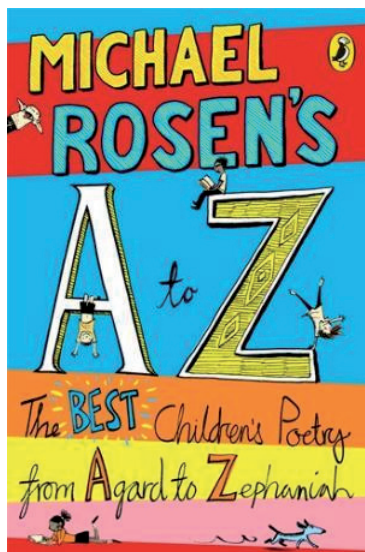


Booktrust Teaching Sequence for: Michael Rosen's A to Z: The Best Children's Poetry from Agard to Zephaniah



Title: Michael Rosen's A to Z: The Best Children's Poetry from Agard to Zephaniah
Author: Michael Rosen
First published: 2009
Publisher: Puffin
ISBN: 978-0141324500

Ideal for use with:
Predominantly Key Stage 2 pupils, although some poems could also be used with Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 3.

This guide provides information about the book as well as ideas and suggestions for fun classroom activities.

About the book

Michael Rosen's A-Z was developed during Michael Rosen's time as **Children's Laureate** from 2007-2009. The book accompanied his A-Z of Poetry Tour, which took him to venues all over the UK.

This fabulous anthology of poetry for children includes a poet for every letter of the alphabet - with a few exceptions - Rosen has played around with some of the tricky letters, giving the reader something extra to think about! Featuring both older poems and plenty of contemporary works, the focus is on fun, reading aloud and diversity of work: poems about nature, mums and dads, teachers and school trips nestle comfortably next to poems about Italian-Scottish café owners, being turned into a bat and mutant mangos.

Curriculum Links

The activities in this guide will help to meet the following curriculum objectives for Key Stage 2

- **Speaking:** Choose and prepare poems or stories for performance, identifying appropriate expression, tone, volume and use of voices and other sounds (Y3)
- **Drama:** Devise a performance, considering how to adapt the performance for a specific audience. (Y6)
- **Understanding and interpreting texts:** Explain how writers use figurative and expressive language to create images and atmosphere. (Y4)
- **Understanding and interpreting texts:** Explore how writers use language for comic and dramatic effects. (Y5)
- **Engaging and Responding to texts:** Compare how writers from different times and places present experience and use language. (Y6)
- **Creating and Shaping text:** Choose and combine words, images and other features for particular effects. (Y4)
- **Creating and Shaping text:** Integrate words, images and sounds imaginatively for different purposes. (Y6)

About the author/editor

Michael Rosen was born in 1946 in north London. One of the best-known figures in the children's book world, he is renowned for his work as a poet, performer, broadcaster and scriptwriter. As an author and by selecting other writers' works for anthologies he has been involved with over 140 books, and in 2007 was appointed the fifth Children's Laureate.

Michael started writing poetry when he was twelve years old, creating satirical poems about people he knew. By the time he was sixteen he was an avid poetry reader, especially enjoying DH Lawrence's poems and James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. He studied English at Wadham College, Oxford, where he started to realise his ambition of acting, as well as writing and directing.

Michael started his career as a writer with a play, *Backbone*, that was performed at the Royal Court in 1969. His next stop was the BBC, where he worked on Play School, SchoolsTV and radio dramas until 1972 when he went freelance. A collection of poems about his childhood were published in 1974 as *Mind Your Own Business*.

He quickly established himself with as a children's poet with subsequent collections including: *Wouldn't You Like to Know*, *You Tell Me* and *Quick! Let's Get Out of Here!*

Today he lectures and teaches in universities on children's literature, reading and writing and is a familiar voice to BBC listeners. He visits schools with his one-man show to enthuse children with his passion for books and poetry and has won numerous prizes for his poetry, picture books, and other writing.



Getting started

As Michael Rosen suggests in the Foreword, all of the poems in this anthology can be used for a variety of different classroom activities. Try these as starting points:

- **Read a poem aloud:** Have pupils take it in turns to read a poem for the class. Michael suggests: 'Take any poem and see what it sounds like when you say it. Or you could ask someone else to say it. Then you could have a go at doing it together'
- **Perform a poem as a class:** Work together to plan a joint poetry performance, incorporating movements or even music, and perform it for another class or in assembly. Michael suggests: 'While one person is reading the poem, you could just sway to and fro to the rhythm of it.'
- **Choose your favourite:** Talk about which poems pupils like best and why. Michael suggests: 'You can start where you want to, go backwards and forwards... looking for poems you like.'
- **Make a class A-Z:** Either using poems you have written yourself, or favourites by other poets, compile your own alphabet of poetry. Michael suggests: 'Make your own A to Z poetry book in your class, in your school or online...'

Find out more

Find tips, videos, resources and ideas from Michael about making your classroom poetry friendly: www.booktrust.org.uk

Find out about Michael's time as Children's Laureate: www.childrenslaureate.org.uk/show/feature/Previous-Laureates-Michael-Rosen

Visit Michael Rosen's official website: www.michaelrosen.co.uk

Activities

Rhythm and rhyme

Look at some of the following poems' use of rhythm and rhyme:

- » 'The Cancan' – Mandy Coe (p 37)
- » 'The Spare Room' – Diana Hendry (p 102)
- » 'Arundel Swimming Pool' – Robert Hull (p 107)
- » 'The Boneyard Rap' – Wes Magee (p 155)
- » 'Shopping Trolley' – Brian Moses (p 169)
- » 'Detention Tension' (a rap) – Coral Rumble (p 218)
- » 'I De Rap Guy' – Benjamin Zephaniah (p 273)

Try this:

- Read the poems aloud in class. Have a look at some film of poets like Benjamin Zephaniah or Brian Moses reading their work (you can find these online: try searching Youtube.com). Talk about how they perform. How do they use their voices and bodies to get their meaning across? What bits are quiet? What bits are loud? Why?
- Ask small groups to take a poem and work on acting them out as they are read aloud. Are there actions that go with the poems? How should they be read? Are there certain words to emphasise?
- Ask all the groups to perform their poems in class, or use the hall stage if you have one, perhaps with dimmed lights, a spotlight and even a microphone. Alternatively, have pupils take a poem home to perform to parents. Try to learn the poem by heart.
- 'The Cancan' is a poem that also refers to a dance. Think about the ways that dances and poems both use rhythms. Investigate some other dances – the Polka, the Waltz, the Cha-Cha-Cha, or steps from country dances, and learn them, then make up poems to their rhythms. Ask children to perform their poems as they dance.
- Three of these poems are rap-style poems – 'The Boneyard Rap',

'Detention Tension' and 'I De Rap Guy'. Listen to some rap music as a class, and talk about what the poems have in common – fast, short lines, repetition, humour, slang. Write your own raps about school, about parents, about a favourite TV show or book. Record your raps and post the MP3 files on the school website.

- 'Shopping Trolley' likens the trolley in the poem to different types of car. If your pupils were cars, what cars would they be? How can they make the words represent the different types of car? Long, luxurious vowel sounds show the purring engine of a Jaguar; loud, roaring, fast words might fit a supercharged Ferrari. Make collages of car pictures and onomatopoeic words to go with your poems in a class book.

Descriptions

Here are some great examples of poems that are trying to describe things in a fresh and original way, using all the senses – smell, touch, taste, sound and sight, colours, similes, metaphors and the actions of the things themselves.

- » 'Mushrooms' – Berlie Doherty (p 54)
- » 'What Is the Pond Doing?' – Diana Hendry (p 101)
- » 'Colour Outside the Lines' – Jared Louche (p 132)
- » 'Flashback in Winter Light' – Paul Lyalls (p 136)
- » 'Fifteen Ways of Looking at a Ladybird' – Matt Simpson (p 231)

Try this:

- Use 'Mushrooms' as a model for your own poems. Bring in a selection of interesting and unusual fruit and vegetables and ask children to choose one. Notice how it looks, tastes, feels to the touch, smells – even how it sounds if you tread on it, squeeze it, or throw it against the wall! You can dissect the fruits/vegetables in class and see what they are like inside too. Think about where

and how they grow – look at seed packets, gardening websites and books for information. Now write your poems taking all this into account, perhaps one four-line verse per sense.

- ‘Music’s the colour I love the best’ says Jared Louche in ‘Colour Outside the Lines.’ Ask pupils to draw their impressions of sounds made by different musical instruments. What does a tuba’s sound look like, an electric guitar or a violin? Now play some orchestral music or anything without words. Can they describe the way the music would look if they could see it? Can they draw it? Remember, it doesn’t have to be a picture of anything in particular – just patterns and colours suggested by how the music feels.
- We can describe something by explaining what it does, especially using simile and metaphor. In ‘What is the Pond Doing?’ Diana Hendry answers the question by describing the pond licking reeds, plopping and slurping, as well as how it might be feeling – ‘Dreaming of running away to sea,’. She includes a simile (‘Wobbling like a wobbly jelly’) and many metaphors in her description, presenting the reader with strong ideas and images. Make your own poems along the same lines –e.g. ‘What is the Grass Doing?’ ‘What is the Sun Doing?’ ‘What is the Moon Doing?’ Encourage children to be as creative as possible with their similes and metaphors.
- Inspired by ‘Fifteen Ways of Looking at a Ladybird’, link writing poems to science: investigate which insects live in your local area, conduct a scientific survey and write up your results. Create a mural for your classroom featuring drawings of your local insects as well as writing inspired by the poem. Use metaphors to describe your creatures – what do they remind you of?
- In ‘Flashback in Winter Light’, the paint factory in this poem seems to come alive and growl at the children who are sleeping inside their rainbow house. Ask children to imagine the multi-coloured house in the poem and draw or paint it.

Patterns, structures and lists

These poems follow simple repeating patterns that are easy to copy in class and insert your own details. However, although the patterns are simple, the ideas expressed in them are more sophisticated.

- » ‘I Speak the Language’ – Francesca Beard (p 21)
- » ‘The World is a Box’ – Sophie Hannah (p 91)
- » ‘Yes’ – Adrian Mitchell (p 158)
- » ‘Magpie’ – Tom Pow (p 194)
- » ‘The Magic Box’ – Kit Wright (p 258)

Try this:

- In ‘I Speak the Language’, Francesca Beard lists all the languages she speaks, including ‘Munch to my Sandwich’ as well as ‘Bonjour to French’. Create a class list poem by researching the different languages spoken by pupils across the school and incorporate them into your own ‘I Speak the Language’ poem. Be sure to add in some more abstract, imaginary ‘languages’ too, such as ‘Goal to Football’ or ‘Cuddle to my Mum’.
- ‘The World is a Box’ is a simple poem that uses the repeated concept of unusual objects as boxes and what might be contained in them. Ask children to write their own 6-line poems along the same lines. Make boxes from card in class and add one line of text per side of the cube. When the boxes are made up, children have to interpret each others’ boxes: which is the ‘right’ order to read the lines in? As an additional activity, record the poems on sound-recorder buttons and put them inside the boxes. Readers can read the poem in whichever order they like, and then hear the order the author intended.
- ‘Yes’ is a poem whose pattern explores the voices of a variety of objects and people, from a lemon tree to a soldier. Talk about the poem in class. Why might a railway say ‘Maybe’ and a prison say ‘No’? Consider making the poem into a class performance, with one child reading ‘A smile says / A heart says...’ etc and the other

children taking turns to call out the 'answers. Once you've got the idea, make up your own starters and call them out, asking the children to make up imaginative answers. Do this weekly as a fun start or end to the day.

- Magpies like to collect treasures, and the magpie in Tom Pow's poem has collected a vast array of odd items. Copying the structure of the poem, alternate the chorus with your own verses. Make a list, as a class, of all the crazy things you can imagine might be found in a magpie's nest – especially if they are shiny! Then see if you can give your verses a rhyme. Tom Pow uses an AA/BB rhyme but you could rhyme alternate lines instead. Alternatively, you could make a large 'nest' of paper and ask children to each find an interesting object to put inside it. Each child could then write a descriptive sentence about their object, which could be combined to create a class poem.
- In another box poem, 'The Magic Box', Kit Wright imagines she has one vast, magical box and puts everything in the world she wants in it (and many imaginary things too). Explore with children the idea that they can put experiences and actions into their box as well as concrete items, and that their objects can be made-up ones (Wright includes a black sun and a fifth season). Ask them to think about what their box looks like. Is it the size of an ocean and made of the wood of a magical tree? Is it the size of a matchbox, but enchanted, so that the inside is much bigger than the outside? Can they draw it and its contents? Ask children to write their magic box poems using the same repeating structure.

Families and other animals

Use these poems as inspiration for pupils to write poems about or to family members, pets or favourite animals.

- » 'In Daylight Strange' – Alan Brownjohn (p 29)
- » 'Limpet' – Chrissie Gittins (p 83)
- » 'Finding out About the Family' – Richard Edwards (p 62)
- » 'Aunty Joan' – John Foster (p 71)
- » 'The Noise' – Michael Rosen (p 212)

Try this:

- In 'The Noise', Michael Rosen remembers a particular phrase his dad used to say whenever he and his brother were being too noisy. Ask children to think of a favourite phrase belonging to a member of their family – 'Because I said so' or 'You'll know all about it' perhaps. Get pupils to tell or act out the story of three different funny occasions when these phrases have been used.
- 'Aunty Joan' presents the idea that an auntie has been transformed into a telephone. If a child's mum, dad, sister or brother suddenly became strange objects, what would they be and why? Did Aunty Joan become a telephone because she loved talking? Can pupils draw a cartoon of the transformation?
- Chrissie Gittins' poem 'Limpet' describes the fears of a tiny crustacean clinging to a rock for security. Give children a choice of a variety of seemingly small and unimportant creatures – worms, snails, minnows, moles, mice, cockles etc. You might like to create information cards about each one with a photo so that children know something about their creature. Consider as a class that even the smallest creatures could have feelings. What could they be? Brainstorm ideas in small groups then write a group poem in the voice of their creature – what it is, what it does, how it feels.
- 'Finding out About the Family' is another funny poem that imagines all the family have been turned into bats, toads and werewolves by an evil sister. If the

children had a magic wand, what would they change about their world? Write a list – it could be anything from more pocket money to less baths to more playing football in the park with Dad. Children could give their lists to parents / carers and ask them to make up their own lists too. Children and parents can choose one item from each others' list and make that wish come true.

- Be inspired by 'In Daylight Strange' and ask children to imagine what would happen if a large animal were to appear at school. Would it be quiet or noisy, fast or slow? Where would it go? What would other people think? Would they be able to see it? Would the child and the animal become friends? Ask pupils to write the story of what happens including all the senses – what does the animal look like, smell like, sound like? How does it feel to the touch?

How it looks

Poems sometimes break out of their usual format and move around on the page, creating different effects. Be inspired by these techniques and explore how the positioning of text can add to its meaning.

- » 'Tree' – James Carter (p 35)
- » 'Brothers' - Peter Cole (p 40)
- » 'Waht'– Peter Cole (p 41)
- » 'The Day the Marks Made Sense' – Imtiaz Dharker, (p 51)

Try this:

- James Carter's poem 'Tree' visually contrasts the wide variety of descriptions of a treetop with the narrow trunk of words that describe mankind's misuse of trees. Consider making your own caligrammes (poems whose layout reflect their subject) about cars, horses, cats, houses, table lamps – whatever you like. Play with font size and style too.
- The words on the page in the poem 'Brothers' cleverly represent

the stature of two brothers: one tall, represented by a long thin column of words and one short, represented by a short and wide section. Get children to think of shapes or page layouts to describe people who are: Happy (a smile shape?) In love (a heart shape?) Unhappy (a heart shape with a split?) Messy (words all over the page, overlapping each other, at odd angles etc) Neat (evenly spaced and contained in a box?)

- Have a look at 'The Day the Marks Made Sense' and the way that Imtiaz Dharker describes words as birds, 'writing a song all the way across the sky'. Make a colourful class poetry mural with each pupil contributing a poem written inside a bird-shaped cutout. Ask children to write about what makes them feel they can fly – a smile from a friend; holding mum's hand; praise from a teacher; a sunny day? How can they describe these things best?
- Peter Cole's deliberately mis-spelled poem 'Waht' shows us that we can still make meaning from writing even if it isn't 'perfect'. Can children creatively mis-spell for a whole day? Can they make up a nonsense language of their own and rename and re-label objects and spaces around the school? Give prizes for the craziest new words or the most creatively mis-spelled ones. Whilst this may seem like a distraction from helping children to learn accurate spelling, it can also be a useful exercise, as children will need to know how to spell words correctly before they can purposefully mis-spell.

Websites for the poets featured in this book

Adisa: www.adisaworld.com/main.html

John Agard: www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth162

Allan Ahlberg: www.penguin.co.uk/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,1000000334,00.html

Francesca Beard: www.francescab Beard.com

Gerard Benson: www.poetrybusiness.co.uk/index.php/gerard-benson

James Berry: www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=110

Alan Brownjohn: www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth170

James Carter: www.jamescarterpoet.co.uk

Mandy Coe: www.mandycoe.com

Peter Cole: www.petercolepoet.com

Paul Cookson: www.paulcooksonpoet.co.uk

Graham Denton: www.handsup.karoo.net

Imtiaz Dharker: www.imtiazdharker.com

Berlie Doherty: www.berliedoherty.com

Carol Ann Duffy: www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth104

Matthew Fitt: www.itchy-coo.com

John Foster: www.lovereadng4kids.co.uk/author/1190/John-Foster.html

John Fuller: www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth182

Andrew Fusek Peters: www.twopeters.com

Chrissie Gittins: www.chrissiegittins.co.uk

Philip Gross: www.philipgross.co.uk

Sophie Hannah: www.sophiehannah.com

David Harmer: www.davidharmer.com

John Hegley: www.johnhegley.co.uk

Diana Hendry: www.dianahendry.co.uk

Margot Henderson: www.scottishbooktrust.com/contacts/margot-henderson

Robert Hull: www.saltpublishing.com/books/cpl/9781844715060.htm

Jenny Joseph: www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=197

Michael Kavanagh: www.thescrumbler.com/wp/about

Jackie Kay: www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth54

Jared Louche: www.applesandsnakes.co.uk/page/84/Jared+Louche/235#-biography

Paul Lyalls: www.paul-lyalls.com

Lindsay McRae: www.puffin.co.uk/nf/Author/AuthorPage/0,,1000046032,00.html

Roger McGough: www.uktouring.org.uk/rogermcgough

Ian McMillan: www.uktouring.org.uk/ian-mcmillan

Wes Magee: www.wesmagee.com

Adrian Mitchell: www.adrianmitchell.co.uk

Tony Mitton: www.tonymitton.co.uk

John Mole: www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=28

Brian Moses: www.brianmoses.co.uk/

Grace Nichols: www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth79

Judith Nicholls: www.poetryarchive.org/poetryarchive/singlePoet.do?poetId=33

Gareth Owen: www.garethowen.com

Brian Patten: www.brianpatten.co.uk

Gervase Phinn: www.gervase-phinn.com

Tom Pow: www.tompow.co.uk

Michael Rosen: www.michaelrosen.co.uk

Coral Rumble: coralrumble.co.uk

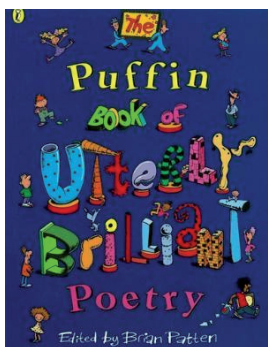
Jacob Sam La Rose: www.jsamlarose.com

Tim Turnbull: www.timturnbull.co.uk

Kit Wright: www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth226

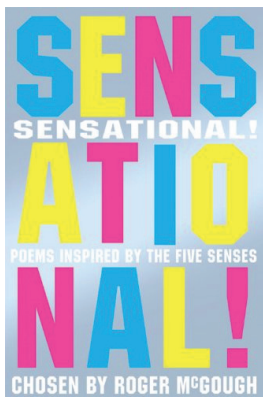
Benjamin Zephaniah: www.benjaminzephaniah.com/content/index.php

More poetry anthologies for Key Stage 2



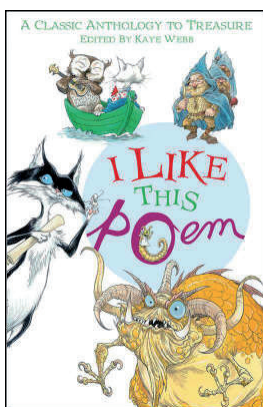
The Puffin Book of Utterly Brilliant Poetry ed. Brian Patten (Puffin)

Ten poets including Spike Milligan, Benjamin Zephaniah and Jackie Kay contribute poems to this anthology celebrating the power of verse. Each section begins with an interview with the poet, and the poems included encompass subjects as varied as ghosts, school, elephants and chocolate cake. A great resource for any poetry-friendly classroom.



Sensational! ed. Roger McGough (Macmillan)

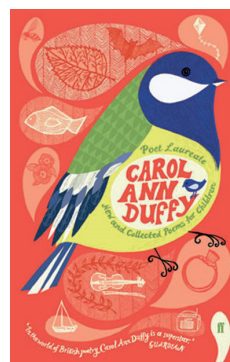
This fantastic anthology edited by Roger McGough won the 2005 CLPE Poetry Award. Including a wide range of poems responding to, and provoking, all five of the senses, it also features a wide range of poetic forms, from haikus through to limericks. Every poem here could inspire a child's writing, reading or thinking - and their teacher's too!



I Like This Poem ed. Kaye Webb (Puffin)

Each poem in this classic treasury of favourite verse was chosen by a child for other children. Bringing together a variety of both classic and contemporary verse by poets ranging from William Wordsworth and Christina Rossetti to Michael Rosen and Roald Dahl, you will find something here to appeal to every child in your class.

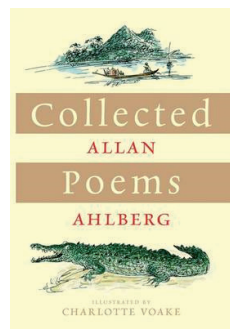
More great poetry by the poets in this book



New and Collected Poems for Children by Carol Ann Duffy (Faber)

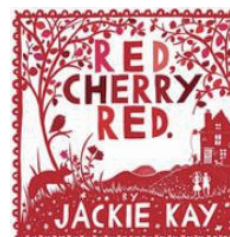
This beautifully presented collection from the current Poet Laureate brings together the best of her poems for children, both old and new. Ranging from a tribute to Johann Sebastian Baa (a very talented sheep) to poems about more familiar subjects such as friendship and school, this is a delightful book for children throughout Key Stage 2.

Collected Poems by Allan Ahlberg (Puffin)



A wonderful anthology of poems taken from well-known poet and picture book author Allan Ahlberg's previous collections, this book includes many favourites that are perfect for the classroom, including the school-themed poems 'Please Mrs Butler' and 'Dog in the Playground'. Ideal for children at Key Stage 1 and younger pupils at Key Stage 2, these poems will evoke laughter as well as thoughtfulness.

Red Cherry Red by Jackie Kay (Bloomsbury)



Truthful, soulful and witty, the poems in this collection explore the theme of identity. Who are we? What reveals us? Is our identity bound up in where we live, or in the dreams we hold? Especially recommended for more confident readers at Key Stage 2, and pupils at Key Stage 3, this profound collection offers much for older children and teenagers to reflect on.

Visit the Booktrust website for more book recommendations and resources for teachers: www.booktrust.org.uk