

# Sculpture

This sheet is to accompany Poetry Prompt 72 that features Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024 Joseph Coelho. Joseph Coelho was back at the Tate Gallery again for this week's Poetry Prompt, looking at a sculpture by Henry Moore called *Draped Seated Woman*. The sculpture inspired him to write a poem. Here's another poem by him, inspired by a sculpture called *The Watchers*, which is situated on the Alton Estate in Roehampton.

## Look at the poem:

Read the poem aloud. You might do this yourself, with a friend or someone else could read it to you:

## The Watchers

The children felt the eyes  
burning down into their backs.  
They turned and saw three statues  
down by the crossed tracks.

Their legs were thin and sharp,  
their heads were bronze blocks.  
The children grasped their courage,  
took aim with dirt and rocks.

Stones clanged off the metal,  
mud sucked the faceless grins.  
The children kept up their assault,  
then heard a malefic din.

A droning from the statues,  
a blade scrapes teeth in a jaw,  
a sound so full of hatred that  
the children dropped down to the floor.

They quivered as the snow fell  
on this bone-October night.  
The statues gawped, sightless,  
as the moon began to bright.

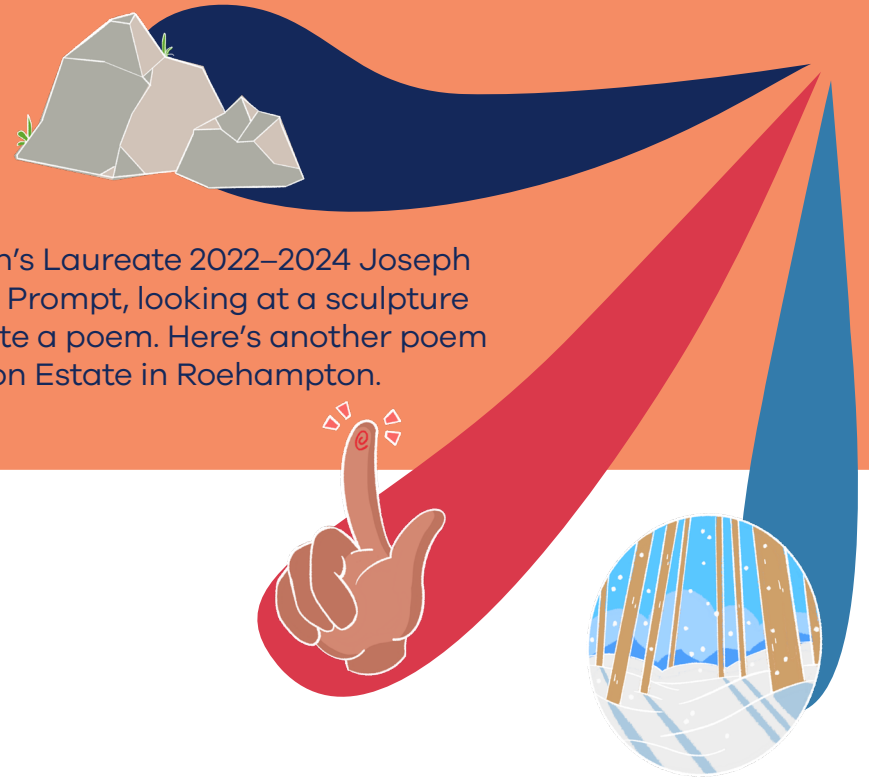
The children's knees were knocking,  
tears juggling from their eyes.  
The statues kept up their stare,  
eager for their prize.

One child ventured nearer,  
though fear told her to flee.  
The statues' gazes deepened,  
each peered more hungrily.

She ventured a hand to feel  
the bronze-black shining skin.  
The statues tensed to the touch,  
the girl felt her finger sting.

A smudge of red barely visible  
amongst the metal and the mud.  
The children fled, screaming,  
the girl sucked at the blood.

*The poem continues on the next page*



The statues on the crossed tracks  
had hoped the children would linger.  
They rippled as they savoured  
the taste of that girl's finger.

The statues are always watching  
from the tracks upon the hill.  
They sing for flesh and blood.  
They're out there singing still.

From *Overheard in a Tower Block* by Joseph Coelho  
(Otter-Barry Books, 2017)

## Think about the poem:

Consider the poem  
you just heard or read.  
What did it make you  
think about? How  
did it make you feel?  
What made you feel  
this way?

Take time to read  
the poem once more  
and think about the  
story being told. What  
happened here? Who  
was involved?

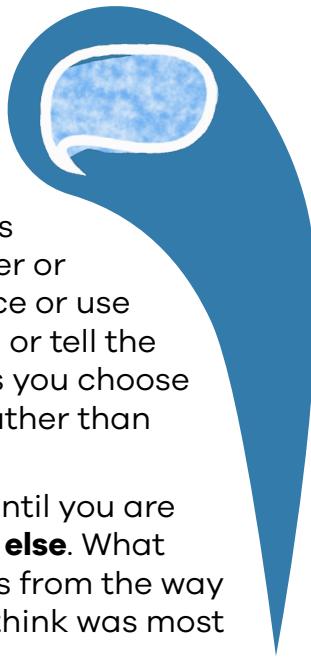
## Look at the language:

- Read the poem again. **Circle or underline words or phrases that describe the statues.** How does Joseph Coelho build a sense of unease around them? They are inanimate objects, but how does he use his words to **bring them to life?** Think about the atmosphere created by the poem. How are you left feeling about the statues at the end of the poem? Why do you think this is? Are there any words that you haven't heard before or that you are unsure of the meaning of? What do you think they might mean? What makes you think this? Use a dictionary, either a physical one if you have one to hand, or an online one like: <https://kids.britannica.com/kids/browse/dictionary> to **confirm the meaning of any words you are unsure of.**
- Read the poem again and using a piece of paper and any art materials you have to hand, even just a pencil, **have a go at drawing what you think the statues look like.** Which words or phrases helped you to build your picture? Now, take a look at the real statues: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-watchers-266376>. How does your drawing compare? What is similar and what is different?



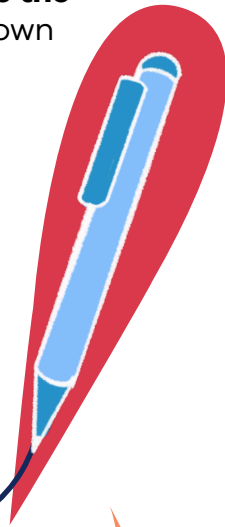
## Perform the poem:

- Think about the **atmosphere that's created in the poem, and the story being told**. How might you show this in a performance of the poem? Will some parts be louder or quieter, faster or slower, higher or lower? How will you pace your performance or use facial expression to bring out the emotion or tell the story? How will you make sure any actions you choose to incorporate **add to the performance**, rather than detract from it?
- Rehearse your performance a few times until you are happy with it, then **perform it to someone else**. What sense did your audience get of the statues from the way you performed the poem? What did they think was most effective about your performance?



## Write your own!

- *The Watchers* statue was very close to where Joseph Coelho lived when he was a child. Either **look again at the photograph of the statue *The Watchers*: <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-watchers-266376> or a statue in your own local area**. What sense do you gain of the statue? How would you describe it? **Jot down as many words or phrases that come to mind** as possible.
- Use these to **draft your own poem about the statue**. Will it be a poem that directly describes the statue, or will you build a story around the statue, as Joseph Coelho did in the original poem? **Think about the language that helped to make the poem so atmospheric**. How might you do this in your own writing to create the right atmosphere?
- When you're happy with what you have drafted, **write it out in your best handwriting or type it up** to share with someone else. When you've finished, you may also want to perform your poem to think about the atmosphere you've created in your writing.



Find all Poetry Prompts as well as more information about Joseph Coelho at [booktrust.org.uk/childrens-laureate](https://booktrust.org.uk/childrens-laureate)

## Find and explore more poems on CLPE's website.

This sequence of activities was designed in partnership with CLPE. CLPE is a UK-based children's literacy charity working with primary schools to raise the achievement of children's reading and writing by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively, putting quality children's books at the heart of all learning. Find out more about their work, and access further resources and training at: [clpe.org.uk](https://clpe.org.uk).