

Talking Statues Leeds: The Public Writing Competition

Give John Harrison a voice!

Wool merchant, city benefactor and cat lover, John Harrison (1579-1656) was one of the leading citizens of 17th-century Leeds. Now this colourful character from Leeds' past, standing in City Square, wants to tell us a thing or two - but what does he have to say? Are you the one to tell us?



Your challenge is to find a 'voice' for the statue of John Harrison, and to write an engaging monologue in 350 words.

Get under your statue's skin!

- Look closely and develop a sense of empathy with your sculpture.
- Invite your listener to feel with you: create shifts in tempo and emotion, use different tenses, figures of speech and anecdotes, psychological transitions, sensory details and even sound effects.

Finding your statue's voice

Write in the first person and adopt the persona of your character:

- What kind of vocabulary will you use - your own or that of another era?
- Your words will be spoken so read them aloud: use their rhythm and your sentence structure to convey emotional charge and urgency.
- Read great monologues for inspiration, for example Hamlet's 'Alas, Poor Yorick', or watch film monologues, like Morgan Freeman's in *The Shawshank Redemption*.

How are you going to keep people listening? Structure your monologue!

- How will you introduce yourself? With a greeting, a warning, a question, an order, a riddle? Grab and hold your listener's attention from your very first line.
- Think of your monologue as a story, with you as both narrator and lead: how will you build a sense of development, suspense and atmosphere?

- Your final line is the most important of all: how will you say goodbye and make your exit?

Find out about your statue - Do some background research before you begin

Google around and become an expert on your statue. You're sure to discover interesting facts, anecdotes, jokes or quotes to weave into your monologue.

The Subject: John Harrison in City Square

John Harrison was a wool merchant living in seventeenth-century Leeds. Along with six other prominent townsmen, he bought the manorial rights to the town from the Crown shortly after Leeds obtained its first charter from Charles I in 1626. Harrison was also a noted benefactor of Leeds, financing the building of a new Grammar School and several other projects.

Soon after his marriage to Elizabeth Foxcroft in 1631, Harrison had a fine house built for the couple on Briggate, opposite Boar Lane, with a garden and orchard. He was apparently fond of cats - seventeenth-century Leeds historian Ralph Thoresby tells us that his Briggate house had numerous 'Holes or Passages cut in the Doors and Ceilings, for the free passage of Cats'.

Go pay John Harrison a visit!

Go to City Square and visit the statue of John Harrison for some further inspiration! John Harrison has the following sign placed nearby:



Some points to keep in mind:

- **The audience is not used to speaking to statues!** It's an unexpected experience and so, the piece needs to be engaging from the start.
- **Every word counts!** It's a short word limit, so avoid 'filler'!
- **The project sets out to reach new audiences:** people who like looking at public art and sculptures as well as people who didn't know they did! We hope for wide public appeal.
- **Use the physicality of the statue.** If a statue has a broken nose, you might want to refer to it.
- **Refer to the location and surroundings** of the statue. What's it doing in that place specifically? Does it explore the areas at night when nobody is around?

Have you found your story and your voice? Then get writing!

**How to enter:**

Submit your monologue (maximum 350 words) with the heading 'John Harrison Competition Entry' to **competition@talkingstatues.co.uk** by **Monday 19th September 2016**.

Our expert judging panel will be looking for originality, factual accuracy and entertainment value, so keep this in mind when writing!

The winning pieces will be recorded by well-known actors and included as part of Talking Statues, ready to chat later in the autumn. They'll talk for a whole year! Winners will also be invited along to their monologue recording and receive a copy of the final recorded script to keep.

For further information, visit **www.talkingstatuesleeds.co.uk/competition**

The competition is open to all over the age of 18.

Talking Statues Leeds

If statues could speak, what stories could they tell? Talking Statues Leeds brings iconic statues around the city to life, using actors, writers and mobile technology. Pass a Talking Statue, swipe your phone on a nearby QR code, and...you get a phone call from the Black Prince...or Leeds merchant John Harrison...or a watchful Golden Owl!

The statues of Leeds began talking in June 2016 as part of the Yorkshire Festival. They will remain talking for at least one year - or for as long as the signs remain in place.

Talking Statues Leeds is produced by Sing London in partnership with West Yorkshire Playhouse and Leeds City Council, and was commissioned by the Yorkshire Festival 2016.