

Embargoed until midday (12.00 BST) on Monday 4 July 2022

AWARD-WINNING POET, PLAYWRIGHT & AUTHOR JOSEPH COELHO ANNOUNCED AS NEW WATERSTONES CHILDREN'S LAUREATE

"It is a dream come true to be appointed as Waterstones Children's Laureate, beyond anything my younger self could have imagined, and that's not good enough. During my tenure I will endeavour to ensure every child can see themselves in books and as writers of books, as storytellers, as poets with voices to be heard. So that we can create the future that we need, one where we all read, write and dream the infinite stories of ourselves and each other." **Joseph Coelho, Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024**

Add David Bebber image of CL12 when available

www.booktrust.org.uk | [@UKLaureate](https://twitter.com/UKLaureate) | [@BookTrust](https://twitter.com/BookTrust) | [#ChildrensLaureate](https://twitter.com/ChildrensLaureate)

London, Monday 4 July 2022: Joseph Coelho, award-winning performance poet, playwright and children's author, has today been crowned the Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022 – 2024.

Coelho was presented with the bespoke silver Laureate medal by outgoing Waterstones Children's Laureate, Cressida Cowell MBE, at a ceremony held at The Unicorn Theatre, London.

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. Each Laureate brings their own passion and creativity to their tenure.

At today's ceremony, Joseph Coelho – who is acclaimed for his 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* – revealed that his tenure will celebrate the power of poetry, showcase new authors and illustrators to diversify bookshelves and inspire bookmakers of the future, and champion public libraries and the role they play in communities. Coelho also performed a new poem written to mark the occasion, entitled 'The Power of a Poem'.

Joseph Coelho, Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–2024, said:

"Poetry is powerful, it is the medium we turn to at weddings, funerals and new births because it goes beyond mere words, poetry translates the soul. I want to use the prestigious platform of the Waterstones Children's Laureate to highlight and celebrate the power of poetry. To invite the nation, young and old, to write poems, to become poets. I want to ensure that every child has the opportunity to see themselves in books and as bookmakers through the plethora of new and exciting voices we have coming out of the UK - to diversify bookshelves so that every child can imagine themselves as writers, illustrators and poets. And, finally I want to hug every library, these miraculous institutions where new horizons line the shelves, where minds go to grow. Libraries made me a writer and make communities thrive - I wish to champion the services of these essential launchpads of learning."

To deliver Coelho's ambitions, his Laureateship will focus on three major projects:

- **'Bookmaker Like You'** will showcase new talent within the industry and spotlight their work, so that children are introduced to a range of creatives that truly reflect everyone in our diverse society, and ensure that every child can see themselves as a bookmaker
- **'Poetry Prompts'** will celebrate the power of poetry in all its forms, breaking down the fear often associated with reading and writing to show why poems are for everyone, and the joy that writing, reading and performing poetry can bring
- Coelho will also champion local libraries, highlighting the vital role they play within the community and inspiring a love of reading in young people, by completing his **'Library Marathon'** to join a library in every local authority in the UK, and encourage even more people to register with their local library

Kate Edwards, Chair of the Waterstones Children's Laureate Steering Group and Chair of the Waterstones Children's Laureate 2022–24 Judging Panel, said:

"Nominations for this prestigious role are invited from hundreds of literature, literacy and education organisations across the UK, and we are thrilled to welcome Joseph to the 'League of Laureates'. His dynamic performance, passionate advocacy and engaging writing – which inspires children of all ages – cemented our choice for the next Waterstones Children's Laureate, to champion the right of every child to enjoy a lifetime rich in books and stories. The Steering Group is looking forward to working with Joseph over the next two years to reach even more children and communities, following on from the wonderful work of the outgoing Laureate Cressida Cowell MBE. On behalf of the judges, I extend Joseph our warmest congratulations."

Diana Gerald, CEO at BookTrust, said:

"At BookTrust we believe all children should enjoy the life changing benefits of reading, and we are honoured to manage the Waterstones Children's Laureate. Joseph Coelho is a truly wonderful successor to Cressida Cowell MBE as he becomes the twelfth Laureate. Joseph is an extraordinary advocate for making poetry accessible to all, celebrating creativity and storytelling and inspiring younger generations to find their voice, pick-up a pen, join a library and read a book. I have no doubt that the Laureate platform will help amplify his ability to reach even more young people, and show how books and reading can broaden horizons."

Florentyna Martin, Head of Children's at Waterstones, said:

"We are thrilled to welcome Joseph Coelho to the post of Waterstones Children's Laureate. His passion for stories and poetry brings a hefty dose of sunshine to readers, inspiring all those who experience his work. It is exciting to think what the next two years will bring and our booksellers are eager to support his Laureate ambitions from the off; Joseph's term will undoubtedly be one for the history books."

Joseph Coelho will deliver the Creative Keynote at The Children's Media Conference on Wednesday 6 July in his inaugural appearance as the new Waterstones Children's Laureate.

For more information, please contact MIDAS:

Hannah McMillan: hannah.mcmillan@midaspr.co.uk | 07971 086649

Gabriella Drinkald: gabriella.drinkald@midaspr.co.uk | 07894 587828

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

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

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](https://www.waterstones.com) | [@Waterstones](https://www.instagram.com/waterstones)