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I reading

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opening extract from

School's Out

written by

John Foster

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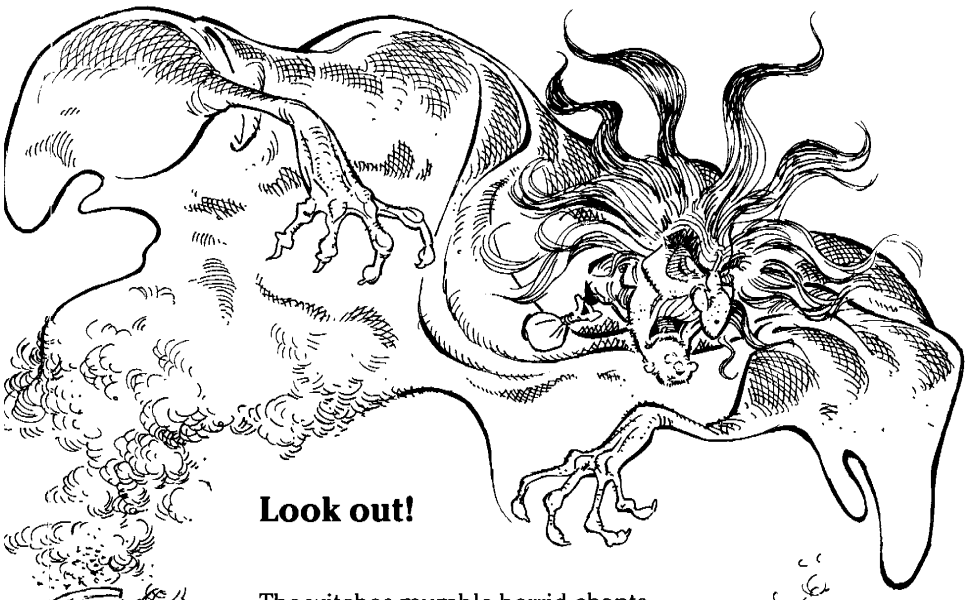
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SCHOOL, MAN,
'S COOL

Schoolspeak

's cool, man,
It's the best.
Gotta keep your interest
Talkin' is the name of the game
And if you wanna play
You gotta speak the same:
SCHOOLSPEAK,
's cool, man,
Understand me if you can.
P.E.'s brill,
Maths is vile,
Maths, man, it ain't my style.
Art's a doddle,
R.E.'s a doss,
Gotta show 'em who's the boss:
SCHOOLSPEAK,
's cool, man,
It's the lingo they wanna ban.
Science is grotty,
Drama's dead good,
History I'd skive, if I could.
English is ace,
French is a bind,
I'd love to leave this class behind:
SCHOOLSPEAK,
's cool, man,
's all part of my master plan.
Miss is magic,
Sir's a pain,
Head's a wally, librarian's plain,
Dinners are skill,
Homework's a drag
I'm telling you school ain't my bag.
SCHOOLSPEAK
SCHOOL, MAN,
's cool.

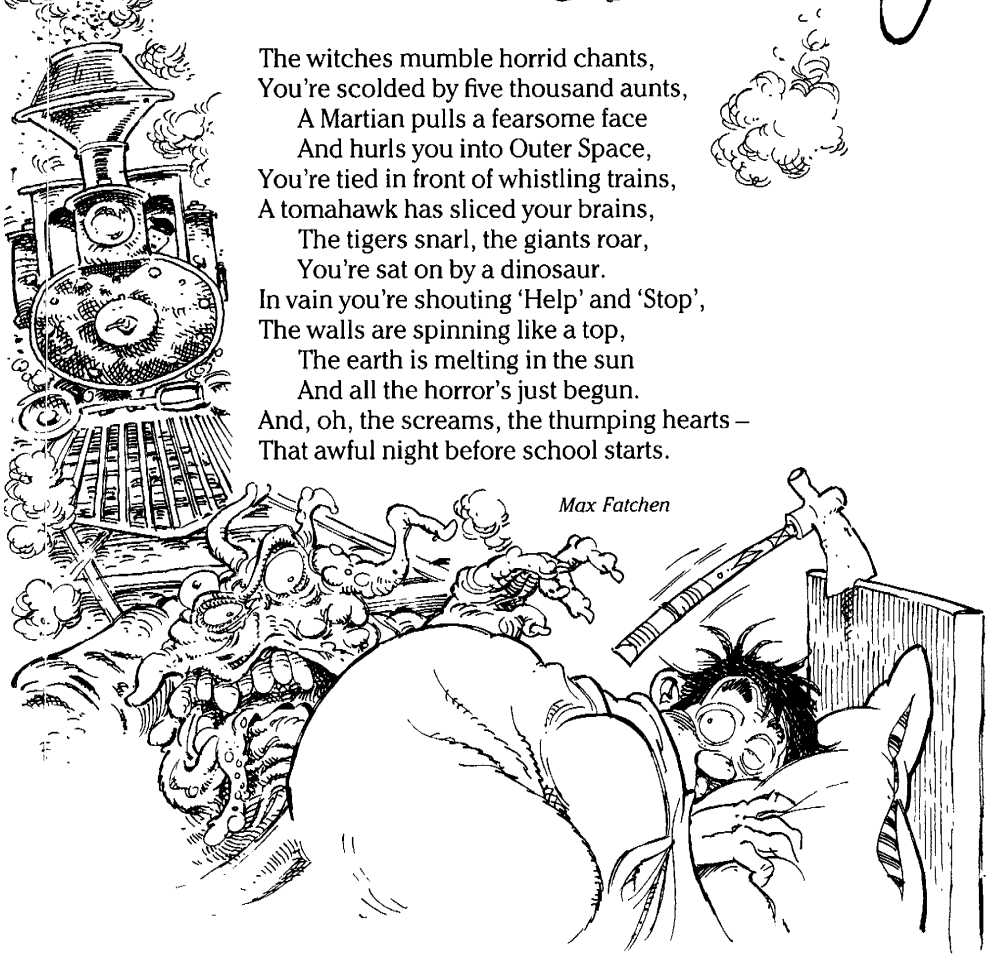
Ray Mather



Look out!

The witches mumble horrid chants,
You're scolded by five thousand aunts,
    A Martian pulls a fearsome face
    And hurls you into Outer Space,
You're tied in front of whistling trains,
A tomahawk has sliced your brains,
    The tigers snarl, the giants roar,
    You're sat on by a dinosaur.
In vain you're shouting 'Help' and 'Stop',
The walls are spinning like a top,
    The earth is melting in the sun
    And all the horror's just begun.
And, oh, the screams, the thumping hearts –
That awful night before school starts.

Max Fatchen



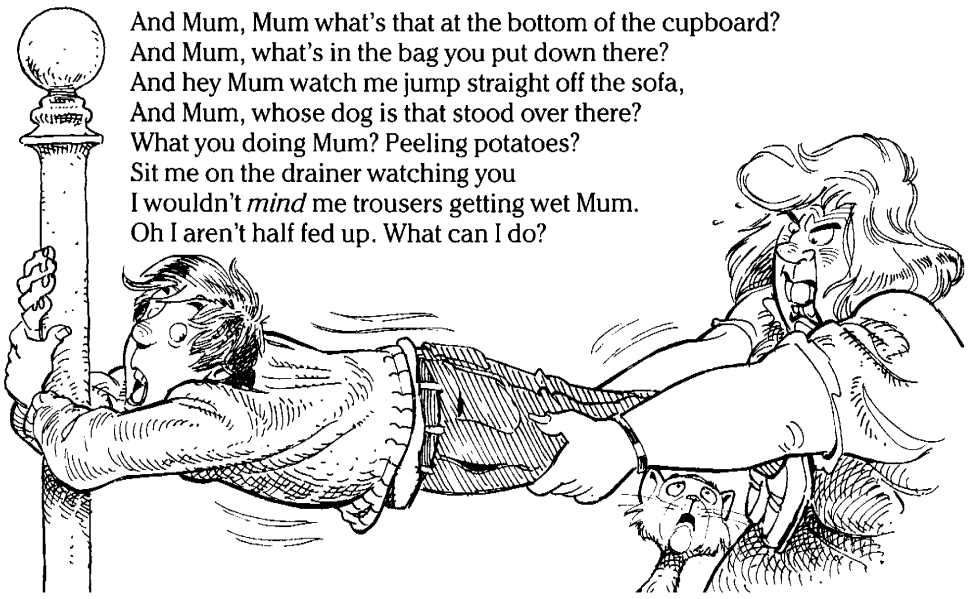
I don't want to go to school

I don't want to go to school Mum
I want to stay at home with my duck.
I'd rather stay at home with you Mum,
And hit the skirting board with my truck.
Don't make me go to school today Mum,
I'll sit here quiet on the stairs
Or I'll sit underneath the table
Scratching all the varnish off the chairs.

I don't want to go to school Mum
When I could be underneath your feet.
It's shopping day and we could go together
Taking twice as long to get to Regent Street.
And every time you stop to talk to someone
I won't let you concentrate, no fear,
I'll be jumping up and down beside you
Shouting, 'Can I have some sweets Mum?' in your ear.

Or how about me doing a bit of painting?
Or what about a bit of cutting out?
Or sitting in the open bedroom window,
Body in and legs sticking out?
Or what about us going up the park Mum?
Or how about me sitting at the sink?
Or what about me making you a cake Mum?
And Mum. Hey Mum. Mum can I have a drink?

And Mum, Mum what's that at the bottom of the cupboard?
And Mum, what's in the bag you put down there?
And hey Mum watch me jump straight off the sofa,
And Mum, whose dog is that stood over there?
What you doing Mum? Peeling potatoes?
Sit me on the drainer watching you
I wouldn't *mind* me trousers getting wet Mum.
Oh I aren't half fed up. What can I do?



What time is Daddy coming home Mum?
What's in that long packet? Sausagemeat?
How long is it before he comes Mum?
And Mum. Hey Mum. What can I have to eat?
Oh sorry Mum! I've upset me Ribena.
Oh look! It's making quite a little pool.
Hey Mum, hey, where we going in such a hurry?
Oh Mum! Hey Mum, you're taking me to SCHOOL!

Pam Ayres

August poem

Today it is raining
and it is autumn.

The children are going back to school with their new bags
and their new uniforms.

It is spring for the children and autumn for the teachers.

For the children are always young and the teachers are
growing older
and the blackboard is grainy with chalk.

The teachers look out at the rainy playground
and sometimes they think about *Macbeth*
but mostly about their own lives
and how the freshness of spring has departed.

It is raining
and it is autumn,
and the rain prickles the sea
and wets the new uniforms of the children
and their new shoes.

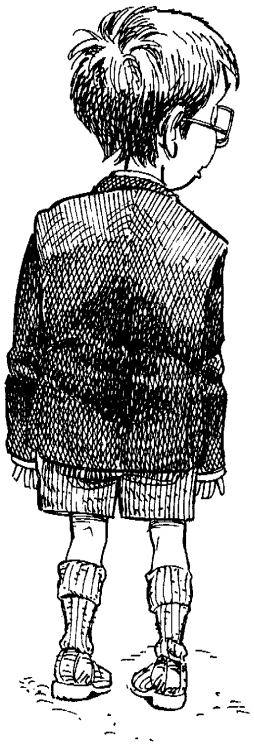
When it is raining the soul becomes grey,
a continuous drizzle of autumn.
It is like a screen that will always be there.

The teachers look out, the forgotten chalk in their hands,
and they break it over and over.

Iain Crichton Smith

New boy

The day began with tea.
I was wearing flannel shorts
Which rubbed my knees leaving
A ring of red beneath the grey.
We sat, my parents and I,
At a polished table
Drinking pale tea
Amongst unfamiliar faces.
There was cake
And side plates and knives
And my toes felt cramped
Inside tight black shoes.



My parents were quiet,
Father in a suit,
Mother with her best brooch
And new handbag.
We children were excused
So we gathered acorns
Beneath a tree
Near some frayed ropes.

We did not hear the cars leave.

We found ourselves in
Narrow beds,
Watching the shadows,
Trying hard not to cry
And waiting for sleep.

Nigel Cox

47 Bus

We're doing nothing new in Maths
If I stay at home with a cold today
And if I miss a History test
I know it all backwards anyway;

We've had the lessons I like for the week:
There's nothing with which I couldn't cope
And if it isn't in the book
Someone will lend me the notes;

But when I remember how early
Some other people have to get up,
Like the invisible man, the milkman,
Ghosting round in his electric truck,

And the way that Four Lane Ends
At 8.15 is a regular date
Where, rain or hail or snow or shine,
The three of us always wait,

Though I've hardly time for breakfast
And while I must seem ridiculous
To pass up the chance of a well-earned rest,
I mustn't disappoint the 47 bus.

Stanley Cook

Bus

Jane caught the school bus,
and so did Melissa.
Bill was a professional
hitch-hiking bus-misser.

Ian Serraillier

Early bird does catch the fattest worm

Late again
going to be late again
for school again
and I can't say
I overslept
can't blame it
on the bus
can't blame it
on the train
can't blame it
on the rain
and Granny words
buzzing in my brain
'Early bird does catch the worm,'
and I thinking
Teacher going tell me off
and I wishing
I was a bird
and teacher was a juicy worm.

John Agard

Monday

Monday; not only that but it's pouring;
My friend's away and that'll be boring;
Games are off, in Maths there's a test –
It's a day when I never do my best.
No one thinks it's a bumper-fun day –
So why don't we simply cancel Monday?

It's a day when teachers speak a faceful:
'This work is really quite disgraceful!'
And Monday lunch just breaks your heart:
It's green grub salad and concrete tart.
It's Monday again, a proper blues day:
Couldn't we just begin on Tuesday?

Eric Finney

Some days

Some days this school
is a huge concrete sandwich
squeezing me out like jam.

It weighs so much
breathing hurts, my legs freeze
my body is heavy.

On days like that
I carry whole buildings
high on my back.

Other days
the school is a rocket
thrusting right into the sun.

It's yellow and green
freshly painted,
the cabin windows
gleam with laughter.

On days like that
whole buildings support me,
my ladder is pushing
over their rooftops.

Amongst the clouds
I'd need a computer
to count all the bubbles
bursting aloud in my head.

David Harmer