



Visual Story

A visual resource for children and adults with Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

This resource is intended to help prepare any visitors for a new experience and to help them to become familiar with the show, surroundings and situation.

The Show

The show lasts for approx. 1 hour and does not have an interval.

Synopsis

This play of OVERHEARD IN A TOWER BLOCK is based on the book OVERHEARD IN A TOWER BLOCK © 2017 written by Joseph Coelho and illustrated by Kate Milner and published by Otter-Barry Books.

A powerful and imaginative coming-of-age drama inspired by award-winning poet Joseph Coelho's **Overheard in a Tower Block**. Step into the life of a young boy growing up in the heart of a bustling city tower block.

From the laughter of neighbours to whispered secrets and moments of quiet woe, this story invites you to listen to the rhythms of life in a world filled with challenges and surprises.

Through vivid, thought-provoking poetry brought to life on stage, Joseph Coelho's words paint a poignant and relatable picture of growing up. With themes of family, friendship, courage and self-discovery, this is a story about finding your way in a world that doesn't always make sense.

Prepare to be moved, inspired and captivated.



'Statues that sing for your flesh and blood; bullies who kick you under the table; and things that lurk in the library...

Growing up in a Tower Block can be full of surprises, even more so with a disappearing father and a Mermaid Queen Mother;

*Gazing at the stars from five storeys up,
smelling the bins from five storeys below...*

Overheard arguments.

Overheard laughter.'

A young boy's coming-of-age story by the 2022-24 Children's Laureate.

Please note that this show contains flashing lights around 35 minutes into the show.

Characters

Seb and his friend David are played by performers. All of the other characters are puppets.



Seb and David



Mum and Dad



Sarah the bully



Miss Coo— Substitute Teacher



Mr Ratcliffe—Headteacher



Mrs Badger—Librarian



The Witch



The Artist

The Show

In this section special alerts are written in blue ink.



When you enter the auditorium you will see the set. There are three big tower block buildings and a large screen. On the screen there are sometimes projections and shadow puppets. The light is quite dark. **There are city sounds in the background.**

Just before the show is going to start the lights get a bit darker and the show begins.

There is laughter from Sarah the bully who quickly disappears.

Seb enters.

He describes the tower block where he lives as if it was alive.

As he talks about looking up at the stars and at Richmond park through his mums telescope there are projections and shadow puppets on the screen.

He tells us about the red trainers that his dad bought him that he loves so much.

He goes to visit his friend David. He shows him his new trainers, and **the lights change colours with every superhero they mention.**



Seb and David play video games. **Lights flash and video game music plays** as they enjoy their game battling ogres and trolls.

We hear the voice of David's Dad shouting from another room. He tells them to be quiet. They decide to go out. They are going to go and look at the three Witches—These are statues that are on the estate.

They head up the hill to the statues. We see shadow puppets of the statues. Some kids are throwing mud at the statues.

Sarah the bully is part of the gang of kids throwing mud. She notices Seb. She is like a bird. **She flies in, squawking.** She tells Seb he should throw something at the statues or she'll get him.

Seb takes aim and throws a stone at the middle statue. He hits it, and **there is a high pitched sound as the stone hits the statue and the lights change.**

As Seb tries to run away Sarah returns. She is enjoying stepping on snails. Seb describes her like a bird hopping and squelching and cackling with laughter. She pins Seb down, then leaves him in the rain. David arrives but Sarah is already gone.

Seb heads home but when he gets to the door he can hear that his mum and dad are arguing. He describes their argument like a monster, **There is a shadow sequence on the screen showing a monster, which roars and shouts and eats the words that mum and dad throw at each other.**



Dad comes out of the flat with a loud grunt—He is angry. When Seb goes inside he finds mum crying. **Mum shouts up at Seb as he runs to his room.** He gets into bed and discovers the stone that hit the statue in his pocket.

The morning alarm clock goes off.

Seb notices that some of his dad's things are gone.

He heads to school. He's late. **The school bell rings** and he goes straight into class. Miss Coo is a substitute teacher. She says shhhhhh a lot!

Seb has to find a spare seat as Miss Coo has mixed up the tables for the day. The only seat that is free is next to Sarah. Sarah laughs and teases Seb, annoying him. Miss Coo tells him to move—But there isn't anywhere else to go. None of the other tables want him.

Seb has to go back to Sarah's table, and she keeps annoying him. **Seb can't take any more, he shouts and throws his chair.** He is sent to the Head Teacher.

The lights get darker and there is the sound of a ticking clock as Seb waits for the Head Teacher. There are children singing nursery rhymes in the background.

The giant Head Teacher looms over Seb.

The Head Teacher asks Seb if everything is ok. That's when Seb realises that everything has started to go wrong since he hit the statue with the stone.....



The school bell rings and Seb heads straight to the library as he can hear the sound of children talking about him in the playground.

Mrs Badger, the librarian greets him. She knows that Seb likes to read and what kind of books he likes.

She recommends the story of Prometheus. As Seb reads the book he imagines his Dad as Prometheus stealing a fist full of fire from the Gods. **Fiery lights flicker.**

He reads another story. He imagines his Mum as a Mermaid Queen, with tiny pearl tears. **As he reads this story the lights turn blue and music plays as mum enters as a Mermaid.**

Mrs Badger interrupts him as she finds him still reading. She gives him a history book about the history of his estate. **Spooky music plays as she explains about the history of the statues** and that people have said that if you anger them things could go very wrong for you.....

Mrs Badger leaves and David comes rushing in. He has heard about what happened in class.

Seb shows David the book about the estate and they read a poem about some children who threw things at the statues just like Seb did. **Spooky music plays, the lights go darker and the 'eyes' light up on the giant statues. As they describe stones hitting the statues we hear the high pitched sound again—Just like when Seb hit the statue himself.** One of the children in the poem cuts their hand on a statue and starts to bleed. The children think the statue has bitten them.



Seb tells David that he thinks bad things, like Sarah bullying him, getting in trouble at school, and Mum and Dad arguing have all happened since he hit the statue with the stone. David doesn't agree. **Seb and David argue, shouting at each other, until Seb shouts at David to shut up! David runs off.**

When David gets home it's very quiet and there is a funny atmosphere. Mum and Dad are both there. They have brought Seb a present, to say sorry for the way they have been acting. They've given him a kids electronics kit. As he starts to play with it he decides to build a rain detector—**It lights up as he works on it, and crackles of electricity fill the air—but then the focus changes to Mum and Dad, who are arguing again. As they fight lights flicker and lasers zap. Eventually Dad storms out. The rain detector lets out a loud beep.**

Mum comes in, she wants to cheer Seb up. She tries tickling him. She brings the tablet so that they can look at photos. They look at photos of a holiday to Eastbourne. Seb remembers how happy he was walking on the beach, and how he didn't know what he wanted to be when he was older, and that he still doesn't know. Mum reassures him that whatever he decides both she and his Dad will always be there to support him.

It gets darker as night falls. Seb goes to bed and tells us about his dream of a castle and duelling Knights. It's like a book he's been reading. Shadow puppets act out the scene as Seb describes the Knights battling and fighting and both believing they are right. Just like his Mum and Dad. **Voices whisper 'I am right' and Seb's heart beats loudly.**



Seb wakes up. He decides that he needs to go back to the statues of the three Witches. **It is dark. He creeps to the lift. As the lift door opens he screams!** David is in the lift. David is creeping out too. He had a dream that Seb was going to the Witches and decided he needed to go too. They make up from their argument and Seb tells David that he has a plan to give the Witches a drop of his blood—Like the poem they read. He thinks that this will stop all his problems.

They creep down into the park. **It is dark and we can hear the sounds of owls hooting and trees swishing.** They find the statues, and realise that one has gone! **Lights flash and we hear the high pitch noise that Seb heard when he hit the statue with a stone. The boys are scared. They start to run and they lose each other. They shout out to try and find each other but Seb is all alone.**

Seb describes the park and the ponds. Shadow puppets light up the screen with images of the park in the darkness. Seb is scared. He reaches the pond and makes a bridge from a log. He slips on the log and falls into the water!

The lights turn blue and the sound changes to bubbling underwater noises. Seb is sinking into the pond.

A Witch appears in the water. Seb recognises it as the missing statue. The Witch speaks poetically and Seb finds it hard to understand. He works out that the Witch is a poet and a storyteller and that she is there to help him. Suddenly he is pulled out of the pond!

The light gets brighter and Dad and Seb are shouting in panic and relief.



Seb tells Dad what happened and how he thinks everything will be ok now. Dad tells him that things aren't that easy.

As they are walking back home **they hear a siren and see that there are police at the tower block.** One of the statues has been stolen.

They see a man who Dad thinks is the artist who made the statues. Seb is surprised to hear that the statues are a piece of art made by someone. He thought they must have always just been there.

Seb talks to the artist who explains to him that the statues aren't witches, but muses. One is Melete, the muse of practice, one is Mneme, the muse of memory, and the one that was stolen was Aoide.

Seb guesses that Aoide is the muse of poetry, and realises this was the muse he met underwater in the ponds.

The artist explains that now there are only two statues it doesn't mean the artwork is ruined, just that it's changed. It now has a slightly different meaning, and that there is no need to fear change. Change makes us who we are.

Seb feels better about what's happening in his life, and that nothing can change the love between him and his Mum and Dad.

The lights get darker.

This is the end of the show.

The lights come on again.

The performers take a bow—You can clap if you like.

We hope you enjoyed the show.

