

Guddlefankin wi words: Translating Roald Dahl's BFG into Scots

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The BFG is the most translated of all of Dahl's books, but it is also the trickiest to translate, as it includes over 300 invented words – the so-called *gobblefunk* language which the BFG and other giants speak. As there are no Scots words for the likes of *froboscottle* and *snozzcumber*, I had to create a new language, which I've called *guddlefank* (a blend of the words *guddle* and *fankle*, which both mean 'mix up' or 'muddle').

I've tried to use the same principles as Dahl when he created words like *delumptious* or *wondercrump*, starting with words children already know and changing the ending or blending them together to make something new but still understandable. Many of the *guddlefank* words therefore include parts of familiar Scots words. The words *brammerous*, *brawstottin* and *beezerie-braw* all mean 'excellent' or 'wonderful' and are based on words like *brammer*, *beezer* and *stoater*. The *feechcumber* (=snozzcumber) which the GFG eats has its origins in *feechie* 'disgusting'; and the *girnscunner* and *trauchlefasher* (bad dreams) are based on the words *girn* 'complain', *scunner* 'annoy', *trauchle* 'struggle' and *fash* 'worry or bother'.

Another challenge for BFG translators is the number of jokes which rely on puns and word play, as these don't always translate into another language. Again I've tried to follow the spirit of Dahl, so the GFG uses a lot of spoonerisms and malapropisms, as he does in English – but these ones work in Scots. For example, he says to Sophy: 'Yer heid is fu o tince an matties' (instead of 'mince and tatties') and talks about 'piesanmoose (poisonous) snakes'. I've used the word *dwam* for the dreams that the GFG mixes up – so I couldn't resist the pun *dwam-jars* for the jars that he keeps them in!

As well as translating words, I've changed some of the references which didn't make sense for Scots. The BFG learns to write from reading *Nicholas Nickleby* by 'Dahl's Chickens'. But the GFG wouldn't learn Scots from Dickens, so he reads *Rob Roy* by 'Watter Scootie' instead. Some other cultural changes are a joke about Jersey which is changed to one about Harris tweed, and a pun about Wales and whales (which doesn't work for Scottish accents!) which is changed to one about Arbroath and broth.

I also had to decide how the Queen would speak. Instead of having her speak entirely in Scots, like the other characters, she speaks a kind of Scottish English and uses some Scots words, so she asks Sophy 'What is he blethering about?' when she can't understand the GFG. I couldn't shift the setting from Buckingham Palace to Holyrood or Balmoral, as that would have been too radical a change to the original, but some of the Palace servants have more Scottish names, like Mr Tammas (originally Mr Tibbs) the Royal Butler. There are also hints that the action starts in Scotland, as Sophy asks the GFG about the other man-eating giants: 'Dae they ever gae tae Scotland?' Sophy speired. 'Aften,' said the GFG. 'They says the Scots is tastin wunnerfu weel o hashimanorum.'

Here are the Top Ten *Guddlefank* words from *The GFG* (with Dahl's originals in brackets). There is a longer list of *guddlefank* words at <https://susanrennie.co>.

BRAWSOME = brow AND awesome!

'Och, that's browsome!' cried the GFG, aye beamin. 'It's grand-beezerie! Fair ferlious! I is aw o a stotter.'

FANTASTOOSHOUS = phizz-whizzing

'Whit a fantastooshous seat!' cried the GFG. 'I is gaun tae be cosy as a peatot up here.'

SCRUMBRAWLICIOUS = scrumdiddlyumptious

'Ilka human bean is sindry an different. Some is scumbrawlicious an some is yeuksome.'

FEEHCUMBER = snozzcumber

'Here is the mankorous feehcumber!' cried the GFG, waggin it about.

FUZZLEGLOG = frobscottle

'Here is fuzzlelog!' he cried, haudin the bottle up high an prood, as thou it conteened some rare wine. 'Fantooshous bizzin fuzzlelog!'

RUMMLYPUMP = whizz-popper

'Us giants is makkin rummlypumps aw the time! Rummlypumpin is a sign o happiness. It is music in oor lugs!'

GIRSLGORBLER = the Fleshlumpeater

'Noo then, ye wee nauchly nyaff!' boomed the Girslegorbler.

NICHTBOGLE = nightmare (ie a bogle that comes in the night)

'This yin is a girnie-wurnie nichtbogle. Jist look at him thrummlin himsel agin the gless!'

TRAUCHLEFASHER = trogglehumper

'I'se catchin a frichtsme trauchlefasher!' he cried. 'This is a *richt ill* dwam!'

DWAM-JAR = dream jar

'Hoots toots!' he said, haudin the dwam-jar afore him. 'This will be giein some wee bairnikie a bonnie nicht whan I blaws it in their lugs!'

Finally, this is how giants swear in Scots, when they are captured and very unhappy!

'I is flumgummert!' girmed the Girslegorbler.

'I is gulliewullied!' bawled the Bairnchawer.

'I is smacherdachtelt!' skirled the Banecrumper.

'I is hippiedunshed!' cried the Mucklecleeker.

'I is tanterwalloped!' skreighed the Slaistermaister.

'I is catterbattert!' shoutit the Lassiechamper.

'I is malliewhuppelt!' skelloched the Slaverslorper.

'I is barliefummelt!' yowled the Bluidqueesher.

'I is rummelgumpit!' skirled the Haggernasher.