



Ross Collins learning activities

Creative activities inspired by *There's A Bear On My Chair* and other books by Ross Collins.

Age 5-8

CFE Levels Early and First

Resource created by
Scottish Book Trust

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About this resource

This resource is full of cross-curricular activity suggestions inspired by Ross Collins' wonderful picture books. It has been produced to support activities based around the stories in *There's a Bear on My Chair*, *Robot Rumpus* and *Dear Vampa*, however we've designed it so you can use most of the activities even if you don't own the books. Have fun!

Exploring emotions

There's a Bear on My Chair, *Robot Rumpus* and *Dear Vampa* all explore situations which are frustrating or difficult. Mouse has his personal space invaded, Mum and Dad's robots end up causing more mayhem than they solve, and Bram's new neighbours create conflict and discord.

Any of these books could all be used as a springboard to the development of emotional literacy: recognising different emotions, talking about feelings and finding ways to work through frustration.

Emotions activity HWB 0-20a, HWB 1-20a.

Ask pupils to think of a situation when things didn't go the way they wanted them to. How did this make them feel? Were they frustrated, annoyed, sad, or angry? What did these emotions feel like in their body?

Give each pupil a sheet of paper with a simple outline of a person on it and ask them to colour it in to show what angry, frustrating emotions feel like, what colour do they think they are and where do they feel them in their body?

After they have completed their pictures, give them a second outline and ask them to think of a time they felt really calm and relaxed. How did this feel? What colour is calm? Where does the emotion 'relaxed' appear in the body? Colour in the new outline to represent calm relaxed feelings.

Finally, ask how someone could move from one picture to another. Discuss how they calm themselves down when they feel angry and frustrated. What do they do to calm down, where do they go, do they need something to hug, something happy to think of, something to listen to, or something to eat or drink? Do they think some of these techniques might have helped the characters in the book?

As an extension activity you may want to introduce some new [relaxation ideas](#) or read further books that [explore emotions](#).

There's A Bear on My Chair activities

Rhyming poetry LIT 0-13a, ENG 0-12a, ENG 0-31a

Ross Collins uses rhyming text throughout *There's A Bear on My Chair*, however, writing rhyming poetry can be challenging for young pupils. The key is not to ask them to learn lots of skills at once. If you ease them into it, it is definitely possible to get them coming out with poems that rhyme and scan!

First, you could introduce rhyming to your pupils by asking them to match rhyming words. Print out a poem such as [Pirate Pete](#) by James Carter, and cut the first four verses into separate lines. Ask pupils to see if they can match the rhyming lines together. Can they spot where the rhyming word is placed in each line?

Once they're familiar with the concept of rhyming, let them listen to the whole poem and ask them if they can come up with anything else that Pirate Pete might have?

Animal rhymes LIT 0-31a, ENG 1-31a, LIT 1-26a

Now, you can move on to writing some poems related to *There's A Bear on My Chair*. Ask your pupils to call out names of animals and write these down on the board as they suggest them. Now pick out one of the names which seems like it might be easy to rhyme (let's take 'rat' as an example). On the board, write down the following:

There's a rat...

Now ask the pupils to think call out as many words that rhyme with rat as possible. When they're finished and you've written their suggestions on the board, ask them to use one of the words to finish off the sentence. For instance:

There's a rat in my flat.

Ask them to look at the rest of the rhyming words on the board and think about how they could be used in the poem. For instance:

There's a rat in my flat.

What a little brat!

I chased him with a bat

But he hid in my hat.

Note that we're not worrying about rhythm at this point – it doesn't matter if not every line has the same amount of syllables.

Now ask pupils to choose a new animal and brainstorm some rhyming words. You may want to highlight animals on the board that are likely to yield a lot of rhymes. Ask them if they can create some rhyming lines of poetry for their new animal.

Poetic rhythm LIT 0-31a, ENG 1-31a, LIT 1-26a

After pupils can rhyme, another useful skill to pick up is the ability to make a poem scan: in other words, make the rhythm consistent throughout the poem.

Explain that if poets or authors want to create a particularly rhythmic poem, they like to make sure that every line has the same number of beats. Play this clip of poet Michael Rosen performing his poem ['Hand on the Bridge'](#) and ask your pupils if they can hear a 'beat' throughout the poem. Can they clap along to the beat? How many beats can they hear in each line of the poem?

Next, tell your pupils that they are going to come up with some poems that have this kind of beat. Tell them that a mysterious, terrifying monster has been sighted in your town called the Humberbrat. It's been doing mean things to all the locals, as can be seen in this short poem:

*Beware, beware the Humberbrat,
It trips you up and steals your bike!*

Ask pupils if they can tap out the rhythm of this poem and tell you how many beats are in each line. Now give them another example of a terrifying monster – the Humberbat:

*Beware, beware the Humberbat,
It...*

Ask pupils to brainstorm words that rhyme with Humberbat. Once you have enough suggestions, ask them if they can think of a line to complete the poem.

Now, ask pupils to come up with two line poems for the following monsters: the Ogdenbat, the Brazenspam, the Flugenrank and the Ironbray. They must make sure the beat is consistent throughout, so ask them to test this by tapping out the rhythm of their poem.

To help them come up with lines, you can prompt them. How fast, large and strong is the monster? What is it made from? What does it do? What does it look like?

Chair building TCH 0-09a, TCH 1-09a, TCH 0-10a, TCH 1-10a

The bear in the story seems too big for the mouse's chair, but a well-designed chair might well support a heavy bear. This gives you a nice opportunity to explore some design work with your class.

Take a look at this [blog post](#) which shows how to make a basic chair for a teddy bear using cardboard tubes. Bring a teddy bear into the classroom and tell pupils that they are going to build a chair for the bear, but need to decide how best to do it. Give pupils a cardboard square (see the blog post) and tell them that this is where someone would sit. Ask them to design and construct some legs to go beneath it

Present the pupils with a choice of materials for the legs. You could include some sticks gathered from outside, some unsharpened pencils, or some thin paper straws. Ask pupils to discuss which materials might be suitable, and which might be too weak to hold the bears weight, too small to support the seat or difficult to glue, tie or stick together. They could experiment with the materials for a while.

Now, present the pupils with some cardboard tubes. Do they think these be better? Why? After this, you can set pupils to work on building their chairs as shown in the blog post.

Create a pattern EXA 0-02a, EXA 1-02a, EXA 1-03a

The mouse in *There's a Bear on My Chair* has a patterned jumper. Ask your pupils to create their own patterns and design a new jumper for the mouse. They could paint or draw this; alternatively, they could draw the outline in pencil and then cut out pieces of fabric to stick on top of their drawing.

In Ross's [Authors Live session](#) he shows pupils how to draw the bear. As an extension activity you could ask pupils to follow his instructions but to add in their own design for an item of clothing the bear might wear.

Robot Rumpus activities

Programme some healthy meals into Cook-bot LIT 1-26a, LIT 1-18a, HWB 1-30a

In [Robot Rumpus](#) Mum and Dad have bought new robots to help around the house. Cook-bot is supposed to cook up lovely food for the family, but things don't work out quite as expected. Read the story together and then ask pupils what food they would ask Cook-bot to cook for them? Can they come up with some tasty, healthy recipes to programme into Cook-bot? If they don't want to end up with a spaghetti bath, they will also need to create some robot instructions! Ask them to think about the order in which Cook-bot has to do things in order to create one of the meals and then create an instruction page for it.

Write a robot story LIT 0-31a, ENG 1-31a

Have a look at this great [robot resource](#) from Pie Corbett. There are some prompts to encourage children to write a robot story on page three. Using *Robot Rumpus* as a starting point ask pupils create a story of a house helping robot that malfunctions. They can decide who owns the robot, what it does around the house, what goes wrong and how it is finally captured.

Animated automatons TCH 0-09a, TCH 1-09a, TCH 0-11a, TCH 1-11a

Ask pupils what kind of robots they would like to help around their house. Using recycled materials, ask them to design and build some robots and animate them using a stop-motion animation programme. Create an animation which shows the robot carrying out its primary function.

As an extension activity they could come up with an advertising slogan like the ones on the inside cover of the book. They could also write a script for a TV advert for their robot.

Train Book-bot LIT 0-09a, LIT 1-09a

Book-bot isn't much good at choosing books to read to the girl. Give Book-bot some suggestions. Talk about the books you read with parents or guardians; which ones do you like best?

What kind of voice do you think Book-bot has? Do you think it would be a good voice for reading a book out loud? Imagine you had to train Book-bot how to read a book aloud. It's not as simple as people think! How could it make the book entertaining? What kind of voices could it use? How could it vary the pitch and speed of its voice? Practice reading some books aloud so you can show Book-bot how it's done.

Dear Vampa activities

Letter writing LIT 0-26a, LIT 1-25a, HWB 0-47a, HWB 1-47a

Bram writes a letter to Vampa to tell him about his neighbours. Ask your pupils to talk about their community and the people that live there. Discuss if they'd like to have the Pires or the Wolfsons for their neighbours.

After you've got pupils chatting about their communities, ask them imagine that a vampire or werewolf family has moved next door to them. Get them to write a letter to tell someone about the new neighbours. They can add in facts about their real street, what their family might think about the newcomers, what the new neighbours like to do, where they shop, or what their friends think of them. Ask them to think of some great things about their new neighbours, and to suggest a way they could become friends.

Party planning LIT 1-25a, LIT 1-26a, HWB 0-47a, HWB 1-47a

The Wolfson Family plans a housewarming party, but when the Pire family go to the party there's nothing for them to drink. This shows that if you're planning a party, it pays to prepare. Can your pupils plan a party for some unusual guests?

Write out some strange guests on slips of paper e.g.: mermaids, witches, fairies, zombies or dragons. Ask pupils to pick two or three slips of paper and then work together to design a party that will keep the chosen guests happy. They should think about what kind of food and drink to serve, what kind of games to play, how to decorate and what time of day would suit everyone.

As an extension activity, children could design and make some invitations, create decorations, or plan a menu.

Role play HWB 0-47a, HWB 1-47a, EXA 0-13a, EXA 1-13a

Dear Vampa is a story all about accepting others and realising we might not be so different after all. Ask half of the class to represent the Wolfson Family and ask the other half to represent the Pire Family. Using information from the book, engage the children in role play. Can the Pires show the Wolfsons how they live?. What would the Wolfsons show the Pires about their family life?

Ask each group to consider what their family's daily routine is? What happens when they take their pet out for a walk? What would they tell the other family about their pet's behaviour and habits? What time of day or night do they do things? What they have for dinner?

What questions might each family have for the other? For instance, the Pires must wonder why the Wolfson's love the sun so much! Can they find things that connect both families?