



Lesson plan 2 – Level 1 (age 5-7)

Guess What Dad Does

Brian Patten

When I went to junior school
My friends asked what Dad did.
I did not dare tell them,
So I had to ad lib.

My father's not a fireman.
He's not a bus conductor.
He's not a stuntman in the films
Or a PE instructor.

Yes he is quite rich,
And no, he's not a banker.
He doesn't own a goldmine
Or an oil tanker.

I help him with his job,
And stay up late at night.
Dad works in the shadows
And does not like the light.

I like his job best of all
And get quite excited
When we enter people's homes
Totally uninvited.

First things first:

This poem is a humorous (funny) riddle. The title asks you to 'Guess What Dad Does.'
What exactly *does* Dad do? What does 'ad lib' mean? (line 4).

The poem is clever - it doesn't give the actual answer but it does give you clues. Pick out the particular words or phrases that give you the clearest clues about dad's line of work.

In verses 2 and 3, we only learn one thing about what dad is and lots of things about what he is not. What is the one thing he is? (Rich) Set in the middle of the list of work he doesn't do, what is the effect of this short statement: 'Yes, *he is quite rich*,' alongside the jobs mentioned? (Curiosity. It raises questions about what he DOES do that earns him the status of being rich).

The last 2 lines carry the punch line. What is the effect of the punch line? (What did you do when you heard it? Did you smile? Laugh?) Can you think of something else that relies on a punch line for its effect? (A joke).

The structure of the poem works in the same way as an extended joke. It builds towards the peak of what is revealed at the end.

Drama Exercises

- 1 **Still life statues** based on verses 2 and 3. Pick out all the jobs listed or referred to in the two verses. Adopt still life poses (or statues) to represent: a fireman/firewoman, bus conductor, stunt person, PE instructor, rich person, banker, important boss of a goldmine and captain of an oil tanker. This can be done simultaneously as individuals in a whole class or, in pairs. If working in pairs, take turns to 'sculpt' each other into the pose that best suits the job. If the class are divided into 'A's' and 'B's' then you can also have 'Art Gallery' showings. All the 'A's' hold their still positions while the 'B's' walk round viewing them. Then swap around.
- 2 **Shadows:** In groups, see if you can create the effect of shadows closing around an individual in the middle of the group who is the 'dad' of the poem. (Verse 4, lines 3-4)
- 3 **Ways of moving: adverbs.** Read the last verse. Think of words to describe the movements of a thief entering 'people's homes totally uninvited.' Individually, mime moving around as *stealthily* and *silently* as absolutely possible. Who can be the most silent and stealthy mover of all?
- 4 **More ways of moving.** Using the previous list of jobs mentioned in the poem, think of adverbs to describe how each person doing that occupation would move or walk. Walk around the space in role. Would a firewoman move purposefully? Carefully? Heroically? Speedily?

Extension

Act out the whole poem.

The class is divided into five groups. Each group is allocated one verse each. The task is to enact the verse, using either mime or a sequence of still life statues. No talking allowed for each group's performance. When ready, the groups are lined up in order, all holding still in an opening statue pose for the beginning of their section. As the teacher reads the poem, each group in turn enacts their piece. At the end of each verse, the group holds still in a statue pose. At any one time, there should be four groups in still position and one group performing the enactment of their text.

A group poem: Mission Biscuit

Imagine you are setting out on a dangerous and dastardly mission.... Here are your mission instructions!

You are to make your way in absolute silence from your bedroom, down deeply dark stairs and through gloomy corridors into...the kitchen. Your mission aim, should you choose to accept it, is to locate the carefully hidden chocolate biscuit...and eat it!

You must be the quietest, cleverest, most cunning chocolate biscuit-agent-spy-secret-scoffer in the world.

Firstly, brainstorm a list of action words (verbs) and adverbs describing how you would move For example tip-toe, crawl, creep (verbs)
...stealthily, slowly, silently (adverbs)

Now, use a special poetry recipe to sprinkle a few *similes* into your poem. (Where you use 'as' or 'like' to compare one thing with another).

I slithered slowly into the kitchen *like a snake*...

Quiet *as a thought* I stepped cautiously...(try to avoid well used or well known phrases such as *quiet as a mouse*. Aim for the unexpected or unusual).

The shadows were dark *as crow feathers*....

The biscuit is your goal, your rare treasure, ultimate object of your mission. How else could you describe this forbidden yummy loot? An *edible treasure-trove*? A *melt-in-your-mouth jewel*? Using the words 'treasure, jewel, prize, loot and gem', think of ways to describe each one as though it is delicious food.

As you take your first forbidden bite, you hear a creak behind you. Oh no! Worse than the police! It's...a parent!

Fingers point at you like...
His/her eyes glare like....
His/her voice is as loud as...

What happens next? What's the verdict? What are you sentenced to?

Advanced

Honest, hard-working burglar required for exciting opportunities. Travel guaranteed!

Imagine that you are working for an advertising agency with a difference. Your job is to advertise for a team of secret agents to be sent on top-secret missions. Your work for today is to write or draw the advert for a very special cat-burglar. The team needs someone skilled in breaking into the most impossible of places - all for the good of world peace! You are looking for the James Bond of all safe-crackers.

Write (or draw, or record) the description of the cat-burgling skills that will be needed for this mission. For example -

Fingers – just how nimble/flexible/fast do those fingers need to be? Fingers as nimble as....?

Locks – how easily must locks be sprung open? As quickly as...? As easily as...?

Shadows - how must shadows be moved through or clung to? Able to slink through shadows like...? Can cling to shadows like a...?

Safes – cracking of safes as easy or as fast as...?

Imaginative Development

All sorts of things get stolen away. Here, we are not going to be thinking about actual objects like jewellery or watches. Instead we are going to think of things it would be utterly impossible to steal, pick up or carry. This is where imagination comes in and ideas are stolen away.

For example, how could you steal a river? What would you wrap it up in. Who would you sell it to? How would you hide a house? Or even a school? Could you squeeze it into a pocket? What would happen if a story got stolen? In poetry and the world of imagination, anything is possible.

Brainstorm a list of things it would be impossible to pick up or carry. Collect all the ideas on an interactive whiteboard.

Dreams... stolen by daylight.
Shadows... stolen by the rising sun.
Birthdays... stolen by forgetfulness.
Clouds...

A beach...
A motorway...
A puddle...
Songs...
Conversation...
Laughter...
The moon...
Our classroom...
Fog...
Rain...
A mountain...
Imagination...

What could stolen dreams be used for, or a stolen mountain?

Dreams, stolen by daylight,
Used to mop up shadows that were spilt last night...

A mountain, stolen by my little sister
Kept as a pet in a shoe box under her bed.

Poet Background

What questions would you like to ask Brian Patten about this poem?

Look up Brian Patten on the Poetry Archive – www.poetryarchive.org and hear him read his poems or check out his website <http://www.brianpatten.co.uk/>

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Acknowledgments

About the authors of these notes

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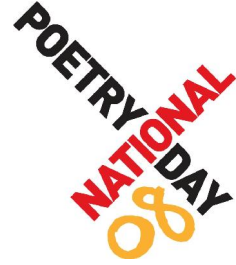
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The moon...
Our classroom...
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