

## ENGLIT 1199, Topics in British Literature: Ideas of Nation and National Character in Scottish Literature

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Pitt in Edinburgh Summer 2017 (June 8-July 8)

Please buy, borrow, or download these books:

1. Robert Louis Stevenson, *Kidnapped* (Any edition is OK, though I like the Oxford World Classics edition, which has good explanatory notes; you might find these necessary to following the historical and some of the cultural references)
2. Liz Lochhead, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (I don't think this is available free online. Get the Nick Hern Books (revised) edition; a used copy might be \$1.50 plus shipping: <https://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1848420285>)
3. Ian Rankin, *Let It Bleed*
4. Alexander McCall Smith, *44 Scotland Street* (again, with both of these, you should be able to find used copies or e-books)

I will put these short texts on our Course Web site:

Robert Burns, selected poems  
Sir Walter Scott, excerpt from *Rob Roy*  
Muriel Spark, excerpt from *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*  
Irvine Welsh, excerpts from *Trainspotting*

### Course Description:

While we're absorbing and exploring the wonderful city of Edinburgh, and some of the Scottish countryside as well, we will read a selection of classic and contemporary literature that grapples with issues of Scottish history, national identity and cultural difference, language, customs, and sense of place.

Lectures and class discussions will tie in Scottish historical and cultural contexts as well as our experience and observations of the place, its landscape, monuments and museums. Besides reading, class work will include written reading responses and a short final paper.

### Reading Schedule:

#### Week One (June 12-15):

Stevenson, *Kidnapped* (please have this read before the beginning of the course). We will have an overview of the history of Scotland and "Scottish literature," an introduction to ideas about ideas of national character. "Scots" language is an essential part of this character, so we'll look at some poems by Robert Burns, Scotland's "National Poet." A brief excerpt from Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*.

### Week Two:

[3-day trip (June 19-21) to Highlands, Skye, Loch Ness]

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> classes: an excerpt from *Rob Roy* by Sir Walter Scott, first great popularizer of Scottish history and legend. Film clips of *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart*.

### Week Three (June 26-29):

Lochhead, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* [we will read this in class]

Film: *The Stone of Destiny*.

We'll be reading Rankin, *Let It Bleed*, and start to discuss later in week (probably Wed).

### Week Four (July 3-6): Views of Contemporary Edinburgh

Finish discussing *Let It Bleed*.

McCall Smith, *44 Scotland Street*.

Excerpts from Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting*.

### Reading Journals:

I expect you to write some thoughtful notes in response to our readings each week, one for each of the four longer texts. Include comments on short texts that move you as well. Consider these journals part review and part class prep. Here's the approach I'd like you take:

1. Do a short synopsis first; probably a paragraph or two is fine, and it's better to be succinct than thorough. You're telling friends (reader friends, that is, people of your own or more serious reading caliber) what this book is "about," where and when it takes place, its central plot elements, characters, themes.
2. What do you find particularly difficult, remarkable/unique, or familiar/conventional about the book? Give at least one specific example; that is, quote a passage and talk about how it illustrates your observation.
3. What keyword would you like to discuss more in class? Obviously, there are tons of strange words, either in Scots dialect or just archaic words that we don't normally use, but a "keyword" should be one that seems especially important to the story or to ideas the writer is stressing. It could, in fact, be a totally familiar word that takes on a whole new meaning in the context of this story.

### Final Reflection:

There won't be a "term paper" for this class. Instead, I'll ask you to look over your Reading Journals and write a brief (4 page) reflection on the course, what the readings have taught you about "Scottish literature" or "national character," and how they've affected your experience of Scotland.