the hero embodies the land, and that readers want that association with Scotland itself. [...] The Highlander has become the image the readers have when looking for a Scottish romance, that big, strapping hero in his plaid with his broadsword, that challenging but beautiful countryside behind

him. The history of the Highlander and the clans is what makes a Highland hero different from the other alpha heroes as it adds a rich depth to him from the moment he strides onto the page. [...] The Scottish hero is usually fighting against terrible odds⁶, reflecting true history. We love this hero for his unflinching courage in facing the powerful forces aligned against him and for his loyalty to his woman, his family and his clan. The Scottish hero also has the advantage of being surrounded by strong women who challenge and tease him. Not only will the heroine have a spirit to match his, but his mother and sisters and the old women of his clan all seem ready to set him straight when they think he needs it.

1 /'rʌɡɪd/ = rough /rʌf/, austere /ɔ:'stiə/ • 2 landes • 3 résistant • 4 servitude • 5 countryside accent • 6 tout est contre lui

Madeline Hunter, *USAtoday*, 13 August 2014

2 How the Highlander hero came to be

A. Read the text. Find some clichés about the Scottish Highlander.

B. Turn to **Worksheet n°46** to learn about Robert the Bruce, William Wallace and Black Agnes.

C. Where does the Scots' reputation for being fearsome come from?

D. Go further. What part did Walter Scott play in the creation of the Scottish hero?

Picture in your mind's eye the Scottish Highlands: the gorgeous lochs, the dramatic landscapes... the fearsome, swoon-worthy¹, kilted men. From 19th century popular fiction to Hollywood blockbusters, audiences of the world have been enraptured² by the rugged image of the highlander. But what are the true origins of this legendary man? The birth of this hero can be traced back to 1296, when English forces invaded Scotland and sparked³ the Wars of Scottish Independence. The conflict went on until the early 14th century with neither side able to claim decisive victory. From this dark and bloody time, however, several brave Scots became renown for their bravery. One of the most famous Scots of that period was the patriotic knight⁴ William Wallace, who defeated the English army at the Battle of Stirling Bridge and later became the inspiration for the 1995 film *Braveheart*. Perhaps less famous but certainly no less important was 'Black Agnes', the Countess of Dunbar who successfully repelled English troops when they tried to seize Dunbar Castle. Finally in 1357, Scotland once again emerged as a sovereign nation,

thanks to the heroic efforts of Robert the Bruce at the Battle of Bannockburn. Robert was crowned king, and the Scots thus gained a reputation for being ferocious warriors. Unfortunately, by the 19th century, Scotland was once more a subject nation to England, and many of its cultural traditions were on the brink of extinction — until Sir Walter Scott stepped onto the scene. Born in Edinburgh, Scott was a respected historian and writer as well as a fierce⁵ advocate of Scottish culture. In 1814, he penned a historical romance titled *Waverley*, which became a huge success. *Waverley* and Scott's subsequent novels, such as *Rob Roy* and *Ivanhoe*, remain important works in the canon of Scottish literature, and did much to establish the legend of the fearsome, dashing highlander that continues to capture our imagination to this day.

1 ici, beau à défallir • 2 émerveiller • 3 start • 4 chevalier • 5 ferocious

Deborah Chu, *The Myth and Romance of the Highlander*, 2019.

HELP!

Nouns

- patriot /'peɪtriət/
- hero /'hiərəʊ/, heroine /'herəʊɪn/

Adjectives

- fictional
- brutal

- patriotic

- victorious
- heroic /'hiərəʊɪk/

Verbs & expressions

- stand up for sth = defend
- stand up to sb = oppose sb