

## Talking Statues Bedford: Public Writing Competition

### Give Sir William Harpur a voice!

Merchant, alderman, sheriff, Lord Mayor of London... Sir William Harpur rose from obscure beginnings to become one of the most prominent citizens of Elizabethan England.

In 1566 he founded a charity to benefit Bedford Grammar School and other causes which is still in existence today as the Harpur Trust.

What does Sir William make of Bedford today as he stands on his plinth? What changes has he seen since the 16th century?



Your challenge is to find a 'voice' for the statue of Sir William Harpur, 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: Sir William Harpur**

Born at the end of the fifteenth century, Sir William Harpur lived through the turbulent reigns of six Tudor monarchs (Henry VII, Henry VIII, Edward VI, Lady, Jane Grey, Mary I and Elizabeth I!), weathering them all to amass a considerable fortune and eventually become Lord Mayor of London in 1561. He took an active part in public life until his 70s, dying at the age of 78.

As no portrait of Sir William from his own lifetime is known to have survived, the statue of Harpur is not intended to be a true likeness. The figure is dressed in the coat of an eighteenth-century alderman, of a style which would have been worn at the time of the statue's creation in 1768.

### **Go pay Sir William Harpur a visit!**

Go to Bedford Old Town Hall and visit the statue of Sir William Harpur for some further inspiration! The following sign is 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 'Sir William Harpur Competition Entry' to [competition@talkingstatues.co.uk](mailto:competition@talkingstatues.co.uk) by **Sunday 21 May 2017**.

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.talkingstatuesbedford.co.uk/competition](http://www.talkingstatuesbedford.co.uk/competition)

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

### **Talking Statues Bedford**

If statues could talk, what stories would they tell? Arts producers Sing London are working with the Love Bedford Business Improvement District (BID), Bedford's theatres and museums to animate 7 statues across Bedford in spring 2017! Pass a Talking Statue, swipe your phone on a nearby plaque and presto, get a call back from John Bunyan (as voiced by Matt Berry), Big Band leader Glenn Miller (written by Toby Litt) or a 5-metre tall silver face (as voiced by Al Murray)!

The statues of Bedford began talking in April 2017, funded by The Harpur Trust and town centre businesses whilst working in partnership with Bedford Borough Council, The Higgins Art Gallery and Museum, The Place Theatre, LifeBox Theatre Company and Bedford Central Library. They will remain talking for at least one year - or for as long as the signs remain in place.