

Meet Our Authors: Michael Rosen

Teaching ideas for *In the Colonie* (extract: 38) (S1-S2)

Extract 38 is one of a series of prose-poem details from *In the Colonie*, a memoir of being in a holiday camp in France as a child. This extract draws on the timeless conflict between mother and child as child wants to flee the nest. You will find the extract and a recording at:

<http://www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoem.do?poemId=451>

Suggested learning experiences

- Discuss parent-child relationships
- Explore the boundaries between prose and poetry
- Consider the characters of the mother, the father, Michael
- Create a play script from the poem
- Write to persuade a parent
- Write own prose poem memoir of a notable day/moment
- Investigate other prose poems (e.g. Carrying the elephant)
- CC – explore conflict/loss
- CC – explore current areas of protest in own lives/world

Overview of possible learning outcomes (at Third Level)

Listening & Talking	Reading	Writing
Identify, discuss and compare textual features, with evidence Give reasons and evidence for personal response to text Collaborate and communicate effectively with others	Identify and explain and compare textual features Use inferential skills to explore characterisation and the ways in which it is expressed/developed in the text	Collect, select and organise ideas to generate original text Convert Rosen's poem into an effective play script which brings out the characterisation of the players Create an effective letter of persuasion Create an effective prose poem that convincingly conveys a personal experience

Warming up

1. **Think, pair, share** – Using only the printed version of this poem, do a 'think, pair, share' activity to know the poem - see "Teaching ideas for developing poetry" for details.

2. **'I want to be free!'** - discuss parent-child relationships, e.g. children wanting to be free and independent and what this piece might suggest about family friction.

Listening and talking: discuss ideas about families and take account of the views of others

Reading: explore the text to identify evidence of the relationships

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Ways with words

1. **'To be or not to be'** – Why might this piece be described as a poem? Why not?

Now **listen** to Michael Rosen's recording. What does this add to your thoughts?

Discuss the differences/boundaries between poetry and prose and list ways in which this piece could qualify as a poem.

Then, with a partner, try re-writing the poem in verse form. Compare your decisions with another group.

Listening and talking: *consider and comment on the textual features that support each case*

Reading: *identify and compare the textual features that relate to poetry/prose*

Digging deeper

1. **Characterisation: reading between the lines** – we learn a lot about the mother in this piece, but we can also infer some things about the father, and indeed about Michael.

Who is the mother talking to in each utterance? Mark up the poem to show her audience each time, or, if working on screen, press return to chunk the text into audience blocks.

What are the mother's main concerns? You could use different coloured highlighters to identify them. Do they differ depending on whom she is speaking to?

What do you think we learn about the mother's personality from what she says, how she says it and to whom she speaks?

How many times is the father mentioned? Highlight what is said to him in a different colour. What is the effect of him being spoken to like this through the piece? What do you think he might be like, and what do you think about the relationship between the mother and father?

What do we learn about Michael in this piece? What is the effect of him being almost unmentioned/saying so little?

Reading: *use inferential and evaluative skills to explore characterisation; comment on the effect of the techniques used*

Working towards writing

2. **Still image (characterisation, cont'd)** – create a still image to capture something of this extract and what you have learnt about the characters of those involved (see above). Then work together to create thought bubbles for each player. Photograph each group's image. Add your thought bubbles to your image, or add them around the margins of a copy of the text on an A3 sheet if you can't take a photo.

Listening and talking: *collaborate to carry out the task*

Reading: *refer to the text for supporting evidence; use inference to inform thought bubbles*

Writing: *create effective text drawing on information gathered in 1 above*

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3. **Script writing** – using your ideas from the still image thought bubbles, turn the extract into a script giving a full exchange of words and thoughtful asides between the three members of the family.

Writing: *create an effective script, drawing on information gathered in 1 and 2 above*

4. **A letter of persuasion** – imagine you are trying to convince your parents to let you go on a protest march. Write a letter to persuade them.

Writing: *plan, draft and write an effective letter of persuasion*

Making poems

1. **Prose poem memoir** – drawing on what you have learnt about prose poems, write your own autobiographical account as a prose poem. Like Michael, only home in on one aspect, one detail, don't try to set the scene or provide description or explanation.

[Other examples of Rosen's prose poems can be found in his collection 'Carrying the Elephant' where he explores the sadness and loss surrounding the death of his son.]

Writing: *plan, draft and write an effective, engaging prose poem, convincingly conveying a personal experience*

Cross-curricular connections

1. **Conflict and loss** – PSHE, confident individuals

What makes us sad, what do we do about it? (Michael Rosen's Sad Book and his Carrying the Elephant collection may be useful here)

What makes us cross, what do we do about it?

2. **Protest and persuasion** – citizenship, responsible citizens

Investigate world/political issues that might give rise to strong views and a need to persuade or protest, e.g. hunting, climate change, child slavery, vivisection

'We're going to see the rabbit' by Alan Brownjohn – a poem about the last rabbit in England which has duly become a tourist attraction/spectacle. The poem raises issues about how we treat our planet, and lends itself to a full class presentation using movement, drama and choral speech.

Home work suggestions

- **Difference of opinion** – Think about a time when you had a difference of opinion and ended up going against your parents' or another adult's will. How old were you? What happened? Ask the adults involved about the same event – what do they remember about it? Record the two perspectives – context, actions, feelings, what was said, what the outcomes were.
- **Running away from home** – Michael didn't actually run away from home, but he might have done. List the causes, things, ideas you would be prepared to leave home for, and say why. What would you take with you if you were running away? What would you miss about home?

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- **Protests in the news** – Find accounts of some current protests. What are the people concerned protesting about? Where? Why? What are they doing by way of protest? What do they hope will happen? How do you feel about the matter? What issues do you feel strongly about?