

The GFG– The BFG in Scots

by Roald Dahl

Illustratit by Quentin Blake, Translatit by Susan Rennie,
Black and White Publishing

Review by Moira McPartlin

The original *BFG* stands for Big Friendly Giant, the Scots version, *The GFG* is the Guid Freendly Giant. This delightful translation remains true to the original story and uses the same quintessential illustrations by Quentin Blake.

2016 is the 100th anniversary of Roald Dahl's birth and having *The BFG* translated into *The GFG* is a fitting way to celebrate the great man's birthday. I fell in love with *The BFG* in the 1980s when it was first published so I am delighted to be given the opportunity to review this translation into Scots.

The story begins with Sophy, who is snatched from her bed in an orphanage by the GFG and wheeled to the land of giants. Here she discovers her kidnapper is friendly. He is a dwam catcher, and the only reason he kidnaps Sophy is because she spies him traveling the streets at night, blowing his dwams through bedroom windows. He has to keep his identity a secret. He doesn't eat wee lassies he only eats foostie feechcumpers and drinks fuzzlelog. But there are nine other giants in the land of giants who travel the world eating human beans. These giants are fearsome and bigger than the GFG. Sophy is horrified by their behaviour and she persuades the GFG to help her devise and execute a ploy to stop them. Fun and adventure follows with a little help from The Queen and, as with all good stories, a satisfactory conclusion is reached.

All Roald Dahl books are well loved for their fun plots and often grotesque characters but for me it is his manipulation of language that makes them even more enjoyable. In the original *BFG* the giant has a peculiar turn of phrase; he gobblefunks around with words to suit the situation. Even with these linguistic somersaults the reader is never in any doubt to the meanings. With the Scots version the guddlefank is even more pronounced and it is obvious the translator had great fun with the inventions – words like 'wally-gowdie' (wally meaning handsome and gowdie meaning treasure) another is 'huntigowkin', a derivative of 'hunt the gowk' which is the cry raised when an April Fool is found out. I sometimes write in Scots vernacular but I now see my vocabulary is quite limited. *The GFG* uses Scots as a

language and although I know many of the words I needed my Scots dictionary to hand while reading.

The translator, Susan Rennie is a Lecturer in English and Scots Language and is a co-founders of Itchy Coo. I own many Itchy Coo books and find them easy to read aloud to kids. *The GFG* is more challenging because of its thorough use of Scots language but I still enjoyed reading *The GFG* aloud because of the sounds and feel of the words on my tongue. Scots is a rich, melodic, often onomatopoeic language but it is also a playful one. Roald Dahl was a master at word play and I am sure he would heartily approve of this fine translation. I'm certainly looking forward to reading it to my grandchildren.

Fiction writer, **Moira McPartlin**, is widely published in literary magazines and has two published novels: *The Incomers* and *Ways of the Doomed*. She lives in Stirlingshire.