

Mustard, Custard, Grumble Belly and Gravy

Michael Rosen (Bloomsbury)

Write a poem based on 'Don't' (pg 5)

Life is full of rules. Michael's poem contains a few that begin with 'don't'. Children are always being told what to do. Now it's their turn! These writing activities invite children to write their own **advice-poem** of 'do-rules' and 'don't-rules'.

Read 'Don't' out loud with your class.

Things to talk about

- What are your pupils told to do most often? What are they told *not* to do most often? How would this change if they were someone (or *something*) else... a teacher, a baby, a pet dog, rain or wind?
- If there were only one 'do' rule and one 'don't' rule in the world, what should they be?

Writing activity 1

- Ask pupils to write a **get-your-own-back poem** of dos and don'ts for parents, brothers, sisters or teachers. Pupils can either repeat 'do' or 'don't' on each line, or divide their poem into two sections, one for 'dos' and one for 'don'ts'. Children can think about whether they want the 'dos' or the 'don'ts' to come first in their poem.

Writing activity 2

- Ask pupils to write a poem of 'dos' and 'don'ts' designed to help a friend in an unusual situation:
 - *they are made of glass*
 - *they are wildly in love*
 - *their hat is on fire*
 - *they are turned into a flea*
 - *they are sad*
 - *they are a snowman*
 - *they are an elephant in a supermarket*
 - *they are about to stop a war*
 - *they are walking a tightrope.*
- Can pupils think of any more imaginary situations that might need rules?
- Ask pupils to choose one of these situations and think about the advice they would give their friend. They could start by making a list of the advice they would give, and then turn this into a poem.

Tips on writing poems

- Some poems use just one rhyme sound, ('Something's Drastic' pg 14), some use repetition ('Trainers' pg 2); some are more like conversation ('Nursery' pg 17). Pupils should think about the mood and tone of the poem before they start – will it be a jokey poem, an angry poem, a stern poem? – and then think about its sound and shape patterns. Remember, not all poems have to rhyme.
- Nonsense rhymes can be hilarious (see 'Digital Watch' pg 11). But if pupils find stubborn words – such as 'digital', 'orange', 'purple', 'hippopotamus' – too hard to find rhymes for, they can go back and pick a more rhyme-friendly word.

Follow-up activities

- Most **fairytale**s carry a cautionary message. Choose a couple of fairytale characters and write them each a list of dos and don'ts.
http://www.schools.net.au/edu/lesson_ideas/fairytales/fairy_url.html
- *Mustard, Custard's* audio CD allows us to enjoy **voice and text**. Choose one poem and ask pupils to say one thing they liked about:
 - reading the poem
 - hearing the poem
 - reading the poem aloud
- Visit the children's area of the Poetry Archive for more out-loud poetry and audio-related lesson-plans. <http://www.poetryarchive.org/childrensarchive/home.do>
- **When do rules become rights?** Create a group poem by coming up with a wish-list of dos and don'ts for a child-friendly world! Compare your poem to this classroom-version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
<http://www.unicef.org.uk/youthvoice/pdfs/uncrc.pdf>

By Mandy Coe

Mandy Coe's poetry has been broadcast on BBC radio and television; her work with schools has been featured in the TES (www.mandycoe.com).