



# Michael Rosen learning resource

Cross curricular activities to support using Michael Rosen’s poems in class

## Age 8-12

## CFE Levels Second to Third

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## About this resource

The activities in this resource have been designed to be used with five poems by Michael Rosen: “Boogy Woogy Buggy”, “Don’t”, “Washing Up”, “Chocolate Cake” and “Do I know you?”.   
  
For other resources on using poetry in the classroom see our resource on [Introducing and exploring poetry in the classroom](https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/learning-resources/introducing-poetry-in-the-classroom) or visit [the Poetry section of our website](https://www.scottishbooktrust.com/topics/poetry).

## “Boogy Woogy Buggy” activities

Read the poem together as a class, then watch Michael perform his poem. You can watch Michael perform [“Boogy Woogy Buggy”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lOo315p9WM) on YouTube (48 seconds). Do your pupils notice anything about the rhythm of the poem?

### Activity 1: Performance

LIT 2-04a, LIT 2-07a, LIT 2-09a, LIT 2-16a  
This is a very rhythmic poem. Having watched and read the poem, split pupils into small groups to discuss and explore how they would read it aloud. Pupils could use some musical instruments, such as claves, to set up a beat to accompany the poem. Ask pupils to decide how they want to perform it, then rehearse and each group can perform it for the class.

### Activity 2: Everyday interventions

LIT 2-09a, LIT 2-22a, LIT 2-23a, LIT 2-24a, LIT 2-28a  
Divide your class into pairs. In these pairs ask pupils to create a list of all the everyday inventions they can think of, such as a hoover or microwave or kettle. For each one, ask pupils to discuss what special thing it allows them to do, what special qualities it has, what life would be like without it– make lists of these special features to go with each invention. Ask pupils to write a short paragraph about what they think life would be like without their chosen item.   
  
For cross-curricular links, you could use this activity to inspire a project exploring life in a previous era. Ask pupils to research and consider what life might have been like in a chosen era, and what life was like without all the modern inventions they are used to.

### Activity 3: Marketing marvels

LIT 2-09a, LIT 2-16a, LIT 2-18a, ENG 2-27a, LIT 2-29a  
Ask pupils to collect and bring in magazines or newspapers. Then ask pupils to cut out all the adverts they can find in the magazines and spread them out on the desks. Discuss the claims that the advertisers make about the products they are trying to sell. Do the pupils believe or agree with these claims? What do pupils think of the adverts? What are the adverts’ aim? Are pupils persuaded by the advertising? You could collect these phrases and comments and use them as part of a display.   
  
Next, choose one of the inventions the class has discussed in the “everyday inventions” activities and plan and develop a marketing campaign to sell your favoured product to the class. Pupils need to consider who they are aiming their product at – would they want everyone in class to buy it or a targeted group? What advertising will they produce and what will it look like?

### Activity 4: Making music

EXA 2-18a  
Ask pupils to find out about different dances like the jive and boogy-woogy. The jive dance originated in 1940’s America and is a version of jitterbug and swing dance. You can watch videos of [jitterbug](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xS5oCLXrQLs) (3 minutes, 25 seconds) and [swing dancing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9zHYkKoL4A) (1 minute, 53 seconds) on YouTube.   
  
Introduce pupils to hand jive dancing. It is a dance from 1940’s that involves different patterns of hand movement, including clapping different parts of the body. A good clip to show pupils is the [hand jive](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fY5pmzmiDO8) (4 minutes, 41 seconds) by Sandy and Danny in Grease (you don’t need to show the whole clip, just the parts where Sandy and Danny dance together. This is hand jiving). Ask pupils to research and find out about it as a group. Can your pupils make up a hand jive to go with “Boogy Woogy Buggy”?

### Activity 5: Buggy-making

TCH2-12a, TCH 2-13a, TCH 2-14a, TCH 2-14b  
Ask pupils to design and make a buggy with a motor and gears that can carry an Easter egg (or object of choice). Now test it to see how far it will roll down a given slope with varying surfaces.

## “Don’t” activities

Read the poem together as a class, then watch Michael perform his poem. You can watch Michael Rosen perform his poem [“Don’t”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oaq3gzswei0) on YouTube (1 minutes, 10 seconds). What do your pupils notice about Michael’s performance? He uses a lot of gestures in the performance.

### Activity 1: Performance

ENG 2-19a, EXA 2-01a  
This is a wonderfully rhythmic poem that cries out for a performance, or at least to be read aloud. Watch Michael perform a variety of poems from his poetry book [*The Hypnotiser*](http://www.michaelrosen.co.uk/hypnotiser/)on his website.This would be a great place to go for your pupils to get ideas for how to perform a poem aloud. Work with your pupils to create an individual or class performance.

### Activity 2: Don’t do that!

LIT 2-09a, LIT 2-06a, ENG 2-27a  
Ask your pupils if they have ever been told off. Pupils can discuss in pairs or as a group the sorts of things grownups tell you not to do. Now compare these ideas to those in the poem. Are the things included in the poem something your pupils think they would be told off for?   
  
Next, ask pupils to come up with a list of daft things they might be told not to do. See if pupils can use internal rhyme (or half-rhyme) in the list in the same way Michael Rosen has done, e.g. don’t stick chips on your hips. And don’t forget something especially silly to end the list!   
  
Pupils can use these lists to create their own “Don’t” poems.

### Activity 3: Thinking about rules and rights

SOC 2-17a, LIT 2-09a, LIT 2-28a, LIT 2-29a  
Have a class discussion about rules. Why do we have rules? Who makes them? Who breaks them? Why, when, how? If children were to make the rules, what would they be? This would be a good opportunity to highlight any school rules and discuss why they are in place.  
  
From this discussion, go on to explain that everyone has rights. [The Rights of a Child](https://www.unicef.org/crc/) have been outlined by the United Nations Convention. Discuss the rights of a child as a class. What do your pupils think? Do they think everyone in the world enjoys these rights? Why or why not?

## “Washing Up” and “Chocolate Cake” activities

[“Washing Up”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dmeS6U_OcE4) (5 minutes, 29 seconds) and [“Chocolate Cake”](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7BxQLITdOOc) (7 minutes, 33 seconds) are both long poems which tell a story. Compare these poems to the more rhythmic poems “Don’t” and “Boogy Woogy Buggy”. What do pupils notice about the pace of the poems? What about how Michael performs them? Is the difference evident when they read them on the page?  
  
[Puffin Publishers has an excellent resource with activity sheets to help you explore Chocolate Cake](https://www.puffinschools.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Puffin-Schools-KS2-Poetry-Resource-Pack-Michael-Rosens-Chocolate-Cake.pdf) in detail with you pupils.

### Activity 1: Poetry moments

LIT 2-04a, LIT 2-06a, LIT 2-09a, LIT 2-16a, ENG 2-19a, LIT 2-26a, LIT 2-28a, EXA 2-14a  
Ask pupils to choose a favourite moment from one of these poems and create a still image of that scene. You can use whatever creative material you prefer as a class, it could be collage, pen and paper, painting, or photography.  
  
Ask pupils to present the image to the class and see if their peers can guess the exact line/s from the poem. Pin the images up on a display board or blu-tack to a white board. If pupils have shown a character, e.g. one of brothers in “Washing Up”, add sticky notes to the images to show what the character is saying, thinking, or feeling.   
  
If you want to extend the activity, divide the poem into sections and ask pupils to create a short series of still images. Once all the images are complete, gather them together and ask the class to present the whole poem in sequence. You can accompany this with a reading of the poem.

### Activity 2: Celebrating the ordinary

LIT 2-09a, LIT 2-28a  
Here are some questions you could pose to your class based on the poems. Pupils can write a short account of these experiences.   
  
“Washing Up”: what chores do you have to do at home, and how do try to make them more fun? What is your relationship with any siblings like? How do you get on when doing chores together? Who is in charge? What happens? Has there ever been a time when you have got into big trouble doing a task?   
  
“Chocolate Cake”: have you ever had a similar food incident? Or been naughty and then been caught out like Michael was with the cake? Have you ever eaten the whole chocolate cake like Michael Rosen? Have you ever been found out? What had you done? Why? Who found out and how? Were there any consequences?

### Activity 3: The memory telescope

LIT 2-09a, LIT 2-07a, LIT 2-05a  
Ask pupils to pick a moment from the above discussion of memories and incident. Tell pupils to close their eyes, and think about it really carefully. What details can they add – where, when, what, how, who, why? Tell pupils to keep honing in closer and closer on the incident, as if they are using a memory telescope. Try to think about what you could see, hear, smell and feel. Did anyone say anything? What, and how was it said, and to whom? Ask pupils to write these details down and then discuss them in pairs or with a neighbour.

### Activity 4: Storyboarding

ENG 2-30a, ENG 2-31a, ENG 2-27a, LIT 2-28a, TCH 2-04b  
Ask pupils to create a storyboard of the memory or incident they have selected. Add words, phrases, text to each panel to bring the incident to life. If you have access to it, you could use comic strip software to create a comic strip of the chosen memory.

### Activity 5: Everyday story poems

LIT 2-27a, ENG 2-31a, ENG 2-19a  
Use any or all of the information gathered in the memory activities to write a poem of an incident. Like Michael Rosen, “talk to the page”, ask pupils to tell the story as if they are telling it to a friend. They can add in speech and sound effects to bring it to life. Pupils do no need to worry about making it rhyme. Now might be a good opportunity to look back at the poem and discuss its structure, and the way Michael breaks his poems up into chunks or repeats words and phrases to create a pattern or an emphasis.

### Activity 6: It escalates

LIT 2-09a, ENG 2-31a, LIT 2-28a

The situation in “Washing Up” escalates quickly – ask pupils to try plotting the events to see how this happened. As a class, discuss how an incident between two people could start small then get more and more out of hand as each one tries to outdo the other, such as eating dinner that turns into a food fight. Can pupils make a poem or a drama out of this?

## “Do I know you?” activities

### Activity 1: Who am I?

LIT 2-09a, LIT 3-09a, LIT 2-16a, LIT 3-16a  
Ask your pupils to read the poem carefully. What do they think Michael Rosen is trying to get them to think about? Have they ever felt lost, misunderstood, and even that they don’t understand themselves? Does everyone have a right to be understood? How could they bring this about? Use this poem as a starting point for a Health and Wellbeing discussion on self-awareness and emotions, as well as empathy and respecting others.

### Activity 2: Something small and lost. . .

LIT 2-20a, ENG 2-27a, ENG 2-31a, LIT 3-20a, ENG 3-27a, ENG 3-31a, LIT 2-09a, LIT 3-09a,

Divide the class into pairs. Ask pupils to create images of their own based on the pattern Michael has used. He describes something small as lost inside something bigger: “*I’m an apple in a pie; I’m a note in a flute’s tune; I’m the whisper in the breeze; I’m a star in the Milky Way. . .*”Once the class have created a few lines of theirown, ask the pairs to discuss how they think the small object might feel in this situation. The class can then use the images they have created in this activity to write their own poems or short verse inspired by “Do I know you?”

### Activity 3: Top ten things you like

LIT 2-26a, LIT 2-28a, ENG 2-30a, LIT 3-26a, LIT 3-28a, ENG 3-30a

Ask the class to think of the ten things or items they like most (not just food items!). Ask pupils to think about what each of these items tells the rest of the world about them as a person. Give pupils a sheet of paper so they can make a table, with each word on the left and an explanation of what it tells the world about them on the right. Pupils might want to illustrate each item.

### Activity 4: “Ask me who I am”

LIT 2-26a, LIT 3-26a, ENG 2-27a, ENG 3-27a

Michael Rosen’s line might suggest making a riddle to hide the identity of a famous person or someone the rest of the class would know. Make a list of “I am. . .” statements about the person (perhaps someone you have been studying, or a character from a class novel) in the style of the poem, and see if pupils can guess their identity.  
  
To extend this activity, pupils could conduct an interview with that character or person and record it as a podcast, or set it out as a magazine interview. Pupils could take it in turns to be in the hot-seat and pretend to be the character. Work with pupils to create a list of suitable interview questions first and encourage pupils to think about interesting answers that will engage your audience. They could perhaps practice their interview before filming or recording them.

## Poems

### Boogy Woogy Buggy

I glide as I ride

in my boogy woogy buggy

take the corners wide

just see me drive

I’m an easy speedy baby

doing the baby buggy jive

I’m in and out the shops

I’m the one that never stops

I’m the one that feels

the beat of the wheels

all that air

in my hair

I streak down the street

between the feet that I meet.

No one can catch

my boogy woogy buggy

no one’s got the pace

I rule this place

I’m a baby who knows

I’m a baby who goes, baby, goes.

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### Do I know you?

I’m lost

I’m lost

I don’t know where I am

I’m a sock in a washing machine

A strawberry in some jam

I’m a letter in a book

I’m the bubble in some fizz

I’m a pebble on a beach

I’m a question in a quiz

I don’t know where you are

You don’t know where you are

You don’t know when I is

I don’t know how you was

You don’t know who I wiz.

So find me

Find me

Ask me who I am

Get me out the washing machine

Fish me out the jam

Open up the book

Let out all the fizz

Let’s walk on the beach

And I’ll answer your quiz

Then I’ll know where you are

You’ll know when I is

I’ll know how you was

And you’ll know who I wiz.

**This poem was especially written for Michael Rosen’s appearance on the Scottish Friendly Children’s Book Tour in 2008.**

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### Don’t

Don’t do,

Don’t do,

Don’t do that.

Don’t pull faces,

Don’t tease the cat.

Don’t pick your ears,

Don’t be rude at school.

Who do they think I am?

Some kind of fool?

One day

They’ll say

Don’t put toffee in my coffee

don’t pour gravy on the baby

don’t put beer in his ear

don’t stick your toes up his nose.

Don’t put confetti on the spaghetti

and don’t squash peas on your knees.

Don’t put ants in your pants

don’t put mustard in the custard

don’t chuck jelly at the telly

and don’t throw fruit at a computer

don’t throw fruit at a computer.

Don’t what?

Don’t throw fruit at a computer.

Don’t what?

Don’t throw fruit at a computer.

Who do they think I am?

Some kind of fool?

**“Don’t” taken from *Mustard, Custard, Grumble Belly and Gravy* by Michael Rosen and illustrated by Quentin Blake. (Andre Deutsch 1985, Bloomsbury 2006). Text copyright © Michael Rosen, 1985.**

### Washing Up

On Sundays,

my mum and dad said,

‘Right, we’ve cooked the dinner,

you two can wash it up,’

and then they went off to the front room.

So then we began.

First there was the row about who

was to wash and who was to dry.

My brother said, ‘You’re too slow at washing,

I have to hang about waiting for you,’

so I said,

‘You always wash, it’s not fair.’

‘Hard cheese,’ he says,

‘I’m doing it.’

So that was that.

‘Whoever dries has to stack the dishes,’

he says,

so that’s me stacking the dishes

while he’s getting the water ready.

Now,

quite often we used to have mustard

with our Sunday dinner

and we didn’t have it out of a tube,

one of us used to make it with the powder

in an eggcup

and there was nearly always

some left over.

Anyway,

my brother

he’d be washing up by now

and he’s standing there at the sink

his hands in the water,

I’m drying up,

And suddenly he goes,

‘Quick, quick quick

come over here

quick, you’ll miss it

quick, you’ll miss it.’

‘What?’ I say, ‘What?’

‘Quick, quick. In here,

in the water.’

I say,

‘What? What?’

‘Give us your hand,’ he says

and he grabs my hand

then my finger,

‘What?’ I say,

‘That,’ he says,

and he pulls my finger under the water

and stuffs it into the eggcup

with left-over blobs of old mustard

stuck to the bottom.

It’s all slimey

‘Oh Horrible.’

I was an idiot to have believed him.

So I go on drying up.

Suddenly

I feel a little speck of water on my neck.

I look up at the ceiling.

Where’d that come from?

I look at my brother

he’s grinning all over his big face.

‘Oy, cut that out,’

He grins again

sticks his finger under the water

in the bowl and

flicks.

Plip.

‘Oy, that got me right on my face.’

‘Did it? did it? did it?’

He’s well pleased.

So now it’s my turn

I’ve got the drying up cloth, haven’t I?

And I’ve been practising for ages

on the kitchen door handle.

Now he’s got his back to me

washing up

and

out goes the cloth, like a whip, it goes

right on the –

‘Ow – that hurt. I didn’t hurt *you*.’

Now it’s me grinning.

So he goes,

‘All right, let’s call it quits.’

‘OK,’ I say, ‘one-all. Fairy squarey.’

So, I go on drying up.

What I don’t know it that

he’s got the Fairy Liquid bottle under the

water

boop boop boop boop boop boop

it’s filling up

with dirty soapy water

and next thing it’s out of the water

and he’s gone sqeeeesh

and squirted it right in my face.

‘Got you in the mush,’ he goes.

‘Right, that it,’ I say,

‘I’ve had enough.’

And I go upstairs and get

this old bicycle cape I’ve got,

one of those capes you can wear when you ride a bicycle in the rain.

So I come down in that

and I say,

‘OK I’m ready for anything you’ve got now.

You can’t get me now, can you?’

So next thing he’s got the little

washing-up brush

and it’s got little bits of meat fat

and squashed peas stuck in it

and he’s come up to me

and he’s in, up, under the cape with it

working it round and round

under my jumper, and under my chin.

So that makes me really wild

and I make a grab for anything that’ll

hold water; dip it in the sink

and fling it at him.

What I don’t know is that

while I went upstairs to get the cape

he’s got a secret weapon ready.

It’s his bicycle pump,

He’s loaded it with the dirty washing-up water

By sucking it all in.

He picks it up,

and it’s squirt again.

All over my hair.

Suddenly the door opens.

‘Have you finished the ...?’

It’s Mum AND Dad.

‘Just look at this.

Look at the pair of them.’

And there’s water all over the floor

all over the table

and all we’ve washed up is

two plates and the mustard pot.

My dad says,

‘You can’t be trusted to do anything you’re asked,

can you.’

He always says that.

Mind you, the floor was pretty clean

After we had mopped it all up.

**“Washing Up” taken from *Quick, Let’s Get Out of Here* by Michael Rosen and illustrated by Quentin Blake (Andrew Deutsch 1983, Puffin 2006). Text © Michael Rosen, 1983. Reproduced by kind permission of Penguin Books Ltd.**

### Chocolate Cake

I love chocolate cake.

And when I was a boy

I loved it even more.

Sometimes we used to have it for tea

and Mum used to say,

‘If there’s any left over

you can have it to take to school

tomorrow to have at playtime.’

And the next day I would take it to school

wrapped in tin foil

open it up at playtime and sit in the

corner of the playground

eating it,

you know how the icing on top

is all shiny and it cracks as you

bite into it

and there’s that other kind of icing in

the middle

and it sticks to your hands and you

can lick your fingers

and lick your lips

oh it’s lovely.

yeah.

Anyway,

once we had this chocolate cake for tea

and later I went to bed

but while I was in bed

I found myself waking up

licking my lips

and smiling.

I woke up proper.

‘The chocolate cake.’

It was the first thing

I thought of.

I could almost see it

so I thought,

what if I go downstairs

and have a little nibble, yeah?

It was all dark

everyone was in bed

so it must have been really late

but I got out of bed,

crept out of the door

there’s always a creaky floorboard, isn’t there?

Past Mum and Dad’s room,

careful not to tread on bits of broken toys

or bits of Lego

you know what it’s like treading on Lego

with your bare feet,

Yowwww

Shhhhhhh

downstairs

into the kitchen

open the cupboard

and there it is

all shining.

So I take it out of the cupboard

put it on the table

and I see that

there’s a few crumbs lying about on the plate,

so I lick my finger and run my finger all over the crumbs

scooping them up

and putting them into my mouth.

oooooooommmmmmmmm

nice.

Then

I look again

and on one side where it’s been cut,

it’s all crumbly.

So I take a knife

I think I’ll just tidy that up a bit,

cut off the crumbly bits

scoop them all up

and into the mouth

oooooommm mmmm

nice.

Look at the cake again.

That looks a bit funny now,

one side doesn’t match the other

I’ll just even it up a bit, eh?

Take the knife

and slice.

This time the knife makes a little cracky noise

as it goes through that hard icing on the top.

A whole slice this time,

into the mouth.

Oh the icing on top

and the icing in the middle

ohhhhhh oooo mmmmmm.

But now

I can’t stop myself.

Knife –

I just take any old slice at it

and I’ve got this great big chunk

and I’m cramming it in

what a greedy pig

but it’s so nice,

and there’s another

and another and I’m squealing and I’m smacking my lips

and I’m stuffing myself with it

and

before I know

I’ve eaten the lot.

The whole lot.

I look at the place.

It’s all gone.

Oh no

they’re bound to notice, aren’t they,

a whole chocolate cake doesn’t just disappear

does it?

What shall I do?

I know. I’ll wash the plate up,

and the knife

and put them away and maybe no one

will notice, eh?

So I do that

and creep creep creep

back to bed

into bed

doze off

licking my lips

with a lovely feeling in my belly.

Mmmmmmmmmm.

In the morning I get up,

downstairs,

have breakfast,

Mum’s saying,

‘Have you got your dinner money?’

and I say,

‘Yes.’

‘And don’t forget to take some chocolate cake with you.’

I stopped breathing.

‘What’s the matter,’ she says,

‘you normally jump at chocolate cake?’

I’m still not breathing,

and she’s looking at me very closely now.

She’s looking at me just below my mouth.

‘What’s that?’ she says.

‘What’s what?’ I say.

‘What’s that there?’

‘Where?’

‘There,’ she says, pointing at my chin.

‘I don’t know,’ I say.

‘It looks like chocolate,’ she says.

‘It’s not chocolate cake is it?’

No answer.

‘Is it?’

‘I don’t know.’

She goes to the cupboard

looks in, up, top, middle, bottom,

turns back to me.

‘It’s gone.

It’s gone.

You haven’t eaten it, have you?’

‘I don’t know.’

‘You don’t know? You don’t know if you’ve eaten a whole

chocolate cake or not?

When? When did you eat it?’

So I told her,

and she said

well what could she say?

‘That;s the last time I give you any cake to take

to school.

Now go. Get out

no wait

not before you’ve washed your dirty sticky face.’

I went upstairs

looked in the mirror

and there it was,

just below my mouth,

a chocolate smudge.

The give-away.

Maybe she’ll forget about it by next week.

**“Chocolate Cake” taken from *Quick, Let’s Get Out of Here* by Michael Rosen and illustrated by Quentin Blake (Andrew Deutsch 1983, Puffin 2006). Text © Michael Rosen, 1983. Reproduced by kind permission of Penguin Books Ltd.**