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opening extract from

# School's Out

written by

**John Foster**

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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.

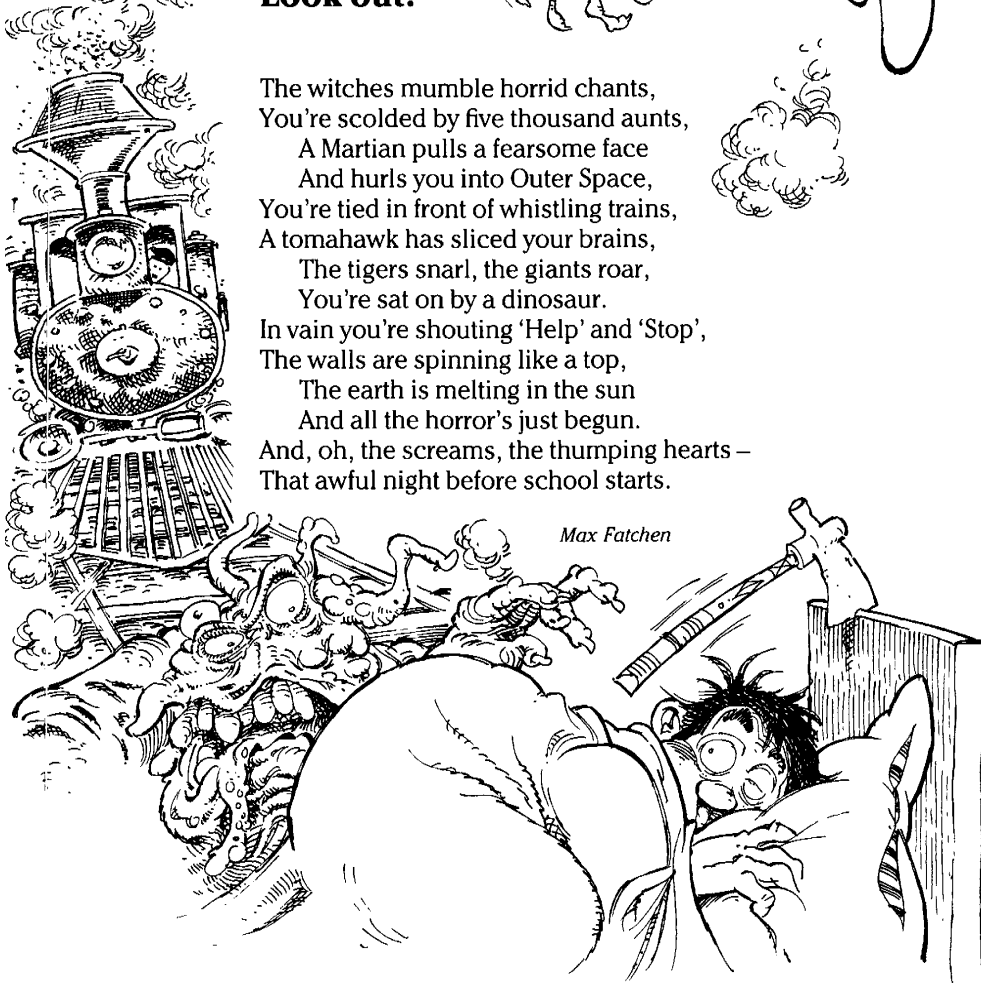
*Ray Mather*



### 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*



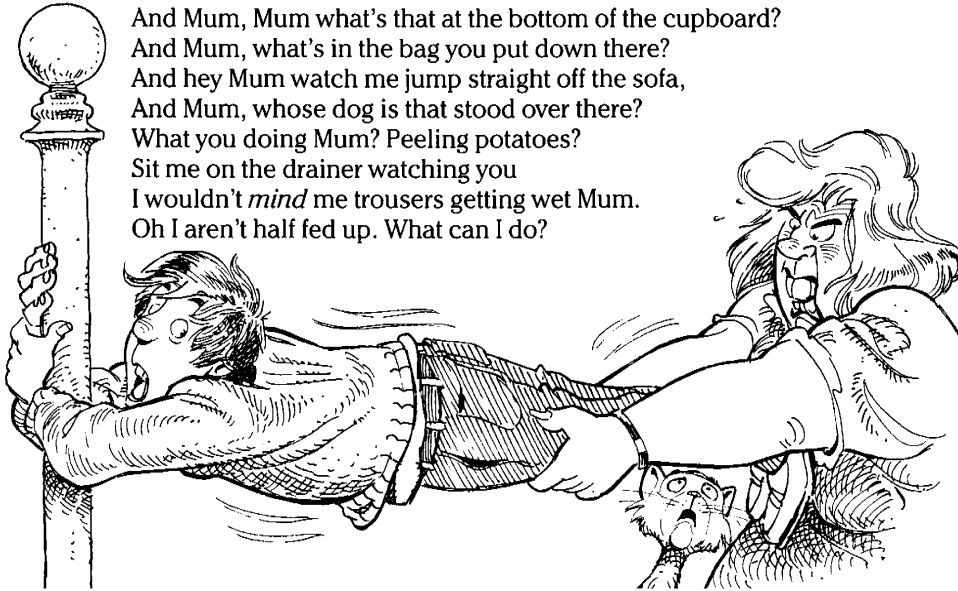
## I don't want to go to school

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.

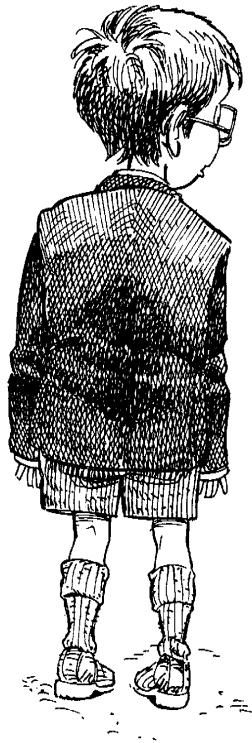
When it is raining the soul becomes grey,  
a continuous drizzle of autumn.  
It is like a screen that will always be there.

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*