



6 Poems with a common theme

# The Bully Asleep

One afternoon, when grassy  
Scents through the classroom crept,  
Bill Craddock laid his head  
Down on his desk, and slept.

The children came around him:  
Jimmy, Roger and Jane;  
They lifted his head timidly  
And let it sink again.

“Look, he’s gone sound asleep, Miss,”  
Said Jimmy Adair:  
“He stays up all the night, you see;  
His mother doesn’t care.”

“Stand away from him, children.”  
Miss Andrews stooped to see.  
“Yes, he’s asleep; go on  
With your writing, and let him be.”

“Now’s a good chance!” whispered Jimmy.

And he snatched Bill’s pen and hid it.

“Kick him under the desk, hard;

He won’t know who did it.”

“Fill all his pockets with rubbish –

Paper, apple-cores, chalk.”

So they plotted, while Jane

Sat wide-eyed at their talk.

Not caring, not hearing,

Bill Craddock he slept on;

Lips parted, eyes closed –

Their cruelty gone.

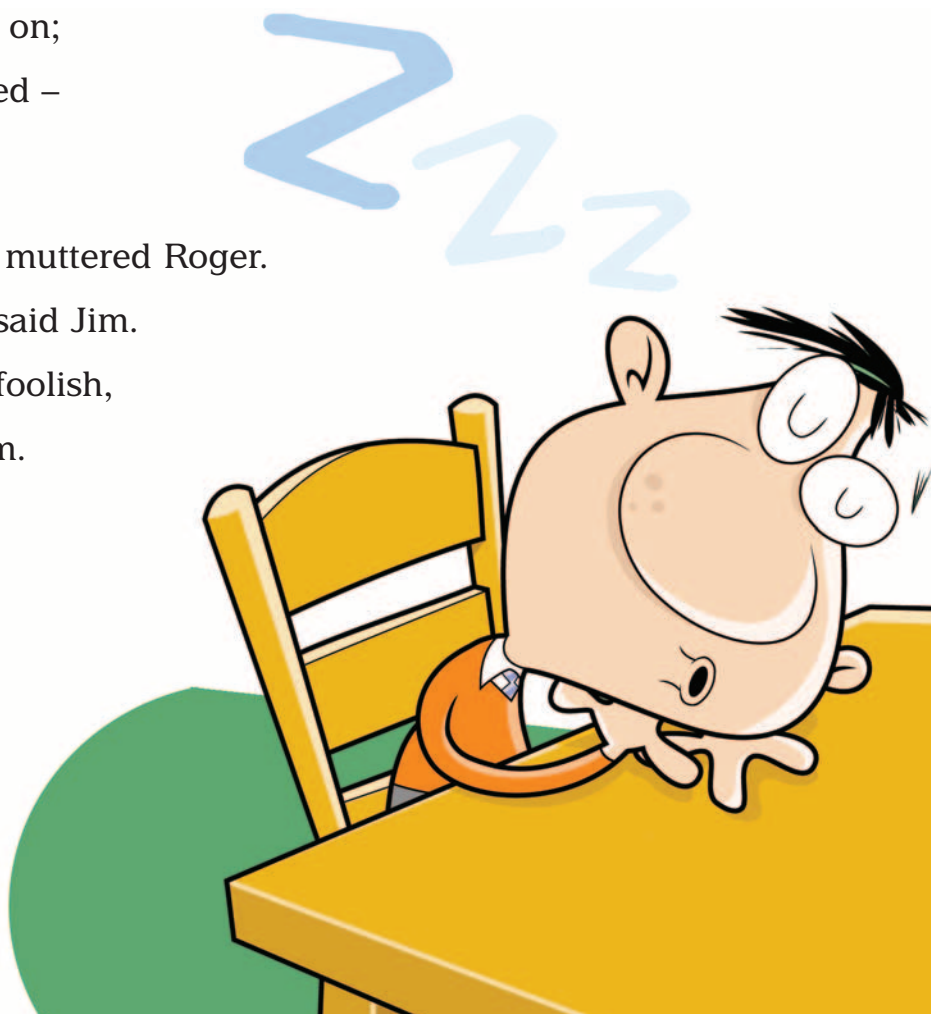
“Stick him with pins!” muttered Roger.

“Ink down his neck!” said Jim.

But Jane, tearful and foolish,

Wanted to comfort him.

*John Walsh*



8 Poems with a common theme

# Never Can Tell

He always had a good excuse  
To stay away from games.  
On the hottest days  
He would stay fully-clothed.  
He never came swimming.

I remember  
One day our class –  
Called to the medical room –  
Asked to strip to the waist.

He pretended not to hear  
His name called  
Again and again.  
With tears in his eyes,  
He pulled his jumper over his head  
And fumbled with his buttons.  
He stopped,  
Walked over to the nurse  
Whispered in her ear.

She pointed to the screens,  
He stepped behind them and waited his turn.  
When he came  
He rushed from behind to the Doctor's office  
Hoping none of us would see.

But we did.  
And we couldn't understand  
The fuss.  
Lots of people have eczema.

*Michael Lowe*



10 Poems with a common theme

# Poem For a New Teacher

Welcome to the school, Miss.  
We're The Class From Hell –  
A wild, unruly mob which  
Nobody can quell,  
The kind of pupils other schools  
Would certainly expel.

So come in, Miss. Excuse the mess,  
The racket and the smell.  
It's dingy in this classroom.  
It's like a prison cell.  
And some of us say that you won't stay  
For long ... but who can tell?

The cross on the floor records where  
Our last teacher fell.  
They say that someone tripped her up.  
You should've heard her yell.  
Anyway, they took away  
A babbling, burnt-out shell

Who'd never dared to make us work,  
Knowing we'd just rebel.  
So most of us can't read and write  
And none of us can spell.  
But now they've sent us you, Miss.  
You're the new personnel.

So come on in and meet us, Miss.  
We really wish you well.  
We hope you like a challenge, Miss,  
'Cos we're The Class From Hell.  
We've got a lot of time to kill...  
It's *hours* till the bell.

*Nick Toczek*



12 Poems with a common theme

# The Inspector Calls

**To be chanted at the end of term.**

The room was cold and dingy  
And the windows far from clean.  
No sand or clay or wall display,  
Not a book was to be seen.

“I’m sure you have a lot of fun,”  
The School Inspector said  
To all the little children  
Who sat in silent dread.

“I’m sure you have a lot of fun,”  
The visitor repeated,  
And the children nodded obediently,  
“Oh yes, sir,” they all bleated.

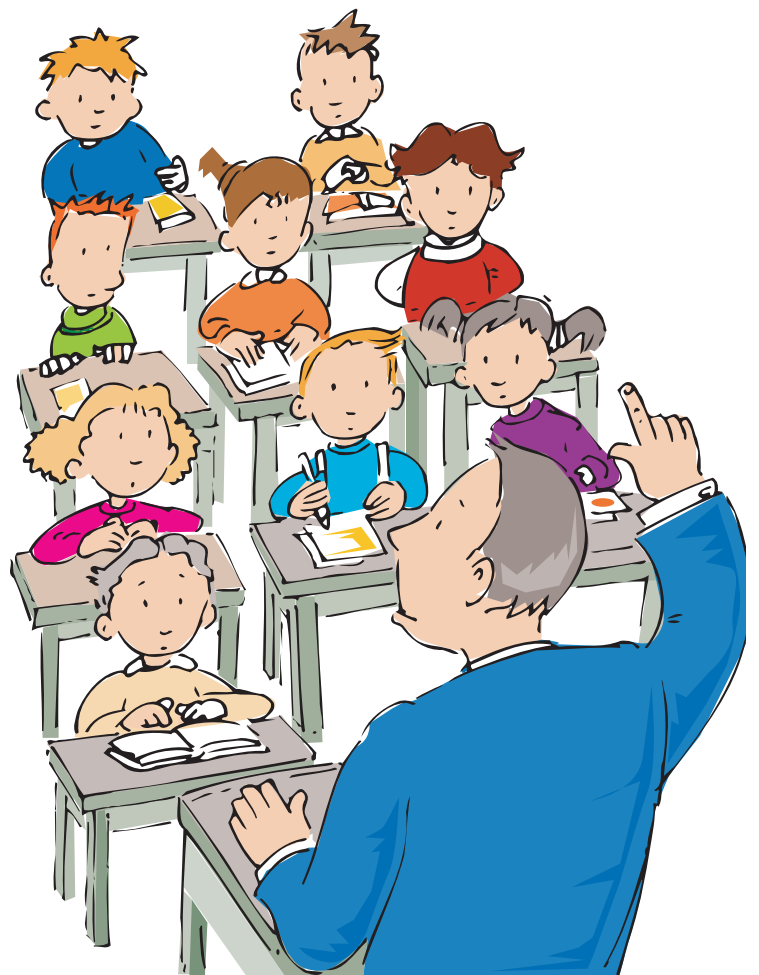
But at the back sat Darren,  
And he shook his little head.  
“Well, I don’t have a lot of fun,”  
The little Infant said.



“Of course you do!” the teacher snapped,  
And fixed him with a glare.  
“We’re always having lots of fun!”  
In a tone that said: “Beware!”

But Darren shook his head again,  
And they heard the Infant say:  
“Well I do not remember it –  
I must have been away that day!”

*Gervase Phinn*



14 Poems with a common theme

# I Hear...

When I think of school  
I hear  
High shouts tossed  
Like juggled balls in windy yards, and lost  
In gutters, treetops, air.

And always, somewhere,  
Piano-notes water-fall  
And small sharp voices wail.  
A monster-roar surges – “Goal!”  
The bell.

Then doors slam. There’s the kick, scruff, stamp of shoes  
Down corridors that trap and trail echoes.  
Desk tops thud with books, kit-bags,  
A child’s ghost screams as her chair’s pushed back.  
Laughter bubbles up and bursts.  
Screech owl whistles. Quick-fox quarrel-flares.  
The voice barks “QUIET!”  
All sit. All wait.  
Till scraped chalk shrieks  
And whispers creep.