

Gael-Talk

Learning Gaelic Year 1 Caibideil 22

Nas fheàrr a' Ghàidhlig bhriste n' a' Bheurla chliste!

Better Broken Gaelic than fluent English!

A little reminder –
We really should pay the piper
(*mòran taing* to those who have!)



Please send donations for the class to Paypal:
profmcintyre@yahoo.com
the amount is up to you, but the suggested donation is \$5

This week we will learn ...

- Sean fhacal na seachdain
- Is vs. tha – the assertive verb
- Sgeul na Seachdain –

- Òran na seachdain –

Sean fhacal na seachdain

**Na spìon fiosaig fir
nach aithne dhut.**



**Do not pluck the beard
of a stranger**

In a confrontation with someone you don't know, you don't know what you're getting into or what you're dealing with ... good advice in the age of road rage!

A reminder:

- Don't forget to remember your accent marks!

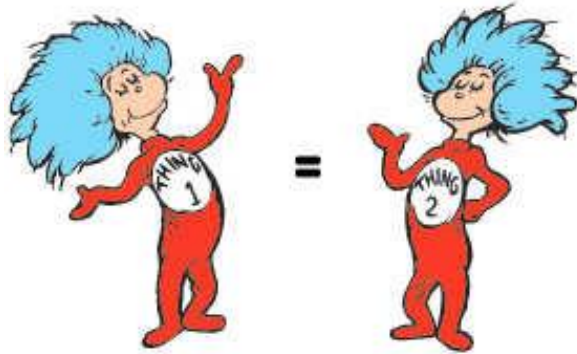


Baile Bhòid = Town of Bute

- ▲ Eilean Bhòid = Island of Penises (genitive plural for *bod*)

Gràmar na Seachdain

How to say that one thing is another thing



Thing 1 = Thing 2

Is: The other verb “to be”

In our learning so far, we’ve focused on some of the uses of the verb “bi” – which we recognize in its various tenses as

- Tha = is [am, are] (present tense)
- Bha = was [were] (past tense)
- Bi = will be

This verb **is** (not to be confused with the English “is”) is known as the assertive verb.

Uses of ‘is’

Thing 1 = thing 2

‘s mise tidsear

‘s mise Mìcheal

Thing 1 is in thing 2

‘S e tidsear a th’ innte = she is a teacher

‘S e polais a th’ ann ann an Seumas = Seumas is a policeman (It is a policeman that is in Seumas)

Emphatic

‘S mullach a tha mi – Is sad that I am

‘S toil leam = Is pleasure with me (you should remember this)

Notice that IS is missing the future tense. IS is irregular, or “defective” as it only has two tense forms – the present and the past, which also satisfies for the conditional. It frequently appears invisible in sentences.

There are several uses to IS. In this lesson, we shall learn one of them; in subsequent lessons we will learn others.

First, by way of comparison: How is IS different from BI?

We’ve already had a lot of experience with the verb BI (“to be”) in the past, present, and future forms. We’ve learned how to use BI to describe whether or not we are hot, cold, happy, sad, dry or wet because these conditions are likely to change.

“**Bi**” (*tha / bha*) **introduces adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases.** To describe a person or thing is “having” or “being” a certain *quality*, use the “**tha**” form.

- **Bha** an taigh mòr. The house was large.
- **Bha** thu gòrach. You were silly/foolish.
- **Bha** am ballach modhail. The boy was well behaved.

- **Tha** e sgìth. He is tired.
- **Tha** an cù donn. The dog is brown.
- **Tha** am balach luath. The boy is fast.
- **Tha** an latha brèagha. The day is beautiful.

- **Bidh** an duine aig an doras. The man will be at the door.
- **Bidh** an cupa air a’ bhòrd. The cup will be on the table.
- **Bidh** sinn anns a’ bhaile a-màireach. We will be in (the) town tomorrow.
- **Bidh** e an seo a-màireach. He will be here tomorrow.

And of course, we’ve had experience with BI as a ‘helping’ verb that combines with the verbal noun to describe actions:

- Bha mi a’ snàmh air a’ mhuir. I was swimming in the ocean.
- Tha mi a’ leaghadh an leabhar. I am reading the book.
- Bidh mi a’ dol dhan Dùn Èideann. I will be going to Edinburgh.

And of course, to express the possessive, as in the song:

- Tha taigh agam – I have a house
- Tha bean agam – I have a wife
- Tha lèine shalach agam – I have a dirty shirt

1. IS – The assertive verb / the copula

We already have been introduced to IS in the phrase

- 'S toil leam = I like

Gaelic distinguishes between identifying two “things” as identical to one another, and saying that something has certain qualities. In a sense,

If we’re talking about a thing having a *quality*, then we use BI.

Quality:

Tha an cù donn.	The dog is brown.	The dog is not identical to “brown.” Brown is a <i>quality</i> that the dog has. (or “has”)
Tha an nighean glic.	The girl is smart.	The girl is not identical to “smart.” “ <i>Smart</i> ” (or smartness) is a <i>quality</i> that the girl has (or “has”)

The assertive verb IS – even though it means “to be” -- is used differently than in the examples above. Note that in **none of these examples given above** is it being said that the subject/noun “thing” is another *thing*. The subject is being described as “having” or “being” a certain quality (tired, brown, fast, etc.).

Part of the confusion lies in English usage, for we use the same word “be” to convey the meaning that one thing is another thing (Thing 1 = Thing 2) and the other meaning that expresses the meaning that a thing “has” a quality. For as the table above says, the dog is not “brown,” but rather “brown” is a color that is “on” the dog.

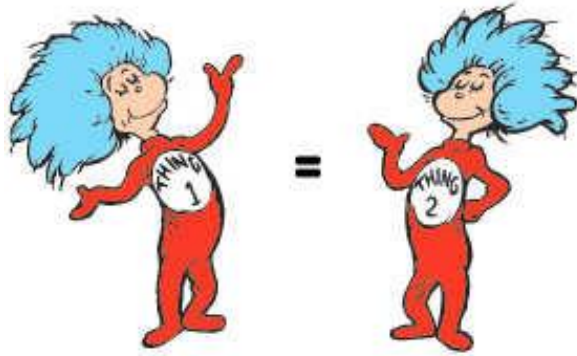
In Gàidhlig, if we’re talking about *identities*, we use the assertive verb, IS.

Identity:

'S Seumas tidsear.	Seumas is a teacher.	Seumas is <i>identical</i> to the “teacher.”	Seumas = teacher
'S Tòmas duine àrd.	Tòmas is a tall man	Tòmas is <i>identical</i> to the “tall man.”	Tòmas = tall man

And that is what this chapter is about.

The first usage we will learn is that IS is frequently used to *equate* two nouns. That is, to say that “thing 1 is thing 2.”



By this we mean that in sentences like

- 'S Seumas tidsear math. Seumas **is** a good teacher.
- 'S Dùn Èidinn baile bhòidheach. Edinburgh **is** a beautiful city.

We would use IS and not BI.

IS is called an *assertive verb* because it “asserts” that one thing or person is another, or a *copula*, because it is used to **link** nouns together.

IS is used when stating our names, our occupations, or other aspects of us that are unlikely to change.

1. In sentences like “James is old”, and “She is Mary”, “old” and “Mary” are called *predicates*.

A useful rule of thumb is that when **the predicate is a noun** (person, place, or thing) use **“is”** and when the predicate is anything else, use **“bi”** (tha/bha).

In other words, we use IS when we are **Identifying one thing as another thing (Thing 1 = Thing 2)**: In sentences in which you are saying that one noun (person, place, or thing) is another noun, use **is**. In sentences like “I am Mary,” “You are James,” “She is Helen,” (Mary, James, and Helen are all nouns), the verb **“is”** is used. **“Is”** introduces nouns, pronouns, and noun phrases. In general, to say a person or thing is a (another) person or thing, use the **“is”** form.

Seumas = doctor Mary = young girl I = Thomas	Seumas is a doctor Mary is a young girl I am Thomas	Is Seumas dotair Is Màiri nighean òg 'S mise Tòmas
--	---	--

Note that in all these (and other) examples, “Is” and “ ’S “ are used interchangeably, for ’s (or ’S) is the contraction for IS. **“Is”** is often shortened to **‘S**, i.e. **‘S mise Mairi**. (I am Mary). (The emphatic pronouns like **“mise”** are often used with the **“is”** verb.)

‘S mise Màiri.

I am Mary.

‘S ise Helen. She is Helen.
‘S esan am fear. He is the man.

We call **Is** the “assertive verb.” Perhaps one way to think of it is that you are **asserting** that one thing **is** another (not just saying that a thing has a *quality* of being red, tall, intelligent, large, etc.). Again, examples:

‘S Seumas tidsear. Seumas is a teacher.
‘S an togalach taigh-òsta. The building is a hotel.

Note that in the above cases, we are saying that one “thing” is another “thing.”

Bho “Ora nam Buadh,” <i>Carmina Gaedelica</i> Is tu sonas gach nì èibhinn Is tu solas gath na grèine, Is tu fuaran san fhàsach	From “Invocation of the Graces,” <i>Carmina Gaedelica</i> You are the joy of all joyous things You are the light of the beam of the sun You are a well of fresh water in the desert
--	--

In summation, “**is**” defines a thing as being something else, and “**bi**” (tha/bha) describes a quality of the thing.

Learning tip: If you’re still having trouble with this concept, perhaps if you think of the matter like this, it’ll make sense: Gaelic holds the **IS** to be “sacred” or special in that it is *special* to say one thing **is** another thing. (*Thing 1 = Thing 2.*) In which case, you would use the **is** assertive verb.

Additional note: It should be emphasized that this is a very important feature in Gaelic. Using the wrong form of the verb “to be” strikes the Gaelic “ear” as outrageous – even painful, in some ways incomprehensible. For instance, a Gaelic speaker would **never** say

**Tha* mi tidsear. (I am a teacher – the asterisk signifies “does not occur”).

*Does not occur.

Such an utterance might elicit a scream of protest or a groan of agony!

2. Bu: The past tense of the assertive verb.

Bu is used in the same way as the present tense **is**, only it conveys the meaning of identity in the past.

There are some elegant Gàidhlig poems, hymns, and songs that display this form:

Bho XIII, Dàin do Eimhir, le Somhairle MacGill-Eain	From XIII, Poems to Eimhir, by Sorley MacLean
---	---

Dom shùilean-sa, bu tu Deirdre 's i bòidheach na buaile grèine	To my eyes, you were Deirdre, She, the beauty of the sunny pasture.
Bho “Alasdair à Gleanna Garadh” le Sileas NicDhòmhnaill (Sileas Na Ceapaich)	Alasdair of Glengarry, by Cicely Macdonald of Keppoch
Bu tu 'n leòmhann thar gach beathach, Bu tu 'n loch nach fhaoidte thaomadh, Bu tu tobair faoilidh na slàinte, Bu tu Beinn Nibheis thar gach aonach,	You were a lion above all other beasts... You were a lake that would not empty You were a well generous of health You were Ben Nevis above all over heights

Note: “thu” drops the lenition when used with “bu” and becomes “tu.”

3. The future / conditional

Bu also serves as both the future and the conditional form of the assertive verb.

- **Bu** esan duine mòr – He *would be / will be* a great man.
- **Bu** i bana-phoileas. – She *would be / will be* a policewoman.

4. The question forms:

In the present tense, the verb is subsumed – that is, it becomes invisible, in a sense,

- An **x** e latha brèagha an-diugh? Is it a beautiful day today?
- Nach **x** Seumas tidsear math? Isn't Seumas a good teacher.

In the past tense, the verb (bu) appears as either “bu” or “b’ ”

- Am b’ i nighean brèagha? Was she a beautiful girl?
- Nach bu leabhar fada e? Wasn't it a long book?

Note: the “nach” question form can also convey an exclamation. To distinguish between the exclamation and the question, you have to pay attention to the context (and sometimes the punctuation, if written).

- Nach e duine àrd! Isn't he a tall man!
- Nach e duine àrd. Isn't he a tall man.
- Nach e duine àrd? Isn't he a tall man?

5. The negative:

For the present tense negative, the verb “disappears,” as with the question form.

Chan e duine glic. An e latha fuar an-diugh? Chan e . Cha bu mhise neach-campachaidh toilichte.	He is not a wise man. Is it a cold day today? No I was not a happy camper.
--	--

--	--

The past tense:

Chan b' e duine glic Nach bu Sheumas amadan?	He was not a wise man. Wasn't Seumas a fool?
---	---

Bu lenites where possible.

The simple negative (saying “no”) is these cases:

Present tense:

- Chan e. No – Is not.
- Cha b' e. No – Was not.

6. One more thing (or things):

Both the present and the past tense negatives lenite the pronoun mi (I / me)

- Cò tha aig an doras? Cha **mhise!** Who's at the door? Not me!
- Cò bha aig an doras? Cha bu mhise. Who was at the door. Not me!

As already noted, *bu* causes “*thu*” to drop the ‘h’ and become “tu”

- Bu **tu** fuaran san fhàsach. You were a well of fresh water in the desert.

Bu lenites mi (I / me):

- Bu **mhise** oileanach aig an oilthigh. I was a student at the university.

Eacarsaichean

For each exercise, the first one has been done for you.

Ex. 1: Translate into English

1. 'S e saighdear.
He is a soldier.
2. 'S rùnaire e dhan chompanaidh sin.
3. 'S i bana-Sgiathanaich. (Eilean Sgiathanaich)
4. An iolaire iasg? Chan e! (iolaire = eagle, iasg = fish)
5. 'S mo phiuthar an seinneadair ag a' chèilidh a-nochd.
6. Nach e latha brèagha an-diugh?
7. Is bradan iasg. (bradan = salmon)
8. Bu Abraham Lincoln ceannard mòr. (ceannard = leader, president)

Ex. 2: Translate into Gàidhlig. Pay attention to verb tense.

1. I am a sailor on that ship.
'S mise seòladair air a' bhàta sin.
2. He is my brother Calum.
3. The bird is an eagle.
4. He was a handsome lad. (eireachdail = handsome)
5. He is a carpenter. (saor = carpenter)
6. My sister is a doctor.
7. She is a good singer. (female singer = bana-sheinneadair)
8. I am a secretary. (rùnaire = secretary)
9. Seumas is an innocent man. (neo-chinnteach)
10. They were students. (students = oileanaich)
11. We were happy children.

Answer key:

Na coimhead air! (Don't peek 😊)

Ex. 1: Translate into English

1. 'S e saighdear.

He is a soldier.

2. 'S rùnaire e dhan chompanaidh sin.

He's a secretary for that company.

3. 'S i bana-Sgiathanaich.

She is a female Skye-person

4. An iolaire iasg? Chan e.

Is an eagle a fish?

5. 'S mo phiuthar an seinneadair ag a' chèilidh a-nochd.

My sister is the singer at the ceilidh tonight.

6. Nach e latha brèagha an-diugh?

Isn't it a beautiful day today?

7. Is bradan iasg.

Salmon is a fish.

8. Bu Abraham Lincoln ceannard mòr.

Abraham Lincoln was a great leader.

Ex. 2: Translate into Gàidhlig. Pay attention to verb tense.

1. I am a sailor on that ship.

'S mise seòladair air a' bhàta sin.

2. He is my brother Calum.

'S e mo bhràthair Calum. (use the contraction for "Is e" > [shay])

3. The bird is an eagle.

'S an t-eun iolaire.

4. He was a handsome lad.

Bu e balach eireachdail.

5. He is a carpenter.

'S e saor.

7. My brother is a doctor.

'S mo phiuthar dotair. (or bana-dhotair)

8. She is a good singer.

'S ise bana-sheinneadair mhath.

9. I am a secretary.

'S mise rùnaire.

10. Seumas is an innocent man.

'S Seumas duine neo-chinnteach.

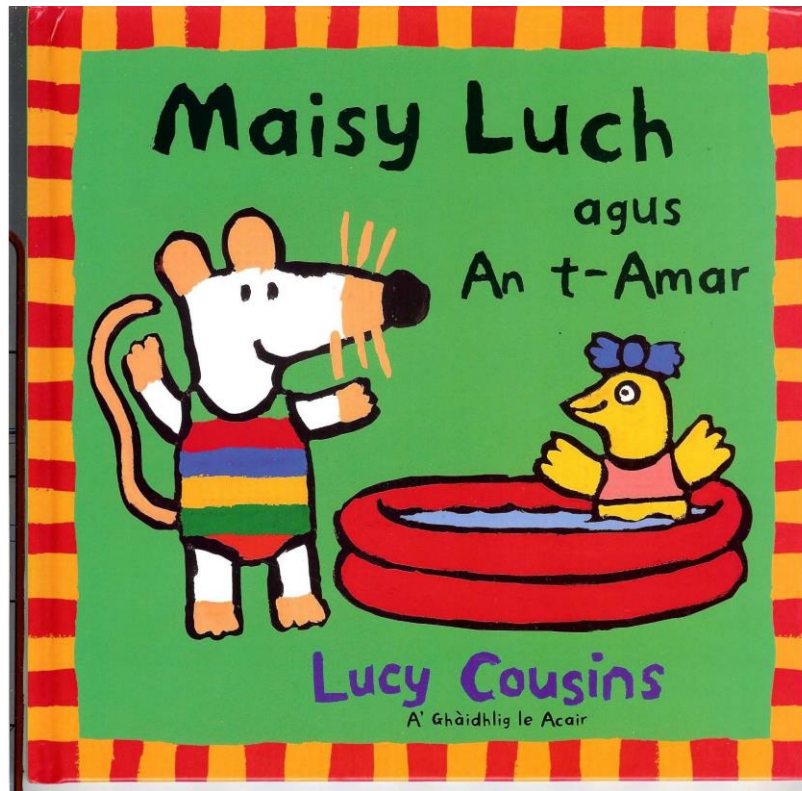
11. They were students.

Bu iad oileanaich.

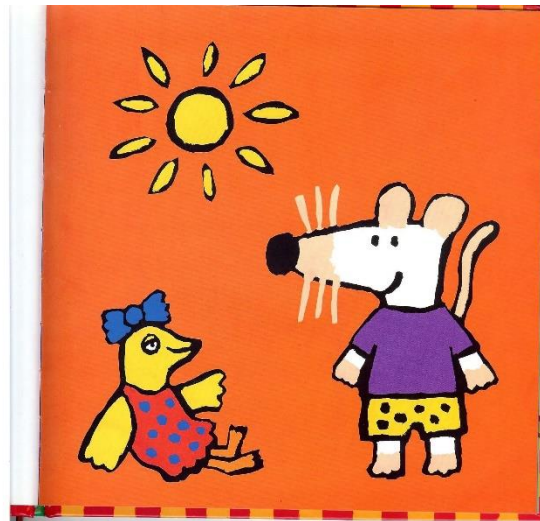
11. We were happy children.

Bu sinne clann toilichte.

Sgeulachd na seachdain



Tha Maisy agus
Tallulah
a' faireachdainn
an teas.



Teth = hot

An teas = the heat

Tha smaoin aig
Maisy.
Bheir i sùil a-steach
dhan t-seada ...



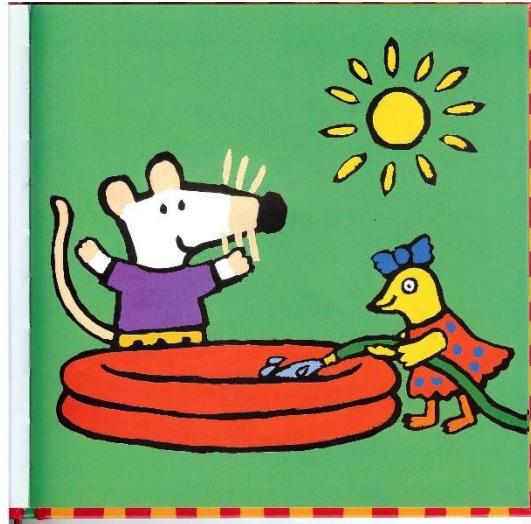
agus dè a lorgas i
ach an t-amar
beag plastaig.
Tha Maisy ga
lìonadh le gaoth.
Sèid, sèid, sèid!



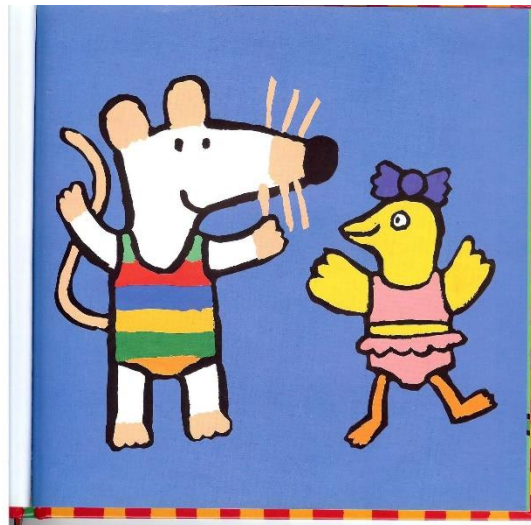
Lorg = search, find

Ga lìonadh = fills it (its filling)

Tha Tallulah
a' lìonadh an
amair le uisge.



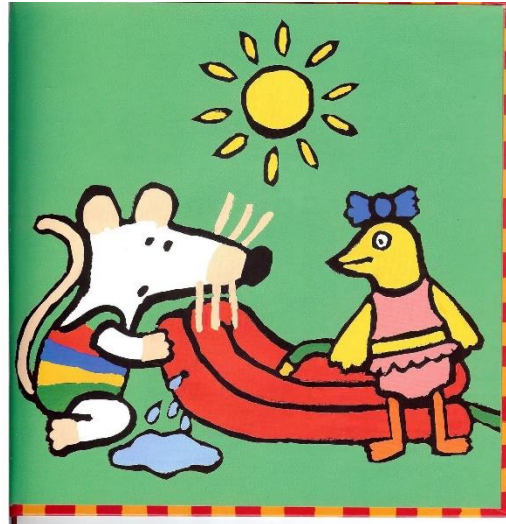
Tha Maisy agus
Tallulah a' cur orra
nan deisean-snàimh
aca.
Seo sinn a-nis!
Tha iad deiseil.



Cur air = put on (cur orra = put on them)

Deisean-snàimh = suit-swimming, swimming suits

O mo chreach,
tha toll anns
an amar!



Mo chreach = my dear! My goodness (lit. my ruination)

Tha Maisy
a' càradh an tuill
le teip steigeach.
Tha sin nas fheàrr

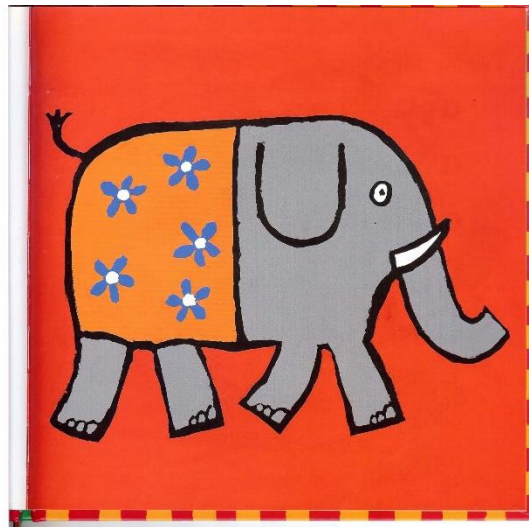


Nas fheàrr = better

Càradh = repairing

Toll / tuill = hole

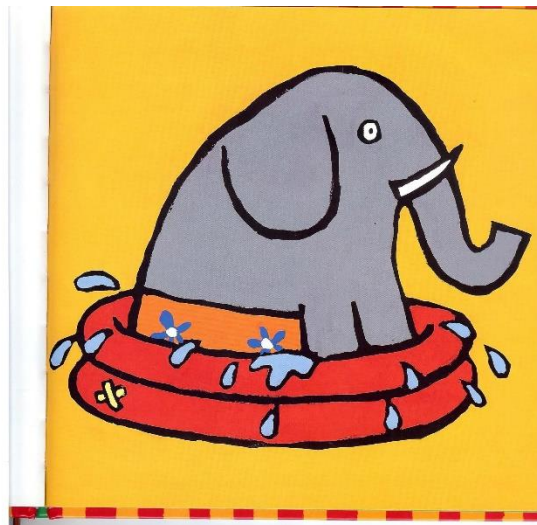
An uair sin
cò tha nochdadh
ach Eddie
na dheise-snàimh
fhèin ...



Nochdadh = appearing

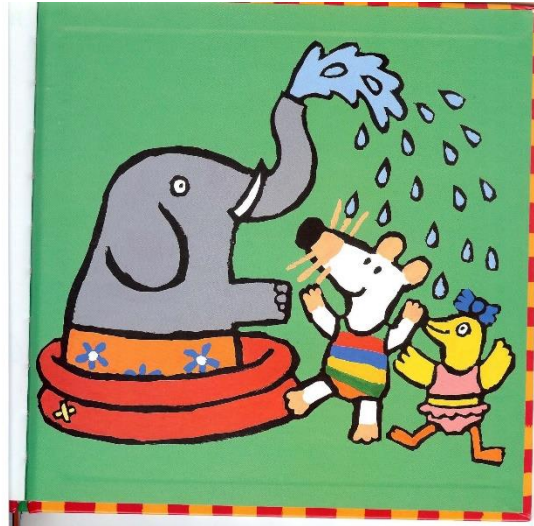
Na dheise-snàimh = in his own swimming suit

agus tha e
a' suidhe anns
an amar!
O Eddie, chan eil
rùm ann dha Maisy
agus Tallulah.



A' suidhe = sitting

Ach tha Eddie
a' frasadh uisge
air Maisy agus
air Tallulah.
A-nis tha h-uile
duine fionnar!



Frasadh = showers, sprays

Fionnar = cool

Òran na seachdain

Crodh-laoigh nam Bodach

This is a lovely wee song about an old man and his milking cows. This is a milking song and was used to keep the singer motivated when they were milking the cows.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNdutkHdiCE>

Crodh-laoigh nam bodach Crodh-laoigh nam bodach Crodh-laoigh nam bodach Gan togail ri gleann. Nam bodach = of the old man Ma tha, ma thogair Ma tha, ma thogair Ma tha, ma thogair Chan eil mo chrodh ann.	The old man's milking cows The old man's milking cows The old man's milking cows Being reared in the glen If so, I couldn't care less If so, I couldn't care less If so, I couldn't care less My cows are not there
---	--

Ma thogair > Togair: incline, like, want, wish; *ach ma thogair* – never mind!

Mar a thogras tu = if you wish