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**WATERSTONES CHILDREN’S LAUREATE JOSEPH COELHO LAUNCHES ‘BOOKMAKER LIKE YOU’ WITH A MISSION TO ENSURE ‘*EVERY CHILD CAN SEE THEMSELVES AS A STORYTELLER WITH A VOICE TO BE HEARD’***

*“For a long time being a writer – let alone the Children’s Laureate – was beyond the scope of my horizons, beyond anything my younger self could have imagined. That’s not good enough, and I want more for children today. Every child deserves to see themselves reflected within the pages of a book, but also to dream that they could be the ones telling the story.*

*I want to use my tenure in this prestigious role to shine a spotlight on the exceptional artistry of the writers, illustrators, poets – as well as those working behind the scenes – that reflect everyone in our diverse society.*

*So that dream can become a reality for every child.*

*First and foremost, ‘Bookmaker Like You’ celebrates the extraordinary variety of new and exciting talent we have in the UK, introducing children to as wide a selection of bookmakers as possible and diversifying bookshelves so that every single child can imagine themselves as a storyteller with a voice to be heard.”*

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



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**London, 7 June 2023:** Waterstones Children’s Laureate 2022-2024, Joseph Coelho, has revealed details for a new project with a mission to ensure that every child can see themselves as a storyteller.

Launching in the autumn, ‘Bookmaker Like You’ will highlight the artistry of creatives from under-represented communities and backgrounds – with a particular focus on new and emerging talent – showcasing the exceptional skill that brings a story to life. Through this showcase, the project will introduce children to a range of bookmakers that truly reflect everyone in our diverse society – so that every child can see themselves as a ‘bookmaker’.

Whilst Joseph Coelho is now an award-winning performance poet, playwright and children’s author – acclaimed for work including the *Luna Loves* picture books, middle grade series *Fairy Tales Gone Bad*, YA verse novel *The Girl Who Became a Tree*, as well as poetry collections for all ages including *Overheard in a Tower Block* and *Poems Aloud* – for a long time this dream was beyond anything his younger self could have imagined.

The ‘Bookmaker Like You’ celebration will introduce children to a huge variety of inspirational bookmakers and inclusive stories that reflect themselves and the world around them. By diversifying bookshelves, Coelho hopes that every single child can see themselves as a storyteller:

*“I have loved reading and writing for as long as I can remember, but it never occurred to me that this could be a job, or become my career, or shape my future. This all changed when the late, great Jean Binta Breeze visited my school in Sixth Form. It blew me away and at that moment I realised that I could be a writer too, that I could be a poet. At the heart of ‘Bookmaker Like You’ is a celebration of the staggering talent across the publishing industry, and it’s also an opportunity for me to tell other people what I’d go back in time to tell little Joe: that their voice is valid, that their words are waiting to be heard, that they can write their own story.”*

Coelho’s ‘Bookmaker Like You’ project will celebrate authors and illustrators from under-represented communities and backgrounds through a variety of festival events, interviews, social media takeovers, and a partnership with BookTrust Represents including a virtual schools visit in Spring 2024. The project will run across his remaining tenure as Waterstones Children’s Laureate – the foremost representative of children’s literature, which is managed by BookTrust, the UK’s largest children’s reading charity.

‘Bookmaker Like You’ will launch with events at Bath Children’s Literature Festival (29 Sept – 8October) and Reading is Magic Festival (2 – 6 October):

Bath Children's Literature Festival ([bathfestivals.org.uk](https://bathfestivals.org.uk/))

Friday 29 September – Bookmaker Like You - Industry Day

*Joseph Coelho, Waterstones Children's Laureate, will introduce a full day of workshops and talks for GCSE and A Level students as part of his Bookmaker Like You project. The day will provide experience and insight into a wide range of roles in the publishing industry. What is it really like to be an author? How do illustrators and authors work together? What does a publicist do? What are the stages a book goes on from manuscript to bookshelf? The Industry Day will answer these questions and more.*

Saturday 30 September – Bookmaker Like You with Joseph Coelho and Selom Sunu

*Join Waterstones Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho and fantastic illustrator Selom Sunu for this special 'Bookmaker Like You' event. Selom will be telling us all about the books he illustrates from Jason Reynold's Run series to Mel Taylor-Bessent's The Christmas Carrolls as well as his work on Cbeebies show Jojo and Gran Gran. Joseph and Selom will be exploring how an author and illustrator work together to bring a story to life and Selom’s journey to becoming an illustrator with lots of top tips along the way.*

Reading is Magic Festival ([readingismagicfestival.com](https://www.readingismagicfestival.com))

Friday 6 October – Bookmaker Like You with Joseph Coelho and J.T. Williams

*Join Waterstones Children’s Laureate Joseph Coelho and brilliant new talent J.T. Williams for this special ‘Bookmaker Like You’ event. J.T. Williams will be telling us all about her Lizzie and Belle Mystery series, fantastic adventures that feature characters inspired by hidden Black British history. They’ll chat about the journey to being an author and what it takes to bring a story to life as well as sharing some top tips for writing your own stories, showing you that you can be a Bookmaker too!*

The ‘Bookmaker Like You’ project will also offer insights from experts including editors, designers, publishers and agents, with the aim of demystifying publishing and inspiring more talent into the industry.

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

*“At BookTrust, we believe that all children should be able to see themselves and wider society represented in the books they read and our own research shows that this has a critical impact on children’s motivations and desire to read. Whilst there has been steady progress in representation in children’s books over recent years, the UK’s overall body of children’s literature remains far from representative. We are therefore delighted to support Joseph’s new project and to have the Waterstones Children’s Laureate deliver a virtual author visit for BookTrust and the children we support. These events enable us to bring talented creators of colour directly into classrooms across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, giving thousands of children an opportunity to discover new books, authors and illustrators and inspiring them to tell their own stories.”*

**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 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