

# Tickling the Ear

Poems for  
Children

Inspired  
by Michael  
Rosen



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# Introduction

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In 2021 Mantle Arts ran an online event called Wolves & Apples for aspiring children's writers. Guest speaker Michael Rosen gave a talk about writing poetry for children. At the end of the session we began to talk about the possibility of putting together a collection of poetry by the people who watched the talk. Michael Rosen offered to write the foreword for us if we did it.

So we did.  
And he did.  
And here it is.

Find some children and read them some of these poems. Then get them to write their own and read them to some other people.

And so on.

Soon everyone in the world will have written a poem.  
Won't that be grand?

*Matthew Pegg*



## Foreword

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This is a feast of poems! Each poem takes us into a world, closely observed, zinging with rhythms, rhymes and chiming words. They beg to be called out, chanted or even sung so that each word gets itself heard. They also invite readers and listeners to have a go themselves. Our language is ours. It belongs to us to do what we want with it. Poetry is a space where we can play with words, play with images to see what new meanings we can make. This group of writers have done just that and I very much hope that it inspires anyone reading this collection to have a go themselves.

Children are at a stage in human existence where a lot of the language they hear has a provisional quality about it: it may mean this, or it may mean that. Quite often it's the sound of words and phrases that are more dominant to the young mind than the exact meaning. This makes them a great audience for the kind of language play that is on show here. And there are a lot of adventures with sound and meaning too.

I hope anyone reading this will take time to read and share these poem with some young people. No need to probe too hard into what the poems mean. Let them just play out like a song on the radio and just see what happens. I often think poems are like conversation openers. They are starting points for conversations, imitations, repetitions and questions. Let all that just flow from the poems.

*Michael Rosen*

# Wolves and Apples

*by Holly Winter-Hughes*



Some things bite and some get bitten  
Some tales get told, some get written  
Some people dance, some play fiddle  
Some like the crust, some the middle  
Some days last aeons, some six seconds  
Some people push, others beckon  
Some make you cry, some fill your heart  
Some love science, some live for art  
Some things are scabrous, some are smooth  
Some things fidget, others don't move  
Some things sizzle, some are ice cold  
Some things fizzle, some explode  
Some things are giant, they reach the sky  
Some unseen by the naked eye  
Sometimes we sit and wonder why  
Sometimes the world just passes by  
Some things shrink, whereas some things grow  
Some things you catch, some things you throw  
Some things shine and some stay hidden  
Some things bite and some get bitten

# Corona Pirates

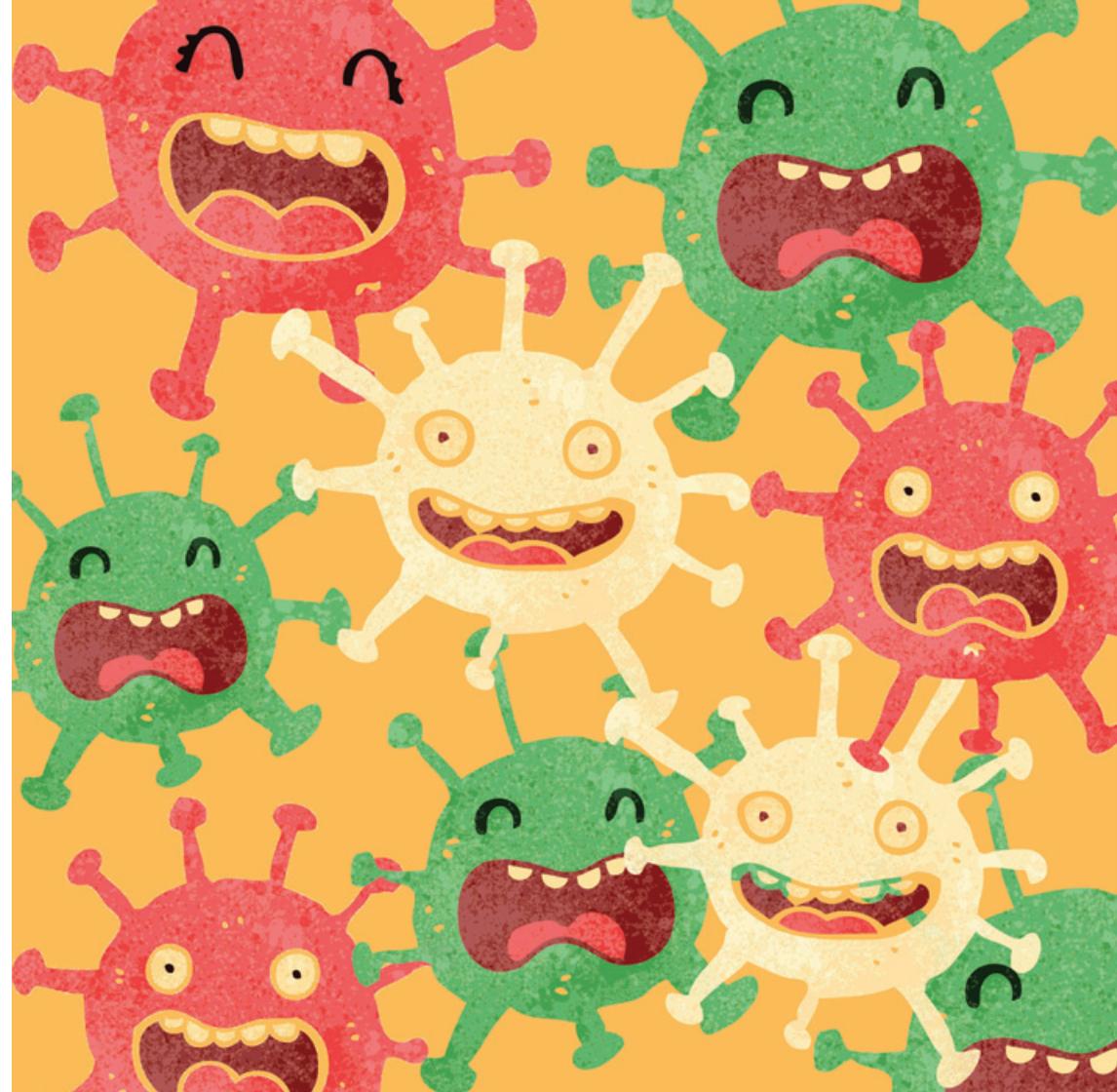
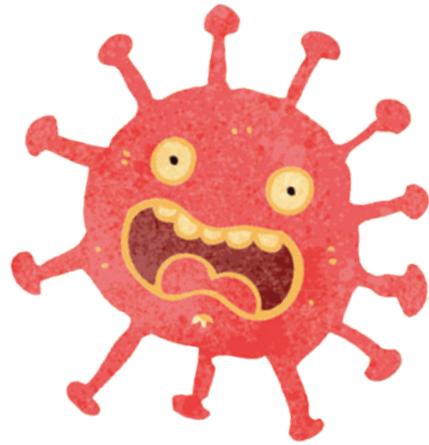
*by Sarah King*

Corona Pirates  
Moved by us,  
It really made  
a great big fuss.

They carried germs  
and threatened us.  
In our school  
and on the bus.

Corona Pirates  
Everywhere!  
I wonder if they're  
In my hair.

"They're very small."  
My sister said,  
"Go through your nose  
Into your head."



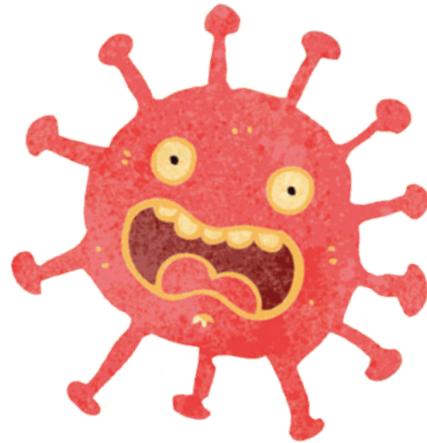
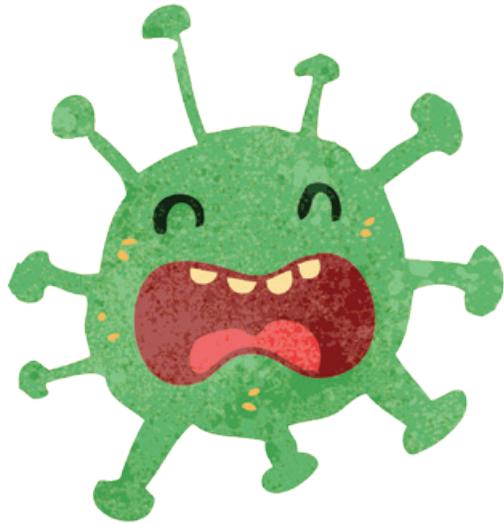
They make you sick  
and cough and stuff,  
and make weak people  
really rough.”

So, we hid away  
for days and days.  
“We have no choice,”  
the big boss says.

We hid away  
Inside our house.  
The world was quiet  
As a mouse.

I had to eat  
all of my tea,  
to stop them  
getting hold of me.

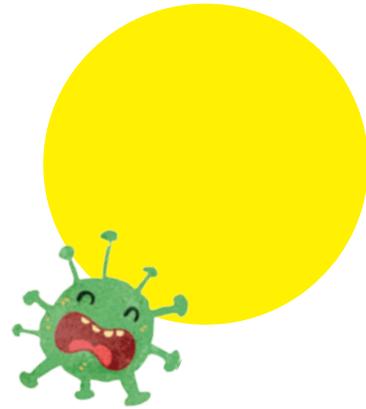
The health care workers  
Had to fight  
Corona Pirates  
day and night



They are good and  
brave to fight that way  
now they deserve  
a holiday

and a medal  
and a present  
or something they like  
that’s nice and pleasant

Because it made  
us lonely lots,  
Some clever scientists  
made us shots.  
To make the pirates go away,  
So we can live and laugh and play.



# Moonlight

*by Edith Husk*

Moonlight  
Hedgehog, head in bowl  
Cat watching, waits his turn



# The Subway

*by Marie Carmichael*

Busy, buzzing subway  
like a city underground,  
whizzing through the tunnels  
as the carriage shakes around.  
Then entering a station  
and it's screeching to a stop,  
you feel your eyes are bulging  
and you hope your ears don't pop.



# Bill's Sandwich.

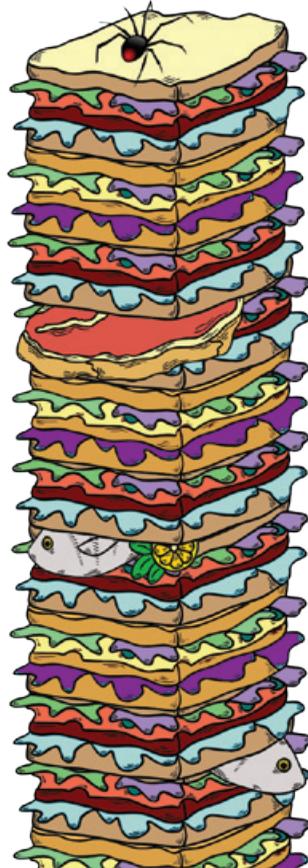
*by Matthew Pegg*

Bill built a sandwich  
And here's what was in it.  
The stuff he stuffed in,  
It took less than a minute.

First he spread jam  
On some very old ham.  
Added peas and a sneeze  
And some cheese wrapped in leaves.

He added some flies,  
Of unusual size.  
The size of those flies,  
Was quite a surprise.  
As they buzzed in the butter,  
A buttery flutter.

He put in some fleas,  
To go with the cheese,



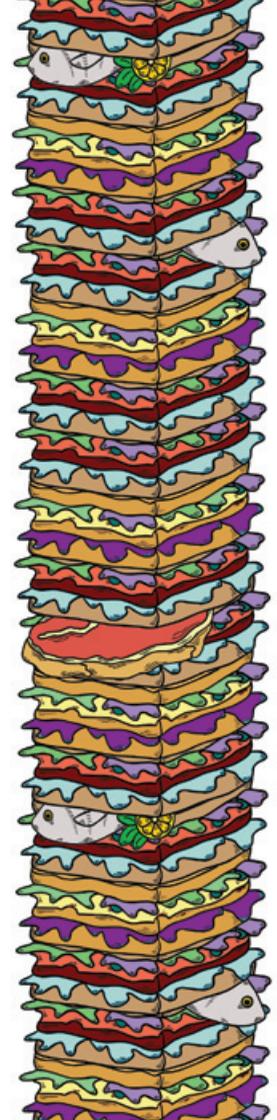
Bark from some trees,  
And some scabs from his knees.

Some hair from the sink,  
And a stinkety-stink,  
He found in the loo.  
And I think it was...  
Goo!

He added some fears,  
And elephant ears,  
And mustard and custard,  
Rhinoceros tears.

He scattered in sighs,  
And plenty of lies,  
Bits of old cars,  
And a comet from Mars.

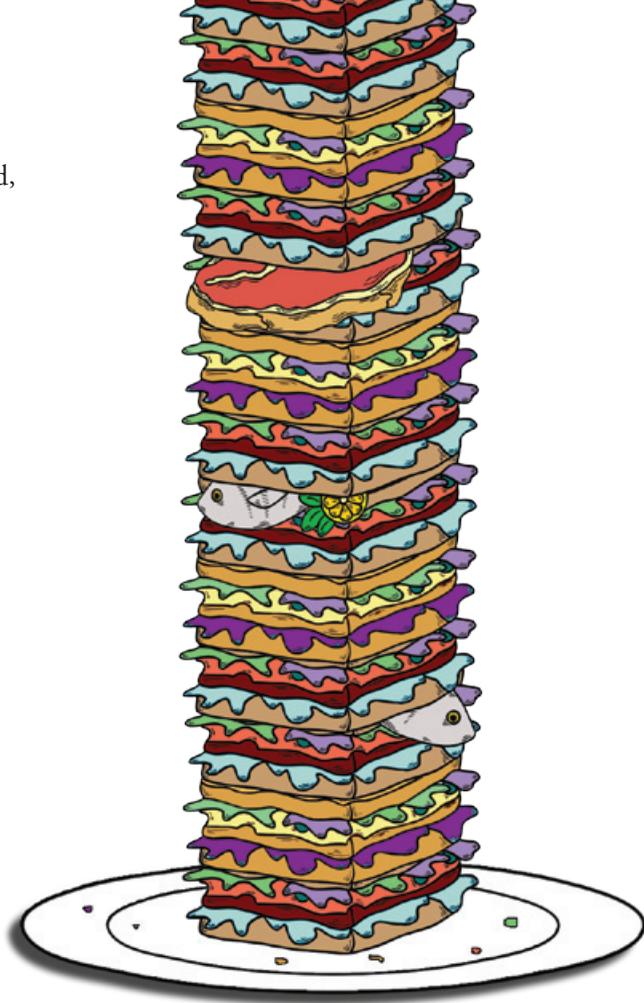
And baubles and bangles,  
And sprinkles and spangles,  
And widgets and gidgets,  
And sand from his sandals,



And an old inner tube,  
From a bicycle wheel.  
“Come on everyone,” he said,  
“Who’ll try this meal?”

A glorious sandwich,  
Made for you by Bill.”  
“I’ll try it,” said Wendy...

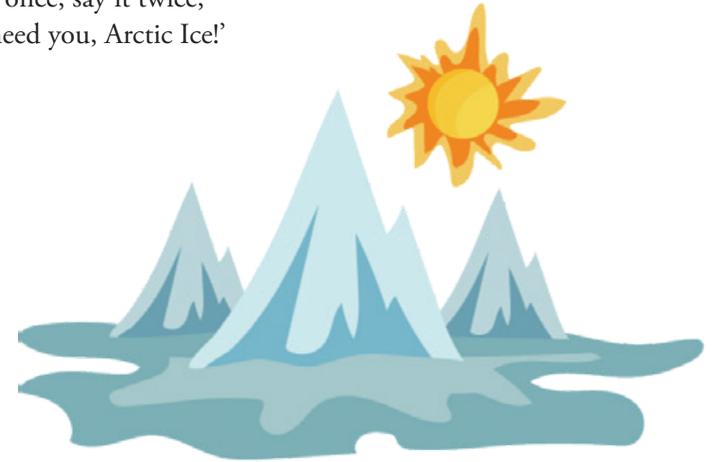
Do you think she was ill?



# Disappearing Glaciers

*by Julie Blaho*

Rumbly, grumbly, Arctic Ice,  
Reindeer call you paradise;  
Polar bears cry every day,  
‘We can’t live if you go away.’  
Rumbly, crumbly, Arctic Ice,  
For global warming, you pay the price.  
Say it once, say it twice,  
‘We need you, Arctic Ice!’



# Moving House

*by Jackie Mills*

Our house is moving, but where will it land?  
Will it land in the sea? Get buried in sand?  
Can our house swim?  
Will it grow fins?  
Will it make a big splash?  
Will all our things smash?  
Will our house sink?  
Will my toys shrink?  
Will it reach the South Pole?  
And where the house was, will there be a big hole?



# The Beefly

*by Edith Husk*

Playing in the park,  
happy as can be  
I look up  
what do I see?  
Something...



a bit like a fly and a bit like a bee  
swooping in the air  
and looking at me.

Better get away from this funny-looking thing  
it doesn't buzz  
but does it sting?

Running in the park  
happy to be free  
I turn around  
behind me I see  
something...

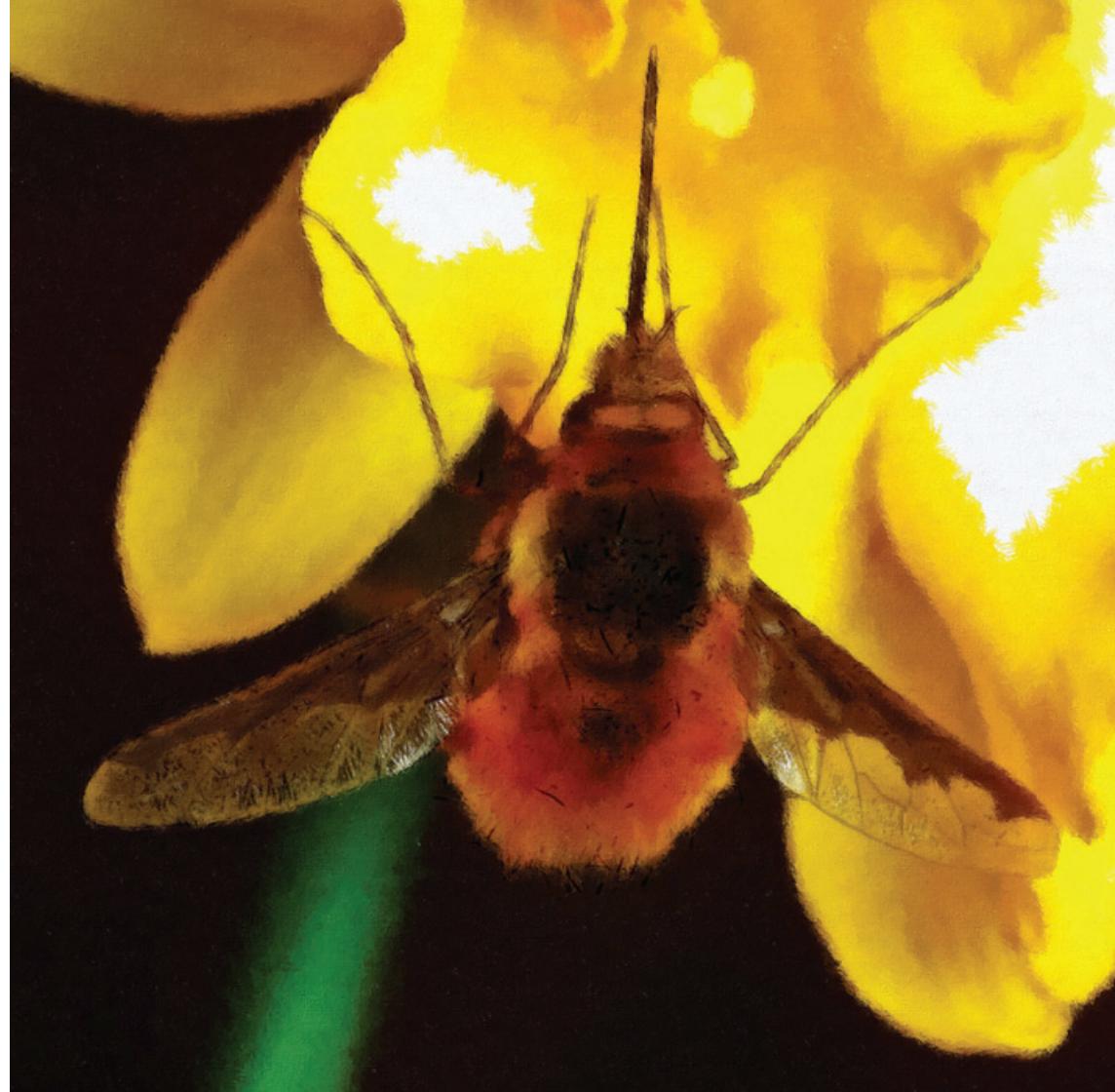
a bit like a fly and a bit like a bee  
darting through the air  
and following me  
Gotta get away from this funny-looking thing  
it doesn't buzz  
but it might sting!

Hiding in the park  
safe behind a tree  
I sneak a peek  
oh, no! I see  
something...

a bit like a fly and a bit like a bee  
hovering like a drone  
then it lands on me!

Can't get away from this funny-looking thing  
it doesn't buzz  
but it's going to sting!

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGH!



Hang on.  
Wait a sec.

Crouching in the park  
under a tree  
I open one eye  
what's this I see?  
Something...

a bit like a fly and a bit like a bee  
sitting on my arm  
and it's tickling me....  
With a great long tongue sticking out  
of a pointy head like a kinda  
snout...

What that about?!

Sitting very still  
in the shade of a tree  
eyes wide open  
what do I see?  
Something...

with wings like a fly,  
fuzzy body like a bee  
I look at it  
as it looks at me  
And that's when I make a discoveree!

Don't have to run from this really cool thing  
which doesn't buzz...

and doesn't sting.





# Night Noises

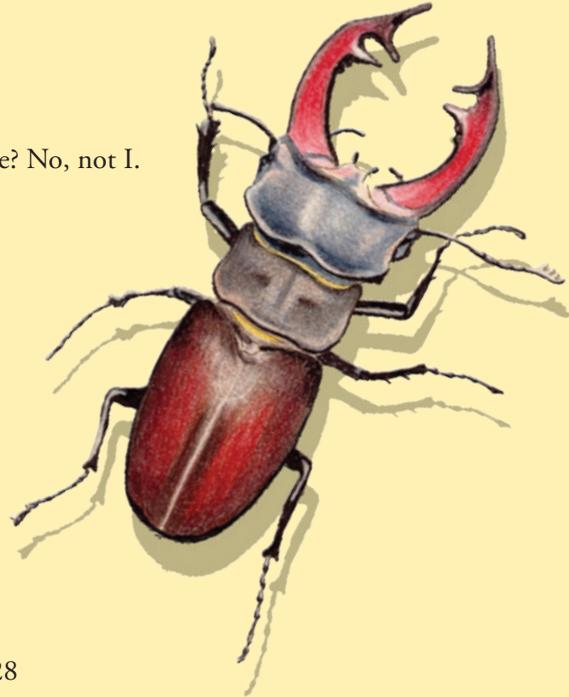
*by Sarah Frend*

Night time.  
Dark.  
Quiet,  
but not silent.  
Listen carefully.  
Geck-o geck-o.  
Listen carefully.  
Ribbit ribbit,  
Croak croak.  
Listen carefully.  
Crickets chir,  
thrum and whir.  
Curled up next to me,  
the cats purr.

# Gentle Giant

*by Julie Blaho*

Gentle black bug flies 'bout the wood.  
A klutz in the cockpit,  
he'd land if he could.  
Six hairy legs, but he's a  
charmer.  
Antlers poke from full body  
armor.  
Have you seen the flying stag beetle? No, not I.  
But if I do, I'll sure say hi!



# Chores

*by Jackie Mills*

Choose your chores carefully  
Don't, in haste, agree to clear up old dog waste,  
Don't say yes to cooking offal,  
Don't be buttering mouldy waffles  
Don't you polish Grandad's dentures  
And definitely 'No!' to ventures  
To do with nappies or baby sick  
Be very choosy when you pick.

# 5th November

*by Sarah Frend*

Fizz, whiz,  
BANG  
whistle, hiss,  
POP  
zip, whoosh,  
BOOM  
went the fireworks.

The bonfire burned,  
spitting sparks,  
flames roaring,  
hands warming.



# What scares you?

*by Holly Winter-Hughes*

I'm scared of sharks in the swimming pool  
I'm scared of wetting myself at school  
I'm scared of getting an answer wrong  
I'm scared of messing up the words to a song  
I'm scared of going upstairs alone  
I'm scared we're about to lose our home  
I'm scared the food bank will lose supplies  
I'm scared that they'll see through all my lies  
Saying things out loud makes the fear feel smaller  
My voice may be trembling but I feel taller  
Talking about what scares me makes me feel better  
And on shy days I put it in a letter  
I'm scared of my uncle when he's drunk  
I'm scared of ghost pirates from ships sunk  
I'm scared that I'll never get heard  
I'm scared of cancer, it's such a big word  
Saying things out loud makes the fear feel smaller  
My voice may be trembling but I feel taller  
Talking about what scares me makes me feel better  
And on shy days I put it in a letter

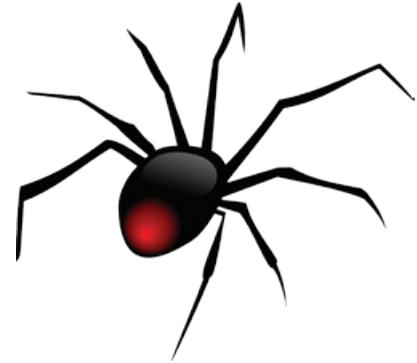
I'm scared that I'll say something dumb  
I'm scared of dying, just like my Mum  
I'm scared of dogs with teeth that glisten  
I'm scared of the day no-one listens  
I'm scared my fears make me immature  
I'm scared that our family might be poor  
I'm scared the sky could drop on our heads  
I'm scared we'll be nothing when we're dead  
Saying things out loud makes the fear feel smaller  
My voice may be trembling but I feel taller  
Talking about what scares me makes me feel better  
And on shy days I put it in a letter



## Spider in the Bath

*by Jackie Mills*

Mum said I was being daft, 'It's just a spider in the bath.'  
George called me a great big kid, 'Just squash it with the shampoo lid.'  
Uncle Joe was drinking beer, 'As long as it don't come over here!'  
Suzy said she'd prefer it did. 'I don't share baths with arachnids.'  
But they didn't see what I just saw,  
Creeping under the bathroom door  
The hairy leg is six foot, easy  
The dripping fangs make me feel queasy  
It rubs its hands, anticipating  
A boy sized feast, with five star ratings  
The eyes are huge, like bowling balls  
They swivel round, peer down the hall  
The thing is poised. My kneecaps shake  
It grins horribly, it sees me quake  
I am a goner, but just before  
It pounces, Scruff bursts through the door  
He scoops it up in his big paw  
Opens wide his doggy jaw  
He chomps and crunches, then with finesse  
Spits out a shriveled sticky mess.



# The Archeologist

*by Jon Dixon*

A squirrel comes to visit me  
In my garden every day.  
He doesn't come to chatter,  
And he doesn't come to play.

The squirrel's very serious.  
In sunshine and in rain,  
He very carefully digs some holes,  
Then fills them up again.

I wonder what he's digging for?  
There must be some reward.  
Perhaps it's buried treasure  
Or an ancient Viking sword.

It might be Roman gold or jewels  
Or medieval huts,  
Or even bones of dinosaurs...  
But I think he's just nuts!



Just nuts! That's it! Of course. Of course.  
The answer in a flash.  
With hungry winter on the way  
He's burying his cache!

My squirrel archeologist  
Is digging everywhere  
To make quite sure there's lots to eat  
Until springtime next year.

And that's why every day I hang  
Some peanuts in a tree,  
To help my friendly squirrel out  
When he comes to visit me.

# My Dragon

*by Sarah Frend*

My dragon's favourite food is jelly,  
He likes to put it in his belly.  
My dragon's favourite food is jelly,  
He eats it while he watches telly.



# Wolves and Apples

*by Jayne Williams*

Lurking in the murk,  
Two species,  
Together,  
Amidst the trees.

One silvery grey,  
The other, shiny and red,  
Both found fame in the forest of fairy tales,  
Told to small children before bed.

One has a poisonous bite,  
That might send you off to sleep,  
For quite a long time.  
The other has big teeth,  
And likes to wear your grandmother's nightie.

Wolves and Apples are who they are,  
One has thick matted fur,  
The other is round and smooth,  
Both are delicious food too,  
To somebody...





This little book of  
poetry for children  
was inspired by a talk  
from Michael Rosen at  
Wolves & Apples in 2021.

Wolves & Apples is a programme of events  
about writing for children and young adults,  
run by Mantle Arts in Leicester.



[www.mantlearts.org.uk](http://www.mantlearts.org.uk)