Activities with Michael Rosen

PART 1

“Peas on My Knees” Silly Body Rhymes

In the video, Michael Rosen chuckles about getting peas all over himself including on his knees, up his nose, and in his ears, noting how satisfying it is when everyday silliness rhymes. This activity is a fun way to help children explore and generate rhyming pairs using familiar body parts and food words.

Activity:

1. Sit children in a circle with soft play food or pom-poms ("peas").
2. Model balancing the item on a body part: *"I've got peas on my knees!"*
3. Encourage children to invent playful new rhyming pairs to chant and act out together (e.g. *"I've got toast on my nose"*, *"I've got pie in my eye"*, *"I've got egg on my leg"*)
4. Children draw a self-portrait covered in their chosen foods and orally share their silly rhymes.

"Hot Potato" Performance

Michael brings the house down with his iconic, mouth-cooling routine, blowing patiently until the food is "cool, just cool, into the mouth... nice!", before contrasting it with his dad's frantic, mouth-burning disaster. This dramatic snippet provides a brilliant springboard for pupils to master facial expressions, comedic pauses, vocal variety, and physical theatre in a spoken poetry performance.

Activity:

1. Watch Michael's demonstration of building anticipation with repetitive actions and dramatic contrast.
2. Children work in groups to stage the "Hot Potato" dining scene. Assign characters: the careful blowers vs the greedy, impatient family member.
3. Children practise over-the-top mime: the gentle blowing, the confident click, the eyes popping out, puffing, and head-bobbing.
4. Record short video clips or perform live for peer evaluation focusing on comedic timing and expression.

Going on an "Epic Hunt" Sound Journey

Michael shares the campfire roots of *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* and demonstrates how MC Grammar energised the poem into an upbeat, rhythmic rap complete with catchy physical actions. Building on this vibrant performance style, children will invent and perform their own expressive onomatopoeia and sound effects to narrate an imaginative obstacle course.

Activity:

1. Listen to Michael performing the refrain and rhythmic actions.
2. Plan a classroom or outdoor journey hunt where children must navigate 4 new obstacles (e.g. crunchy autumn leaves, sticky melted jelly, squeaky wooden floorboards, bubbly soapy water).
3. Working in pairs, children invent the sound words for each obstacle (e.g. *"Crunch, snap"*, *"Glop, plop"*, *"Squeak, squawk"*).
4. Perform the journey as a whole-class rhythmic chant or rap using body percussion and actions.



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Michael Rosen

PART 2

"My Dad Knows Everything" (Until He Doesn't!) Comic Dialogue

Michael fondly recalls idolising his dad as an all-knowing genius who had every book in the house crammed into his skull until a scorching potato reduced him to a spitting, head-bobbing mess. This classic family anecdote inspires pupils to write humorous narrative dialogue or script scenes that play with dramatic irony, inflated authority, and comedic anticlimax.

Activity:

1. Discuss Michael's narrative arc: the child's awe of an adult's "genius" punctured by a silly, relatable reality.
2. Children draft a short two-character dialogue or poem between an "All-Knowing Adult" and an inquisitive child.
3. The child asks three everyday questions which the adult answers with over the top confidence (e.g. explaining what wheels are).
4. The story ends with a sudden, funny mishap where the adult is caught out being distinctly ordinary.

The "Mystery Dog" Detective Poem

When Michael recited his poem "Down behind the dustbin, I met a dog called Jim...", one of the children derails the narrative by asking how on earth he knew the dog's name in the first place. Using this brilliant audience interaction, and the children's theories about reading the dog's collar, pupils will learn to identify, play with, and deliberately subvert narrative logic and plot holes in poetry.

Activity:

1. Share the anecdote and discuss why an unanswered mystery makes poetry funny or intriguing.
2. Children write a 6 to 8 line mystery verse that deliberately contains one absurd, unexplained fact (e.g. meeting an animal or stranger and instantly knowing a bizarre detail about them).
3. Swap poems with a partner. The partner writes an alternate "detective stanza" or clever final verse that interrogates the plot hole or provides an unexpected, logical answer.

Houdini Escapology Tongue-Twister Challenge

Michael recounts the life of legendary escapologist Harry Houdini and recites his own tricky, tongue-tying tribute: "Who done Houdini in? Dan done Houdini in..." Taking his cue that a tongue twister is a verbal trap your mouth must escape from, children will experiment with alliteration, rhythm, and tricky consonant clusters to write and recite an original tongue twister.

Activity:

1. Have children chant Michael's Houdini twister in pairs, gradually speeding up like a metronome until someone stumbles.
2. Explain that a tongue twister is a verbal trap that your tongue has to "escape" from.
3. Children pick a historical figure, animal, or made-up name and brainstorm alliterative, repeating sound patterns.
4. Challenge children to write a 3 to 4 line tongue twister and test whether their partner can escape it three times fast without stumbling.

