

eVIEWS

An interview with Fiona McDonald, Scottish accent.

GLOSSARY

to be a hassle	to be difficult
to run (a play, an exhibition, etc.)	to be showing
“The Fringe”	alternative to Edinburgh Comedy Festival
to be worth doing	to be a good idea to do
point of view	perspective
chance	opportunity
“big names”	well known performers
prestige	reputation
stand-up comedian	comedian who performs live on stage
student review	series of amateur performances by students
“Cambridge Footlights”	Cambridge University’s famous dramatic group
to cater for	to allow for
kilt	short pleated skirt made of tartan cloth worn usually by Scottish men
bagpipes	traditional Scottish musical wind instrument
referendum	public election to change a nation’s constitution
chunk	sizeable amount
to do your own thing	to decide and control one’s future
justifiable	legitimate
to ensure	to guarantee
income	revenue, money coming in
grant	specific allocation of funds
canny	astute, prudent (typically Scottish)
on purpose	deliberately
wee	small (typically Scottish)
slang	informal/colloquial language
to get a point across	to clearly communicate an idea
gist	general idea
overtly	evidently
stuff like that	similar things
to be fond of	to like
to provide	to give

COMPREHENSION EXERCISE

1. True or False? Fiona lived in Edinburgh for a year.
2. Why is it a “hassle” to go to the Edinburgh International Festival now she no longer lives in Edinburgh?
3. How long has the Festival been running?
4. It has a reputation for being the _____ and _____ arts festival in Europe.
5. Why does Fiona like it?
6. True or False? The number of productions in “the Fringe” was cut because they were too expensive to put on.
7. Who can put on productions in “the Fringe Festival”?
8. Who can make money from the Edinburgh festival and the “Fringe”?
9. Why don't the “big names” go so much anymore?
10. Why has “the Fringe” just grown and grown and grown?
11. Who wears the kilts during the festival?
12. What's the weather like in Scotland in August?
13. When did Scotland last have an independent parliament?
14. Which of the following are reasons that Fiona gives for people possibly not voting for independence?
 - a) not believing that the Scots have the ability to govern themselves
 - b) wanting to continue to receive money from the British parliament
 - c) not wanting control over Scottish oil
 - d) believing in Britain as a nation rather than individual countries
 - e) it's more comfortable not to be independent.
15. Would Fiona like to see more independence?
16. What are the problems with the new parliament?
17. What are the specifically Scottish expressions that Fiona mentions at the end?
18. Fiona doesn't live in Scotland at the present. Why does this mean she uses fewer Scottish expressions?
19. What does “och aye the noo” mean?

ANSWERS

1. False.
2. It's difficult to get flights and accommodation.
3. Since the 1940's.
4. It has a reputation for being the biggest and best arts festival in Europe.
5. The variety.
6. False.
7. Anyone who can cover the travel costs and the cost of renting the space.
8. The performers and the people who have hotels and bars.
9. They can get paid more elsewhere.
10. You don't need qualifications to perform there.
11. Only paid bagpipe players.
12. The weather is not so great.
13. In 1707.
14. a), b) and e)
15. She's not really sure and would like to see what happens now first.
16. They are arguing over who is going to pay for the cost overruns.
17. "Canny" and "Och aye the noo Jimmy".
18. People have trouble really understanding what she's trying to say so it's easier to not use them.
19. It's code for "The Loch Ness monster is really just a tourist attraction".
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LESSON PLAN

1. Elicit from the students anything and everything they can tell you about Scotland e.g. one of the countries that makes up Great Britain, population 5,144,000 (2008), capital (Edinburgh – population: approx. 450,000), largest city (Glasgow – population: approx. 1,750,000), where they are located, the climate, the people (the stereotypical Scot is ?), the national dress (kilt), bagpipes, the accent (have students ever heard a Scot talking?), customs, anything else? Have students ever been there? Would they like to go? Why/ not?
The Scottish Parliament has limited self-government and there is constant debate about holding a referendum on the issue of Scottish Independence with predicted results varying enormously.
2. Talk more specifically about Edinburgh. Mention the Edinburgh Castle which presides over the city. Have Ss ever heard of the Edinburgh festival? If so, what do they know of it?
3. Go through the glossary and check for meaning and pronunciation. Note that “canny” and “wee” are Scottish, although they are words that English people understand.
4. Go through the comprehension questions, checking that students understand them, and predict the answers where possible.
5. Play the interview. Check the answers. Repeat and pause as and where necessary.
6. Do Ss have a major yearly event(s) in their home town or country? If so, what is it/ are they? Get them to describe it (or them) in as much detail as possible.
7. Depending on your students, ask them about independence movements that they know about (Northern Ireland, Basque country in Spain, East Timor, etc), describing the forces at work and the possible solutions (if any) OR
Have students (working in pairs or threes) write a tourist brochure for a local festival.

TRANSCRIPTION

- eV Well let's talk about the Edinburgh Festival. You've been going for how many years now?
- Fiona I went to live in Edinburgh in the late 70's, so... Well. A long time. When I lived in Edinburgh I went every year, but I find now that I go less and less in August because basically it's just too much of a hassle. It's very difficult to get flights, it's very difficult to get accommodation, and then it's just so busy that sometimes it's better not to go.
- eV Why do you think it's become so successful?
- Fiona Perhaps because it's something that's been running for a very, very long time. I think it's been running since the 1940's, and it's got a reputation as being I think the biggest and the best, although that's subjective, the best arts festival in Europe. I think it is the biggest, and it's just a way of having a holiday in a place that's attractive and having something interesting to do at the same time.
- eV Is that what you like about it?
- Fiona The thing I like best is the variety because you can... if you're interested in books, there's something, TV festival, there's something for everybody. The theatre that you get is so varied, there is something like more than a thousand shows over the month that there are. It is impossible to not find something that you like in a thousand shows. And there's music as well... there's something for everybody. It's attractive for that reason.
- eV Do you think it's become too successful? Has it gotten too big, too expensive, too crowded or...
- Fiona To a certain extent. I know that a couple of years ago they actually cut the number of productions, this is the unofficial part, because the unofficial part is the biggest part. They call it "the Fringe". And I think that they cut the number of productions because there were so many coming, that some of them were like not worth... not worth going to, because I think anybody can go and present something, if you can cover your travel costs and cost of renting the space, anybody can present something. And if you make money, fine. And if you don't, well you've lost money. But it had become so big that they were running out of theatre accommodation, and they were doing it in people's houses. They were doing it wherever, that I think they did have to cut it to try and keep the quality up a bit.
- eV So is it more about money or is it still a festival? Or is it a necessary combination of both?
- Fiona I guess it's a necessary combination. Is it about money or is it about culture? Both! Both, a lot of people make a lot of money, not only the theatre people but everybody else: the people who have hotels, the people who have restaurants and bars. They make a lot of money so from that point of view, yes, but it's still a chance for people to come and put on a new production that no-one's ever seen, and if it's successful that could be the beginning of a career for them that could last for a long time.
- eV Do the big names still go or are they passed that stage and doing their own independent productions?
- Fiona It depends about what part of it you're talking about because in the official one, when it began, it was the big names, the international actors and opera people, but now these kind of people are so expensive that I guess not all of them are interested in going to Edinburgh because they'd rather be in Milan

or... wherever. Milan Opera House I imagine, has more prestige than the Edinburgh Festival. A lot less fun, but Milan is going to pay you more money, I suppose, but that's the official one. You still get some fairly big names in the official one but not as many as you used to. In the unofficial one, in "the Fringe", what usually happens is that people... for example the comedy people that's the best example, or the people who are now the more famous alternative stand-up comedians, are usually those who came to Edinburgh with a student review, for example, like "The Footlights", "Cambridge Footlights" or whatever, made their name, got an award, and because of that the winner of the Perrier Award every year, is almost always someone who is going to get their own TV show in the future. And then they don't usually come back. Maybe they come back for one or two years but then, when they are so big that they're on TV or have their own show, then it's less appealing. And they can't move to the official festival because that doesn't really cater for that kind of thing.

eV How did it develop then? The official festival came first, I presume, but then why did "the Fringe" develop on the side?

Fiona I'm not very sure exactly, and I don't know when it happened either, but I guess simply because the actors who were less well recognised began to feel that they were not being given the chance to perform, and it was supposed to be a performing arts festival, and I think a group of people got together and decided to do this. Those who were not able to enter the... or were not invited to the official festival, were able to begin their own unofficial festival, and that's the part that's just grown and grown and grown, because you don't need to have qualifications to do it.

The only kilts you see are the ones on the people playing bagpipes for money, and... the only bad thing is that the weather is not so great.

eV There was a referendum last year, and I'm not sure what percentage of the people voted for an independent parliament...

Fiona It came out as a majority, yeah.

eV Scotland has its own independent parliament for the first time in...

Fiona I can remember this one because I think it was 1707 the union of the parliaments, so the last 300 and something years...

eV Why do you think there was such a conservative block there?

Fiona I guess because there are people who are concerned about one, the ability of the Scots to be able to do their own thing after so long not doing it and I think that that's a justifiable thing to think as well and simply because it's more comfortable not to have to do it, maybe that's why not everyone sees Scotland as being an independent nation. It's very easy to continue... because obviously you're going to continue to receive money from the British parliament. It's very easy to continue to take advantage of that, and then going on saying, "Well, we've got the oil, we've got this, we've got that", when in fact there isn't that much, and the Scots are going to have to work very, very hard to ensure that they've got the sufficient income to do what they want. I imagine they'll have to continue getting grants, and so on. It's not a very highly populated country, and it's very difficult to see how it's going to work out. I really don't know.

eV What would you like to see happen in the next few years? Which direction would you like to see? Would you like to see more independence?

Fiona I'd like to see what happens first, being a canny Scot! I'd like to see what happens if...what they are offered, what they can do with it, who is in charge,

are they people who are capable of doing it well? How much autonomy are they actually going to get? That's something I'm not sure about. At the moment they're still arguing about who's paying for the new parliament, and it's gone past its final date. Costs have doubled already. Who's paying for that? Things like that. So I mean it's very early yet to say what's going to happen, and to be able to predict how it might work out. Make sure you put "canny" in the glossary! I said that on purpose! It's the only Scottish word I've used.

eV You didn't say "wee". You didn't say "wee" once!

Fiona No, I don't say it as much as I used to, it's very sad. There's a lot of words that I don't say as much as I used to because you have to explain what they are. You also reduce your vocabulary to accommodate... you don't use as much slang, you don't use so many... you don't use so many... all these wonderful idioms I'm forgetting, because if you say them you know you're not getting the point across. People are getting the gist of it but they're not going to ask you, "Oh what does that mean?"

eV Do you think you're losing your Scottishness, if there is such a word?

Fiona No, I don't think so, 'cos I think that's something that you've got... I mean I'm not overtly Scottish... I don't go around talking about Scotland a lot. I don't have a very strong accent. I don't go around saying "och aye the noo Jimmy" and stuff like that... which is something of a stereotype but... No. I think you're as Scottish as you feel, and I feel as Scottish as I was 10 years ago.

eV What on earth is "och aye the noo"?

Fiona Och aye the noo Jimmy! Erm... well och aye is just one of these expressions like... surprise or whatever and the noo is... the now, at the moment, but it's just one of these standard phrases that they put on silly postcards with drunken Scotsman wearing a kilt saying "och aye the noo Jimmy"! It doesn't really mean anything.

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