



Michael Rosen learning resource

Cross-curricular activities to support using Michael Rosen's poems in class.

Age 8-14

CFE levels second to third

Resource created by
Scottish Book Trust

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How to use this resource

The activities in this resource have been designed to be used with five poems by Michael Rosen. The poems are *Boogy Woogy Buggy*, *Do I know you?*, *Don't*, *Washing Up* and *Chocolate Cake*. You can download these poems from the accompanying poetry resource. You can also find videos online of Michael performing the poems, which you can watch with your class.

If you are looking for more general activities on using poetry in the classroom, search the Scottish Book Trust website for our “Introducing poetry in the classroom learning resource”.

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](#) on YouTube. Do your pupils notice anything about the rhythm of the poem?

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.

Technical tip – Michael Rosen uses assonance (repeated vowel sounds) to create internal rhyme in this poem, e.g. “glide” and “ride”, “feet” and “meet”, and he plays with sounds to create half-rhymes that are also internal: “streak down the street” and “easy, speedy baby”. These rhymes and half-rhymes come very close together, which, combined with the use of one and two syllable words, create a clipped, staccato effect that is pleasing to read aloud.

Everyday inventions

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.

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 is the advert's 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 they 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?

Making music

EXA 2-18a

Ask pupils to find out about different dances like the jive and boogie-woogie. The jive dance originated in 1940’s America and is a version of jitterbug and swing dance. You can watch videos of [jitterbug](#) and [swing](#) dancing 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](#) 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 *Boogie Woogie Buggy*?

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](#) on YouTube. What do your pupils notice about Michael’s performance? He uses a lot of gestures in the performance.

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](#) 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.

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.

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 highlight any schools rules and discuss why they are in place.

From this discussion, go on to explain that everyone has rights. The [Rights of a Child](#) have been outlined by the United Nations Convention. Amnesty International has published book that visually illustrates the rights of a child. You can see a selection of page spreads [here](#). 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 or Chocolate Cake activities

[Washing Up](#) and [Chocolate Cake](#) 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* in detail with you pupils.

Still image: poetry moment

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 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.

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 you 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?

Attention to detail: 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.

Storyboard: a memorable memory

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.

Write an everyday story poem

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 not 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.

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

This poem was written especially for Michael Rosen's appearance on the Scottish Friendly Children's Book Tour in 2008. Unfortunately a video of Michael performing this poem is not available to watch online.

Technical tip – *in the last four lines, Michael is playing about with the rules of grammar and spelling and the sounds of the “wh” words and how they blend together. The “wh” words appear in not-quite-expected places, and the “who I wiz” blurs word and letter boundaries beautifully, cleverly adding the word “why” as they run together. The effect is one of jumbled fun and “almost” sense that is surprisingly meaningful – it echoes the puzzlement of the subjects in the poem who have been struggling alone in a jumbled and complex world.*

Sending a message: Who am I?

LIT 2-09a, LIT 3-09a, LIT 2-16a, LIT 3-16a

Ask you pupils to read the poem carefully. What do they think Michael Rosen is trying to get them to think about? Have they ever feel 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.

Adding images: 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 their own, 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?*

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.

“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.