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Author/Interview subject: Michael Rosen (MR)
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Other speakers: Audience (Aud), Ryan (R)

JF: Hello. I'm Janice Forsyth and a very warm welcome to this world book day event coming to you live from the BBC in Glasgow. This is the first of a series of virtual author events organised by the Scottish Book Trust in association with the BBC. Now if you're watching this online you are part of a massive audience of children watching this in schools right across the UK, so a very warm welcome to you but guess what? We've got some real live children here in the studio with us too. They're from a very special school in Glasgow. Garscadden Primary school. Yes.

Aud: [Cheering]

JF: So why don't you say hello to each other. Why don't you wave across the virtual bridge? Ok. Children here, wave to the folk watching in schools. On you go. Oh that's lovely. You can shout hello too.

Aud: Hello!

JF: Marvellous. What a lovely online and virtual community we are. Now we are absolutely delighted, thrilled and excited that we've got a very special person here whose going to talk you for the next wee while. He is the wonderful children's poet Michael Rosen and I know that you're huge fans of his work and we're delighted he could be with us today because he's so busy. He's very much in demand so it's very special for us that he could spend world book day with us, so a huge warm welcome on world book day to the one and only Michael Rosen!

Aud: [Applause]

MR: Thank you very much. That's lovely. Lovely to see you. So look – you know my name, Michael Rosen. I'll say hello to the virtuals there and there you go, and you waved very nicely. That was very good. Can you say the name of your school one more time?

Aud: Garscadden!

MR: I'm going to learn how to say that, properly, later. Yeah. So look, I write books. You know that, don't you? I can see some of you are sitting on them, which is good. A good thing to do, sit on a book. That could be a slogan actually, couldn't it? Why not sit on a book? And, do you know, when I wrote my very first book I didn't know what to call it. You know? I mean you'd have thought that would have been quite obvious but sometimes, do you teachers sometimes give you a piece of paper? Do you ever get that? Do they just hand you a piece of paper and ask you to write on it? Do you ever have that? And do you have to write at the top the date. I never knew why you have to do that. Because have you noticed, it's, and I'm going to let you into a secret now, it's always today? Have you noticed? It's never yesterday, and it's never tomorrow. You could write, where it says date, you could write – today. No don't do that. You'll get me into trouble. Okay don't do that. But hey now wait a minute. What if you wrote tomorrow? Yeah date - tomorrow. That would be good through wouldn't it? No it would, wouldn't it? Okay and then you have to write the date and then you have to write your name. Why'd you have to write your name? I don't know. You know who you are, don't you? So you could write – me. No don't do that. Okay, that'll get me into more trouble, so you have to write your name. What if you wrote somebody else's name? You know – your name's Dave and you write Shona. No, no. Or what if you wrote - I dunno. So it could be date – tomorrow – name – I dunno – and then you have to write the title and this is the bit that floored me. You know if you've written a nice piece all about your dad, don't write My Mum. That's not going to be helpful. I had this same problem. I had this big pile of poems. What shall I call them? Big pile of poems? That's not very good, is it? And I thought and I thought and I came up with the title and in the end I decided to call it - Mind Your Own Business. And that was my first book and I was dead pleased. I thought mind your own business. Great and then in came out and the very first thing authors do, you know, is they open the book and they smell it. Mmmmmmm. Lovely. But then I heard just a few weeks later there were some children going into a library near me and they were walking into the library and they were going, "Excuse me. Can I have a book please?" And the librarian said "Yes dear. What would you like?" "Mind your own business." And the librarian said "Don't you be so rude" and the kids say "Well, it's not my fault. It's what Michael Rosen called it, wasn't it? Hmmm?" People do that don't they? Hmmm. And then when I finished writing that book someone said to me "Are you writing another book?" I said "Yep". And they said "What's that called?" and I said "Wouldn't You Like To Know?" 'Cause that's what it was called you see. I said "Wouldn't You Like To Know?" And they went "Yeah I would like to know actually, yeah." So I said "Wouldn't You Like To Know?" They said "Yeah I would like to know." So I said "Well that's what it's

called” and they went “Aahhhh”. People do that, don’t they, when they catch on, have you noticed? They go “Aahhhh.” Would you like to do that? Let’s do that. Give it a go. One two three...

Aud: Aahhhh

MR: Tell you what, let’s do it as a rainbow, from you to, you thrown the ah from there to there. Here you go. Are you ready? We’ll start with you. Ok ready?

Aud: Aahhhh

MR: Aahhhh. Lovely. That’s good. Now do it back and you catch it. - when you go go Pumpf! Like that. You catch it. Now here we go.

Aud: Aahhhh

MR: Aahhhh. Pumpf! You did quite do the catch. But never mind. Anyway, so when I’d finished writing that book someone said to me are you writing another book? And I said “Yep. I’m making a book with a wonderful poet called Roger Mcgough and we’re doing a book together”, and they said, “What’s this book called?” and I said “You tell me.” Because that’s what that book was called, you see. I said “You tell me” and they went “Ah, no you tell me” So I said “You tell me” and they went “No you tell me”. I said “But that’s what it’s called!” And they went ...

Aud: Ahhhh

MR: Pumpf! Exactly. So there are these books and in these books I write down poems and stories of one sort or another and I’ll tell you what, let’s start with something, it’s not even in a book yet, this one. I was out with some boys and girls, a bit like you, I was out by the river Thames in London and there’s a railway bridge and we stood under the railway bridge and a train went over and it made a huge noise, and we stood under the bridge and the train was going didala dun didala dun, like that, and you could feel the train when you put your hand on the bridge and I said - *hand on the bridge, feel the rhythm of the train.* You say that.

Aud & MR: *Hand on the bridge, feel the rhythm of the train.*

MR: I thought that’s a first line of a poem. And you know the poet Benjamin Zephaniah said to me once you can make up poems in your head, and I thought if that’s the first line I could make up some more.

*Hand on the bridge, feel the rhythm of the train
Hand on the window, feel the rhythm of the rain
Hand on your throat, feel the rhythm of your talk
Hand on your leg, feel the rhythm of your walk*

Hand in the sea, feel the rhythm of tide
Hand on your heart, feel the rhythm inside
Hand on the rhythm, feel the rhythm of the rhyme
Hand on your life, feel the rhythm of time
Hand on your life, feel the rhythm of time
Hand on your life, feel the rhythm of ...

Aud: ...Time

MR: Time. That's right. I faded away a little bit there like I was dying but maybe I'm just going away into the distance or something. Do you think you could learn that? Yeah, course you could. Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah. I'll teach it to you line by line then we'll all say it together, alright? So we know the first line. It goes, and you could do the gesture..

Aud & MR: *Hand on the bridge, feel the rhythm of the train*
Hand on the window, feel the rhythm of the rain
Hand on your throat, feel the rhythm of your talk
Hand on your leg, feel the rhythm of your walk
Hand in the sea, feel the rhythm of tide
Hand on your heart, feel the rhythm inside
Hand on the rhythm, feel the rhythm of the rhyme
Hand on your life, feel the rhythm of time
Hand on your life, feel the rhythm of time

MR: Whisper!

Aud & MR: *Hand on your life, feel the rhythm of time*

MR: Yes! You clap yourselves for that. You were good! I thought I had to teach it to you, line by line, and you just did it.

Aud: [Applause]

MR: And that's what Benjamin said. If you make up a poem in your head you can learn it much more quickly so thanks to Benjamin I learnt that. I'm learning things all the time, you know. Oh yes. Do you know when I was very very very young, very very young, my parents studied me, you know. That's what Mums and Dads do. Do you know the day you were born? There was someone...you remember that do you? The day you were born? Yeah? I know. I do as well. I don't mean the day you were born. And do you know there was someone in the room who was so excited. There's bound to have been someone who went "Looook! Wow look at it!" and that was you. "Look at it, it's a baby! Come and have a look at it, come one!" And they all crowded round and had a look and that was you. "Look

at it!" Like that! And you were lying there. "She's so beautiful!" That was you. That was you. And then maybe a few weeks went by and maybe you were lying there and you went like this. And they went "Look! He's lifted his head up! Look at it!" They were so excited and you went yeah I'll do it again if you like, like that. And then, I don't want to say anything bad or beastly but the days, the months, the years went by and there you are now, and do you know, your parents aren't as exactly excited as they were that day with everything you do. You know you get in from school and you've got your bag and you go "Uuh" and you plonk yourself down on the sofa. You get the switcher out. "Uuh. Don't like that. Uuh". And your Mum or Dad isn't standing there going "Look! Look what he's doing! He's using the switcher!" Something changes and we don't know what and I noticed that about my parents. So instead of them studying me, I started studying them. And I started finding out some things and the very first thing I found out was my Dad does not know everything. Because when I was very young I thought my Dad knows everything. Oh yeah. I'd be walking out with my Dad and we'd see a bus go by and I'd say "Dad! What's that?" and he'd go "Son, that's a bus" and I thought "Wow! My dad knows..."

Aud: Everything

MR: "Hang on a minute Dad. You said that's a bus, but there's some round things on the bottom and they're going round. What are they?" And my Dad said "Son those are wheels." And I thought "Wow! My dad knows everything..."

Aud: knows everything

MR: "Hang on a minute Dad. You said those are wheels but how many are there?" And my Dad said "Son, there are four" and I thought "Wow!"

Aud: My dad knows everything

MR: But then come a terrible day when I found out that my Dad does not...

Aud: Know everything.

MR: How did I find out? I'll tell you how. It's because one day we were sitting down to eat and it went like this, and you can join in with this as we go. We sit down to eat and the potato's a bit hot, so I only put a little bit on my fork, and I blow – puff puff – till it's cool. Just cool. Into the mouth. Hmk. Nice. And then there's my brother. He's doing the same. You can join in. Puff puff - till it's cool. Just cool. Into the mouth. Hmk. Nice. And there's my mum. She was doing the same. Yes I did come from that sort of a home. Here we go. Puff puff, till it was...

Aud & MR: Cool. Just cool. Into the mouth. Hmk. Nice.

MR: But my Dad. My Dad, what does he do? He stuffs a great big chunk of potato into his mouth and that really does it. His eyes pop out. He blows. He puffs. He yells. He bobs his head up and down. He spits. He spits potato on to the plate. Plegh. And he turns to us and he goes "Watch out everybody the potatoe's really hot" We knew that didn't we? So that was the day I found out that my dad does...

Aud: Not know everything.

MR: Exactly. What a terrible day that was, and then I went on studying them. And I found out something else. I found out that my mum and dad are different. I found out they were different in the way they told me off. Yes. So I'm in the bathroom and I'm cleaning my teeth. Chickachickachikcachikcachikca upstairs chikcachikca Downstairs chikcachikca front door chikcachikca. You do that? Oh no it's just me is it? Anyway, front door chikcachikcachikca, upstairs, chikcachikcachikca like that, and I notice that the toothbrush was just a little bit wobbly. Ooh, it's a bit wobbly. I wonder if it would bend. Bendy. Bendy Bendy. Yeah it's good. Bendy Bendy bendy yeah! Bendy Bendy! I like it yeah bendy bendy bendy phhsy! Oh no I've broken it. I'm going to get into trouble. I know I can stick it...oh no that's not really working. Umm...oh no. I'm going to get into trouble. Err...I'll make up a story. Yeah, I'll make up a story, I'll go downstairs. I'll go say Hi Mum. Ummm, I was in the bathroom cleaning my teeth really hard and, err, the toothbrush broke. Yes! That's it. So I go downstairs, I go into the kitchen and my Mum's standing there, and I go "Um...hi mum. I was just in the bathroom, and I was cleaning my teeth really hard and, err, the toothbrush broke. Errr.Yeah." Mum looked at it and she said "Not to worry. It's just a toothbrush. Look I can see you're worried about it. Don't worry about it. It's all right. We'll get another one tomorrow. It's no big deal." You see how she was? Endlessly forgiving. That's the way she was, but a few minutes later my Dad gets in. My Dad, very cheery, walks in. "Hi everybody. Hi" , we go "Hi Dad Hi. Anything happen today?" He's says "No no. Nothing happened today, no no" "No come on. Something must have happened" "No no no" "Oh come on! Something must have happened" And my mum says "Yeah, there was something funny. Michael says he went to the bathroom and he says he was cleaning his teeth so hard, the toothbrush broke." And my dad goes "Y'what? Cleaning your teeth so hard the toothbrush broke? I've never heard of anybody cleaning their teeth so hard the toothbrush broke. Michael, would you come...tell me about it." So I go "Yeah it's like mum says. Yeah I was...umm...you know and I noticed it was a little bit wobbly." "Wobbly? How do you mean wobbly?" "Well, like I'm saying, you know, and I wondered if it was, you know, just a little bit kind of bendy." "What's that you're doing with your hands?" "No I'm just saying..." "I'm beginning to get the picture. Bendy bendy bendy, phhsy." He's got it out of me. He's standing, he's

taken me for questioning and he's standing in front of me going "Bendy bendy bendy bendy phhsy" And then boys and girls, he remembered it. You see, he's got the picture of it and then he remembered it. And he remembered and remembered and remembered so the next time I did a bad thing he could remind me of it. So let's say I'm in the bedroom and I'm sitting on my brother's head for half an hour, and my dad busts in and he goes "What are doing?!" and I go "I'm...um... sitting on my brothers head for half an hour." And he said "I can see that" and I said "If you could see it then why are you asking me then?" And then he remembers the last bad thing, so what does he say? He says "Oh yes, like the time you went to the bathroom. Bendy bendy bendy." You see how he remembers? And reminds? You know what I thought my dad had? A big book full of all the bad things I'd ever done. Michael's big book of bad things. I'll tell you what, you say big book, you say bad things, and we'll put it together. Michael's...

Aud: Big book

MR: of

Aud: Bad things

MR: Michael's

Aud: Big book

MR: of

Aud: Bad things

MR: Michael's

Aud: [Mumbles]

MR: Oh, that's a tricky one, that one. Yes it's not a bad book is a big book. We'll try it and switch it over. Michael's big book of bad things. Micheal's...

Aud: Big book

MR: of

Aud: Bad things

MR: Michael's

Aud: Big book

MR: of

Aud: Bad things

MR: Lovely! And do you know my dad had a favourite page in Michael's...

Aud: Big book

MR: of

Aud: Bad things

MR: Page one, because on page one it said "Oh yes, like the time you threw your Mother's best ring out of the window. It was her grandmother's." Well don't look at me like that. I said it was page one! I was only two. When you're two you don't know you're doing a bad thing. I must have toddled over, seen the ring on the floor, picked it up and gone wheeeeeee! And chucked it out the window. Only it was worse than that because we lived in a flat over a shop, so when I chucked it out the window it landed in the...

Aud: Shop?

MR: No! The street! Where it was never found again! Do you see that? Do you see the arm? That's how you become a parent. You learn how to do that. Can you say that with me? Where it was never found ...

Aud: never found again.

MR: And it was worse than that boys and girls. My Mum and Dad could speak another language. I know there's lots of boys and girls, these days, their Mum and Dads and grandparents can speak other languages. My Mum and Dad were like that. They could speak a language called Yiddish that some Jewish people can speak and when they spoke English, sometimes they brought a Yiddish word into English and it made it sound all kind of ancient, so here's my Dad. He says "Oh yes, like the time you threw your mother's best..."

Aud: Ring

MR: Ring out of the...

Aud: Window

MR: It was her, wait for it, Yiddish word coming up, it was her Bubba's. Bubba's?! AHHHH! It felt like the room filled up with Bubbas. There were hundreds of them, crowding round me going. "You threw your mother's best ring out of the window? And it was her Bubba's?" So what happens next time I get into trouble? Bedtime. Do you go to bed when your Mum says go to bed?

Aud: No

MR: Do you go? No? Do you go? Do you go? Do you go? Ah we found one. Do you go? No. What's going on? Nobody goes to bed when their Mum's say go to bed. I had the same problem but I had a good reason. It's because I couldn't hear the word bed. When my mum said time for bed all I could hear was time for ---. You see, it was like digital drop out, sixty years ago, or Michael, it's bed time, and all I could hear was, Michael it's – time. Do you see? So look here's me, here's me and my Mum and we're sitting watching telly together, right, like this. I don't know why people look like that when they watch telly. Do you? My Mum says "Michael it's time for bed" and I go... "Michael its bed time. Michael it's time for bed!" and I go "Alright, take it easy Mum. No need to shout. Blimey" And I get up and I go round behind the sofa. Yeah? I do round behind the sofa and when I get behind the sofa I think if I'm really quiet she won't know I'm here, so I stop breathing. [takes breath] See, and I'm watching the telly and she says "Michael, I know you're there." And I go "I'm not" and she says "What are you talking about? Standing in the middle of the room saying you're not there! You must be there to be saying you're not there! You take me for stupid?! Now listen. Go upstairs to bed!" so I go out the room and when I get out the room I think, I know what I could do now. I could do that going upstairs thing where you don't really go upstairs, but you're just stamping on the floor, and then I could come back in the room and go on watching the telly. So outside the room I'm going [stomp stomp stomp stomp] and I'm thinking this is really brilliant [stomp stomp stomp stomp] she thinks I'm going upstairs [stomp stomp stomp stomp] but what I don't know is that she's coming up behind me, and I'm going this is really brilliant and she's standing over me going "What are you doing now?" and I'm going "I'm just going upstairs Mum, well, I'm not actually, no." "Go on upstairs, go to the bathroom. Wash your face and clean your teeth. I can't stand looking at you another minute." She means it. Upstairs, into the bathroom, shut the door and yeah. It was time to muck about. Plug in putt, taps on psshhsh. Flick water at the mirror. Putt. Yes. Putt Yes Putt putt putt putt yes and there's drops of water on the mirror, and the drops start turning into drips and there's one drip going faster than another drip and I think it's like the horse racing on the telly, so I start doing a running commentary "And here comes Longbottom with the Longbottom, and Shortybum and Shortybum is closing on Longbottom" I hear my mum from downstairs "Michael! What's the silly noise going on up there?" I went "Oh yeah I was just looking for the flannel Mum...and here comes Longbottom with the Longbottom and here comes Shortybum" Now when a man shaved when I was boy, this is how they did it. The plug goes in; you know how it goes now, don't you? Here we go. Ready? Putt. Can you do the putt? You have to do that bit. Here we go one two three...

Aud: Putt

MR: Putt. Taps on. Psshhhsh

Aud: Psshhhsh

MR: The little brush in the water. Pwhawhwahwahawha. Can you do that? Pwhawhwaha. Into a jar of shaving soap. Phphphphpt. I loved this shaving soap. I used to hold it up to the light, smell it – Mmmmmmmn- and then prod it – [raspberry]. That's really good. Now it's all squidgy [raspberry]. Yeah I like that jusssshshshsh I'm drilling for oil! Jusssshshshsh. Hey you can't see the hole from the outside. I could bury something in there and no one would ever find it. What could I bury in there? I know. The top off the toothpaste. Good thinking. Chickcachickcachikca [raspberry].chick [raspberry] Chick [raspberry] Churick. That's amazing. That's like, buried treasure. Pirates would come looking for it and they'd sing their pirate song yo ho ho and a bottle of rum. Yo - and I hear my mum from downstairs going "Michael. What's the silly singing now?" I said "Oh yeah I'm just glad I found the flannel Mum." Right quick wash the face. Chugachugachuga. Clean the teeth Chickcachickcachikca. Oh, it's a bit wobbly. A little voice inside said don't do it Michael. No no, I like it yeah. I wonder if it's a bit bendy? Bendy bendy – don't do it Michael! No I want to do it. Bendy bendy - Michael don't do it! No - I'm going to do it, bendy, no I better not do it actually. Chickcachickcachikca - off to bed. Next day, my dad comes into the bathroom. What's he going to do? He's going to have a shave, so it's plug in, you know how it goes, are we ready? One, two, three Putt. Good Taps on.

Aud: Psshhhsh

MR: Don't forget to turn them off. Psshhsht. The little brush in the water. Pwhawhwahwahawha. Into the jar Jusssshshshshum. He's thinking how did that get there? How did the top of the toothpaste get in my shaving soap? So he comes downstairs and he goes up to my brother Brian and he goes "Brian, how did the top of toothpaste get in my shaving soap?" My brother, who's older than me goes "Idunah, Idunanah Uuhuhuhughuhuhuhughuhug." So my Dad comes over to me and he goes "Michael how did the top of toothpaste get in my shaving soap?" and I said "I dunno". You see the difference? When my brother said I don't know his eyebrows where down here like this – "Idunno2 –but when I said I don't know my eyebrows when up in the air. I went "I dunno". The moment my eyebrows when up in the air my dad knew that I was lying. He says "Look at your eyebrows!" What? How can you look at your eyebrows? Imagine if you're out shopping with your dad and you suddenly thought I wonder what my eyebrows look like? "What are you doing son?" "Looking at my eyebrows Dad." And he said

“Look at your eyebrows” and I said “What’s the matter with eyebrows?” He said “They’ve gone up in the air. That means you’re lying.” I said “I’m not.” He said “And another thing, your voice has gone squeaky.” I said “No it hasn’t!” He said “What did you think you were doing sticking the top of the toothpaste in my shaving soap?” And I said “It’s buried treasure. Pirates are going to find it. Yo ho ho” and my dad goes “Are you crazy?” Except he didn’t say crazy in English. He said it in Yiddish and to say crazy in Yiddish you say “are you Meshuggah?” Can you say that? Are you...

Aud: Meshuggah

MR: It reminded him of something. Page one of Michael’s big book of...

Aud: Bad things.

MR: On page one it says “Oh yes, like the time you threw your mother’s best ring out of the window it was her Bubba’s. Ahhhhh! The room filled up, there were Bubba’s flying all round the room. Hundreds of them going back hundreds of years and they were all saying. “First you threw your mum’s best ring out of the window, and then you stuck the top of your father’s the toothpaste in your father’s shaving soap. Oy oy oy oy oy”. So there we are. That’s how I found out the difference between my Mum and my Dad. Yes? Right? Ooh I think I’ve got to stop now for a moment because I think we’re going to have some questions.

JF: That was fantastic.

MR: Thank you very much, Janice.

JF: A huge round of applause and cheering from Michael. Do you want to go there?

MR: Oh - on that one. There you go. Musical chairs.

JF: Ahh. I think you need a little sit down now.

MR: Yeah I do.

JF: Did you know that there was one girl at the back who was laughing so much during the bendy toothbrush sequence I think she was actually crying.

MR: Oh dear.

JF: Yeah. You made her cry.

MR: Well, you might have to take her out.

JF: So time for some questions and obviously as you all know we've got this massive audience obviously watching online. Hi!

MR: Hello.

JF: And many of you submitted questions. Clearly we can't get through all of them but we'll try to get through as many as possible. So here we go. Let's go for the first one which is in fact, Michael, the most popular question that we were asked, and it comes from several primary schools Laurieknowe Primary, Stromness Primary, Glendale, Hopefield, Wellshot, Giffnock Primary, P5 and Scared Heart Primary in Greenock. And the question that they all asked, it was the same question, was what is your favourite piece of work that you have written?

MR: It's a very very long poem that goes *Down behind the dustbin I met a dog called Jim he didn't know me and I didn't know...*

Aud: Him

JF: *him*. Yeah that's right. A very deep profound worrying poem, that. In fact I was in a school one day and said that. I said *Down behind the dustbin I met a dog called Jim he didn't know me and I didn't know...*

Aud: Him

MR: And a boy said "How did you know his name was Jim then?" and I went "Ummm, I dunno." Maybe my eyebrows were up.

JF: Did your voice go squeaky as well?

MR: Yeah. I don't know.

JF: Now in fact Amber and Holly, we should say a special hello to them, because they asked the say question but in a different way, so you don't have to answer this one again

MR: Yes

JF: They said what is your favourite most awesome poem that when you looked at it you just thought wow I'm good. So is it the same poem?

MR: No. I don't think...I dunno, as far as I'm concerned I never think wow I'm good. I think mmm, that's the end of that one, I'd better write another one. So, yeah, I mean, you're never really satisfied, totally, one hundred percent, really. You just want to write something else that might be better.

JF: A good question from Amber and Holly. Thank you very much P7, Cowly Primary.

MR: Amber and Holly. Holly and Amber. Hamber and Olly.

JF: Here we go, Juniper Green. Isn't this a lovely name of a primary school? In Edinburgh, Juniper Green Primary School.

MR: Juniper Green.

JF: And it's P6B. Thank you for your question which is, Michael Rosen, what is your most treasured possession? Toothbrush?

MR: Um, the broken toothbrush. No, I once went to my old house, just as they were very nearly pulling it down. There were builders in there, and I had just come back, just to see, because I hadn't been there for 30 years, and just as these builders were slamming down the walls I saw the old light switch on the wall of our front room, and it hadn't changed in, what am I saying 30 years? 40 years. And I said "hold it there! I want the light switch!" And the builders went, "y'what?" I said "Yeah I want that light switch. I must have touched that light switch hundreds of times when I was a kid and I want it." The bloke said, "Yeah, all right" BAM, and he smashed down the wall and he handed me the light switch. I've got the light switch from my old front room, and it's made of something here, you can look this up guys, called Bakelite. You were going along with that.

JF: I remember. I'm that old as well.

MR: Bakelite. It was invented in about 1908 and it was a special kind of hard plastic. It gets that exciting, life, you know. Hard plastic. Wow. An anniversary. Anyway, it was called Bakelite and I've got a Bakelite switch from my front room.

JF: Can I just ask you where it is? Do you have it mounted on the wall or do you actually use it as a light switch?

MR: It's in a tray with other interesting things like sticks.

JF: Ok. Now as well as the wonderful questions we've got from people watching in schools online right now, we also have somebody from Garscadden Primary School. We're going to bring a microphone to Ryan. Hi Ryan.

R: Hello.

MR: Hi Ryan.

JF: So here's Micheal. You can ask your question.

- R: If you weren't writing poetry and books for children, what would you have liked to have done instead?
- MR: I was very keen when I was a little bit older than you, I wanted to be an actor. I wanted to be an actor and I went to acting classes. The trouble was that the more I did, it kind of went wrong. Whenever I did something serious people laughed, and whenever I tried to do the funny stuff people went that's not very funny and so it never quite worked, so you know, I would do like Shakespeare stuff. I'd go "I know you all and will awhile uphold... [Laughs] and it just didn't work out you see.
- JF: See they're laughing already.
- MR: I know exactly. I've screwed up. So then, what else did I do? I've kind of wanted to have Janice's job, and I sort of do that sometimes. I'm on a thing called Radio 4. It's a radio station that's run by the BBC that you may have heard of, and I'm sometimes on there doing Janice's job, interviewing people.
- JF: He's very good.
- MR: Thank you Janice. I paid her to say that. So that would be something else I could have done in life, a little bit more of that, maybe if they'd wanted me. Yeah I hope that answers your question.
- JF: Because in fact, thank you Ryan, that was great. Is that OK? Did you want to say anything more to Michael?
- R: Umm.
- MR: What do you want to be? Do you have an idea what you'd like to be?
- R: An actor.
- MR: You'd like to be an actor? Good, well, come to me because I've got all the advice you need on that. I know you all...no no no no. Forget it forget it forget it.
- JF: But it's interesting that Ryan should ask that question because somebody else, Josh at Kenmore Primary school, says what made you decide to try medical school first before becoming an author?
- MR: Oh the secret's out. The secret's out. Yes that's right.
- JF: I've got a sore leg Michael. Can you fix it?
- MR: When I was sixteen I thought I'd like to be not actor but a doctor and I thought wouldn't it be brilliant, mending people? So I had this dream that I could go round

mending people and that lasted for a while, I went to medical school and I did things that medical students do which you don't want to know about just now, and, a little scream there, and so yeah, that went on for a little bit and then thought, no I don't actually want to be a doctor, and so I started writing and acting, and doing so more of that. This was all at university and so the doctoring thing slipped away.

JF: Well, we're glad it did, aren't we? Yeah. We'd much rather see you here than in the hospital. Now here's another really popular question that several schools asked. Let me name check them. Hopefield Primary School. Hello. Netherford, Stromness, Wellshot, Carron Giffnock Primary, P5 east Renfrewshire again, and Torphichen Primary School. Probably not pronouncing that properly. Where do you get your ideas from?

MR: Remembering things, seeing things, hearing things, looking at things and you collect them up and I collect them up in notebooks - look. Do you see this? I go about with notebooks and I scribble things down. This is what's called my little notebook, you see, and I scribble anything that come down, they you are, it says - what does it say? Runs away. That's not a very helpful note, was it?

JF: That items upside.

MR: I know. You know why that? That's because I had to go and see Where The Wild Things Are, and go on the radio and talk about it, so I was sitting in the cinema writing and I think my little boy turned the paper round just to make it hard for me. Helpful. There's something there about where broccoli comes from. If you go to my website you can find out where broccoli comes from. It comes from very large green men's armpits.

JF: Urgh. Yuck.

MR: Not many people know that. And then I've got there he was a balloon bully. He bullied balloons. He pushed them about, shoved them up against a wall, so look I'm making notes there. Can you see that? Can you see that on the camera there? There's my notes, and then it moves from the little notebook to the big notebook and this notebook comes from France. It says Claire Fontaine. Do you know what that means? Errr, Clear Fountain. There we are, look, and it gets even messier, there. Look at me trying to write a poem. You see, you don't write poems, it doesn't come out right first time, and the longer you do it, the messier it gets. This was going to be all about a poem that could be like a song that I could do when I first meet people, and it turned into *Gonna use my feet today, gonna keep the beat today, dunno who I'll meet today, gonna use my...*

Aud: Feet today

MR: *Gonna use my...*

Aud: Eyes today

MR: *Look out for the lies today, try to be wise today, gonna use my...*

Aud: Nose today

MR: *Gonna use my...*

Aud: Ears today

MR: *Gonna have no fears today, never mind the tears today, Gonna use my...*

JF: Ears today

MR: *Gonna use my mind today, leave bad things behind today, see what I can find today, gonna use my...*

Aud: Brain today

MR: *Gonna use what I got today, how and where and what today, gonna use the lot today, gonna use what I got today, so that came about out of all that scribbling, but I certainly didn't get it right to start off with, so whenever you sit down and write, and you've got that blank piece of paper and you've said that today is tomorrow, that sort of thing, all right? Remember you won't get it right first time and it doesn't matter. You can scribble and change and change and scribble. And you're all writers, every one of you. You write more than ever I did when I was a school, I promise you. We just used to have to sit still. Go to school and sat still for seven days. What are you doing? I'm at school.*

JF: I bet you didn't sit still, Michael.

MR: How did you guess?

JF: A very good question comes here, Michael, from Maeve McLeod from Our Lady of Missions in East Renfrewshire. It's a small question but it's a big one. What is a poem?

MR: What is a poem? Well poems are lots of different things. In the olden days people used to know exactly what a poem was. There was rhyme and rhythm, but these days with poems you can say anything you want. Usually we have idea that you can say interesting things in a small space. So you don't have to spread very big. You can use one piece of paper, and if you've got something interesting or

important, something that matters to you, you can say it. It could be just one little thing. It could be what something is like and it reminds you of, like sometimes I travel in the underground in London, the tube, and I quite often think about what a strange idea, that we're all squeezed into this tube. Beginning to sound like something isn't it? We're squeezed into the tube and then we come out of the tube. You see. I'm thinking what it's like. It does have to be any bigger than that.

JF: That girl's crying with laughter again.

MR: Is she? Oh dear.

JF: She is she's thinking of the bendy thing.

MR: Well, if you come to London we'll squeeze you into a tube and then squeeze you out of it, and if you end up tasting like toothpaste I'm sorry, but that's the way it is. So really poems can be things that you want to say that matter to you that don't necessarily have to take up much space, and usually it's a nice idea to write them in a way that helps the person read it in the way you want them to, so you lay it out on the page in a way that helps the person. You break it up into lines. You put big bits and small bits and quick bits, and that's how you can do it.

JF: Well there's actually a couple of connected questions relating to what you've just been talking about. Lybster Primary in Caithness, which is near John O'Groats.

MR: Oh yeah.

JF: Right up the top of the country. The whole class – hello! – the whole class want to know this. We can't decide if chocolate cake is really a poem. Can you tell us what you think, and also Golfhill primary in Glasgow ask the same thing, but slightly different – is your chocolate cake poem really true? Did it really happen to you?

MR: Right. Let's deal with whether it's a poem or not. It can be whatever you want to call it. If you'd like to call it a poem you can, if you'd like to call it a story you can, if you'd like to call it a poem story, or a story poem, I mean, people all through history haven't been able to make up their minds. There was a very famous French poet called Baudelaire who used to write a page, like that, and he didn't know whether it was a poem or whether it's what's called prose. That's to say, not a poem, when you write a story, so he called it, in the end, he called them prose poems, because he couldn't make up his mind, so it's be going, this not making up our minds, for about a hundred years.

JF: Can I interrupt you to say we've only got about thirty seconds left.

MR: Well, if ever you can find it there's a great one called The Toy Of The Poor Boy, Le Joujou Du Pauvre, so if any of you ever speak French and you find that, it's a wonderful little story about two children and their very different toys. I'll let you into a secret. The poor boys toy was a rat.

JF: And yes or no, Chocolate Cake happened to you? Right okay. Eyebrows going up. Squeaky voice. Michael, thank you very very much. You've been fantastic. I wish I knew the Yiddish word for fantastic.

MR: You could call me a mensch.

JF: You're a mensch!

MR: Thank you

JF: And so are all the people who are here today, especially the children from Garscadden Primary – cheer – in Glasgow. Thank you very much for watching wherever you are, whichever school you are across the UK. It's been great to have you. I do hope you all enjoyed it and just to let you know that the next of these event, the next live event, is with the creator of the Gruffalo, Julia Donaldson.

MR: Oooh Wonderful.

JF: That's happening on Wednesday 26th May at half past ten. For now enjoy the rest of world book day from all of us here at the BBC in Glasgow, and especially from Michael Rosen, thank you very much and enjoy the rest of it. Happy reading!

MR: Happy reading, yes. Bye bye! Thank you Garscadden. Thank you very much. You were lovely, Thank you. Very Good. Thank you.

Aud: [Applause]