

Ulster-Scots Lesson 3

THE and THEY

1 **tha** – the Definite Article before a noun: e.g. *tha brig*

Pronounced 'tha' rather than 'the'

In Ulster-Scots today, the definite article 'the' is spelt *tha*, not just because it sounds slightly different, but to avoid confusion with the following:

- (a) 'Tonight', 'today', 'tomorrow' and 'together' are *thenicht*, *theday*, *themorra* and *thegither*. Here 'the-' is an abbreviation of 'this' – for example, 'this night', and so 'this year' also becomes *the yeir*.
- (b) 'They', the personal pronoun, is *the* or *the'* in Ulster-Scots. Most writers include an apostrophe (*the'*) to avoid confusion with the definite article. Therefore, a sentence like 'they were all at the dance tonight' becomes: *The' wur aa at tha daunce thenicht*.

2 Using the **tha** where it isn't used in English:

tha is used in front of numbers – *Tha twa o thaim cum in lukin jist tha yin apiece* ('Two of them came in looking for only one each')

It is also used:

with places – (*John Wricht comes fae tha Dee in tha coontie Doon*)

with occupations and institutions - (*He's startit tha schuil fur tae lairn tha bricklayin*)

with sports and illnesses - (*He's gien up tha fitbaa fae he tuk tha maisles*)

3 **tha** used instead of personal pronouns (your, his, etc.):

Is tha wife cumin tae? (..... wife)

Tha wee fella cum aff tha bike. (..... bike)

A brok tha airm in twa places. (..... airm)

4 **tha** used instead of 'how', 'what', etc.:

A niver knowed tha age he wus (how old /age)

D'ye see tha quack thaim clouds shiftit? (..... fast)

Luk tha lenth his airms is. (..... long / length)

Spelling and Pronunciation

1 T and D, followed by an R (makes a THE or DHE sound)

water	-	wattèr (sounds like WAATTHER)
shoulder	-	shoodèr (SHOODTHER)
projector	-	projectèr
ladder	-	leddèr (LEATHER)
after	-	eftèr (EFATHER)

Also, NN followed by an R (makes an –NTHE- sound)

dannèr
wannèr
genèral

2 T followed by an L (makes a glottal stop)

e.g. metal, nettle, bottle (T is sounded with a cough, like BAW – 'KLE)

Verbs in the future tense are either:

A'm fur paintin tha hoose themorra (I'm going to paint...), or

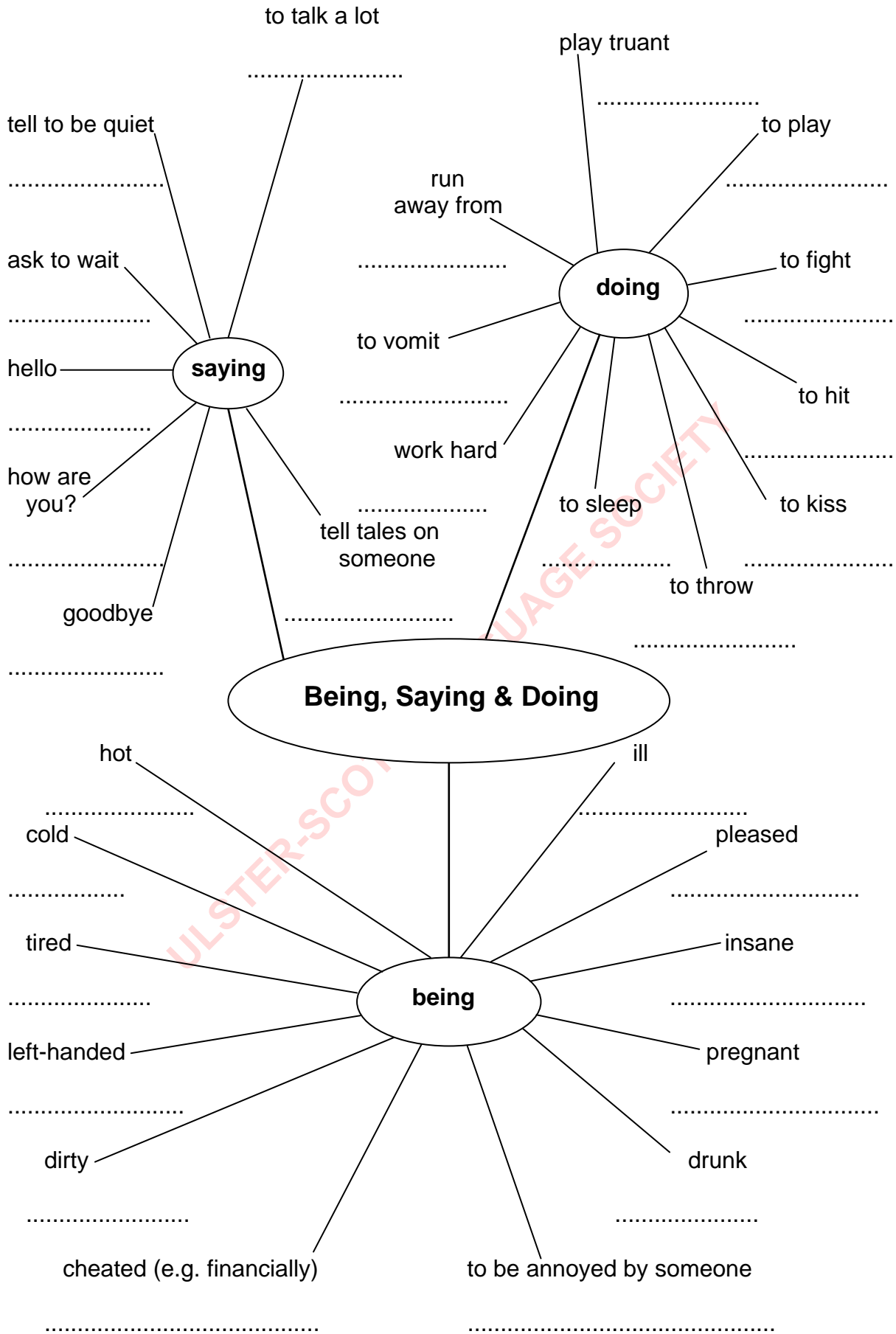
A'll be paintin tha hoose themorra.

CLASS WORK:

Write a short description of yourself in Ulster-Scots as if you were going to introduce yourself ('My name is' ... etc.). Then ask your neighbour, 'Wha micht you be?', or 'Whut dae the' caa ye?'

If uncertain of someone's name, the usual form is 'Whut's this the' caa him?'

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