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**WATERSTONES CHILDREN’S LAUREATE JOSEPH COELHO LAUNCHES POETRY PROMPTS CAMPAIGN ON NATIONAL POETRY DAY TO ‘INSPIRE A NATION OF POETS’**

[**www.booktrust.org.uk**](http://www.booktrust.org.uk) **|** [**@UKLaureate**](https://twitter.com/UKLaureate) **|** [**@BookTrust**](https://twitter.com/BookTrust) **| #ChildrensLaureate |** [**Images & Info**](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/jd1t89ilpfrz8o8/AADv5tQmwrcwy59yrWOZxOxua?dl=0)

**London, 22 September 2022**: The newly appointed Waterstones Children’s Laureate (2022-2024), Joseph Coelho, has today revealed details about the first campaign in his role as the foremost representative of children’s literature.

The award-winning performance poet, playwright and children’s author will launch ‘Poetry Prompts’ in partnership with BookTrust, on National Poetry Day – Thursday 6 October – marking the beginning of an epic celebration of the power of poetry in all its forms. Through the campaign, Coelho aims to break down the fear often associated with reading and writing and show why poems are for everyone, alongside the joy that writing, reading and performing poetry can bring to our lives.

National Poetry Day also marks publication for Coelho’s latest collection *Blow a Kiss, Catch a Kiss: Poems to share with little ones* (Anderson Press, 3+), and his YA verse novel *The Boy Lost in the Maze* (Otter-Barry Books).

**Joseph Coelho, Waterstones Children’s Laureate 2022-24, said:**

*“Poetry Prompts is my invitation to the nation, young and old, to become poets. We turn to poetry at weddings, funerals and births because it goes beyond mere words and translates the soul. But there is baggage associated with poetry that I want everyone to put down – to allow everyone to reclaim the birth right of poet. So often I’ve met children and adults scared to put pen to paper, terrified of ‘getting it wrong’ – this has repercussions in all aspects of life. I want to show everyone that poetry is for them, that we can enjoy the rules and break the rules.”*

From National Poetry Day onwards, Coelho will share a weekly ‘Poetry Prompt’ video to inspire the nation, young and old, to write poems and to become poets. Each video will see Coelho exploring a different subject or technique – such as similes, onomatopoeia and figurative language – and showing how this can be brought to life in fun and engaging ways through poetry.

The first ‘Poetry Prompt’ will tie in with the theme of this year’s National Poetry Day – the environment – and will see Coelho creating a new poem inspired by the sounds of the environment, and showing the freedom that comes with poetry having no rules – ‘*it’s your poem and you’re the boss’* – with the suggestion that poems can even be written on a leaf fallen from a tree, bark of a branch, or a stone.

The bitesize video series – each lasting under ten minutes – will be shared on the BookTrust website each Monday morning, with teachers encouraged to share during registration time to help inspire students to pick up a pen and start writing their own poem. BookTrust, the UK’s largest children’s reading charity and who manage the Laureateship, are set to distribute a Poetry Prompts poster to almost 20,000 primary schools to help inspire children to take part in the campaign and create their own poems.

BookTrust and Joseph Coelho will also be collaborating with the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), who are the National Poetry Centre for Primary Schools, to create a host of resources to accompany the Poetry Prompts, which will be available to download on the BookTrust website and free for use in schools, libraries and at home to encourage further learning and exploration of poetic form and literacy. These resources will be accessible to everyone and will encourage children to read and perform Joe’s poetry and be inspired to come up with ideas for their own poems. Coelho has been a patron of the CLPE since 2019.

**Diana Gerald, CEO of BookTrust, added:**

*“At BookTrust we believe all children should be able to enjoy the lifechanging benefits that reading and sharing stories can bring. Poetry can be a powerful gateway into storytelling and can help children to develop their creativity, imagination and inspire them to read, write or perform their own stories to express a whole range of emotions or topics that they are interested in. We’re incredibly proud to support Joseph Coelho on his mission to break the misconceptions about poetry and hope children and families are inspired to celebrate poetry in all its forms and use it to find their own voice.”*

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

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**About the Waterstones Children’s Laureate**

The Waterstones Children’s Laureate is the foremost representative of children’s literature, awarded biannually to a renowned writer or illustrator in recognition of exceptional talent. Managed by BookTrust – the UK’s largest children’s reading charity – and sponsored by Waterstones, this prestigious role celebrates creativity and storytelling, promotes the vital importance of reading and children’s literature, and champions the right of every child to enjoy a lifetime enriched with books and stories. The Children’s Laureate role was originally created by Poet Laureate Ted Hughes and author Michael Morpurgo, and each Laureate brings their own passion and themes to create a unique legacy.

The current Waterstones Children’s Laureate is Joseph Coelho, award-winning performance poet, playwright, and children’s author. The previous eleven Laureates are: Quentin Blake (1999-2001), Anne Fine (2001-2003), Michael Morpurgo (2003-2005), Jacqueline Wilson (2005-2007), Michael Rosen (2007-2009), Anthony Browne (2009-2011), Julia Donaldson (2011-2013), Malorie Blackman (2013-2015), Chris Riddell (2015-2017), Lauren Child (2017-2019), Cressida Cowell (2019-2022).

**About Joseph Coelho**

Waterstones Children’s Laureate Joseph Coelho is an award-winning performance poet, playwright and children's author based in Kent. His debut poetry collection *Werewolf Club Rules* (Frances Lincoln, 2014) was the winner of the CLPE CLiPPA Poetry Award 2015. His work has poetry and performance at its heart, drawing on over 20 years' experience running dynamic creative literacy sessions in schools. He aims to inspire young people through stories and characters they can recognise and explores themes including fear, courage, diversity, gratitude, empathy and loss. In addition to exploring emotional landscapes, Coelho is inspired by magic, the ancient world and often draws on his own experiences transforming them into something universal that can be shared. Throughout his career he has highlighted the power of poetry and reading, championing and campaigning for local libraries and spotlights new voices and diversity throughout his work.

Coelho writes for children of all ages; his picture books include the critically acclaimed *Luna Loves…* series illustrated by Fiona Lumbers (Andersen Press) and *If All the World Were…* illustrated by Allison Colpoys (Lincoln Children’s Books, 2018) which won the Independent Bookshop Week Book Award 2019. His work across poetry includes the collection *Overheard in a Tower Block* (Otter-Barry Books, 2017), which was shortlisted for the CLPE CLiPPA Poetry Award 2018 and longlisted for the UKLA Book Awards 2019 and *The Girl Who Became a Tree* (Otter-Barry Books, 2019), which was shortlisted for the 2021 CILIP Carnegie Medal. Other work includes middle-grade series *Fairytales Gone Bad* illustrated by Freya Hartas (Walker, 2020) and YA Novel *The Boy Lost in the Maze* (Otter-Barry Books, 2022), as well as non-fiction titles including *How To Write Poems* illustrated by Matt Robertson (Bloomsbury, 2017) among others.

**About BookTrust**

BookTrust is dedicated to getting children reading because we know that children who read are happier, healthier, more empathetic and more creative. Their early language development is supported and they also do better at school. We are the UK’s largest children’s reading charity; each year we reach 3.9 million children across the UK with books, resources and support to help develop a love of reading, because we know that reading can transform lives. We work with a variety of partners to get children excited about books, rhymes and stories, because if reading is fun, children will want to do it. Our books are delivered via health services, libraries, schools and early years practitioners, and are supported with guidance, advice and resources to encourage the reading habit. [booktrust.org.uk](http://www.booktrust.org.uk)

**About CLPE**

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) is an independent UK charity dedicated to raising the literacy achievement of children by putting quality children’s literature at the heart of all learning. It is a charity with a national and international reputation for excellent literacy training, teaching resources and research. CLPE has worked with Primary Schools for 50 years and supports thousands of teachers and schools each year. The CLPE was the winner of the 2019 Eleanor Farjeon Award, Southwark Charity of the Year in 2020, Teach Primary English Award winner in 2021 and London Book Fair Charity of the Year in 2022. For further information about CLPE please visit [www.clpe.org.uk](https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/Kg_oCymgZiLn6mUMFZN9?domain=clpe.org.uk).

**About Waterstones**

Waterstones is the UK and Ireland’s leading high street bookseller with over 300 bookshops, including Foyles, Hatchards, Hodges Figgis, Blackwell’s and branches in Ireland, Brussels and Amsterdam. It is the only national specialist book retailer of scale in the UK, with the average sized shop carrying a range of around 30,000 individual books and with over 200,000 titles in the largest shop. Waterstones.com | @Waterstones