

Something's Drastic

Michael Rosen (Collins)

Write a poem based on 'The Hidebehind' (pg 7)

The scariest stories leave a lot to the imagination. In his poem 'The Hidebehind', Michael says we will never see this monster because it's always hiding. But if it is hiding *how do we know it's there?*

Read the poem out loud with your class.

Class discussion

- In what ways might we sense something is there without clearly seeing it?
- How many (preposition) words can your class come up with to create their monster? By pointing in any direction students will discover quite a few: under, over, below, ahead, beneath.

Getting started

In small groups or individually, ask children to invent their own imaginary creature and write a poem about it.

- Ask pupils to choose where their monster lurks.
- Their choices will give them a name for it, such as the 'Hideabove', the 'Hidebeside', or the 'Hideinside'.
- Knowing where it hides will help them decide if it can fly, creep or float. If it is below, perhaps it can burrow; if it hides inside things, it might be very small.
- Pupils' poems can be longer than Michael's and don't not have to rhyme. To help pupils get started, they can use the same first line: *Have you seen the...*
- To make the poem really scary ask pupils to remember only to hint at what it is.
- Ask pupils to think about describing things in detail, so 'noises' might become claws on the kitchen floor, or the sound of papery wings being folded.
- Remember the twist in the tale: monstrous things are sometimes frightening because we don't understand them! If not to deliberately scare people, why else might the children's Hidebehind feel the need to hide?

Follow-up activities

- Ask students to **decorate** their poem with the tracks/footprints their particular monster leaves behind.

- ‘**Jabberwocky**’ by **Lewis Carroll** is a classic ‘invented monster’ poem. Read it aloud to see how, just as with the words Hidebehind and Hideabove, it plays with language.
- ‘It’s Behind You!’ is a phrase deeply rooted in traditions of pantomime and audience participation. For **performance fun**, pupils can try adding a few ‘Where is it?’ type questions to the poems to invite audience response: *It’s above you! It’s below you! It’s beside you!*
- Create a group poem by combining everyone’s entry for their monster in a **Monster Guide Book**. Use a reference book to see what sections to use such as: NAME... LATIN NAME... DESCRIPTION... FOOD... HABITAT... etc.

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).