

As part of the **Everything is Connected** season in partnership with the Cultural Programme at the University of Oxford, The Story Museum is collaborating with authors and artists to imagine a brighter future. Leading writers Patience Agbabi, Piers Torday, Sita Brahmachari and Ben Okri have each created a short story that shows their visions of the future, encouraging us all to reflect on the potential of a brighter world through the power of stories.

# Water Seers

By Sita Brahmachari



## Part 1: Pre-reading activities

Show **Resource A**

As a class, look closely at the illustration. Discuss in pairs and feedback:

1. **What do you notice about the creatures?**
  - o Can you see any animals you recognise?
  - o What colours are used? What feelings or ideas do you associate with these colours?
  - o How are the animals connected? Why might this be the case?
2. **Imagine these creatures appeared to you in a dream. What do you think they might be trying to tell you?**

## Part 2: Share the story

Disseminate copies of **Resource B**, an active listening task. Read the story aloud. As the students listen to the story, label the images 1-4 in order of which different scenes are described.




## Part 3: Post-reading activities

### Activity 1: Discussion questions

Discuss these questions in pairs and feed back to the class:

- o What does the water seer want from Chand?
- o Chand is a Hindi name that means “moon, light”. How does this link to their gifts in the story?
- o Which of the four elements (earth, fire, water, air) do you think you would be most drawn to and why?
- o Imagine you could communicate with this element and learn to harness its power. How would you use your element?
- o Do you believe we, as humans, are connected to the nature around us?
- o How could humans connect more to the world around them?

### Activity 2: Drama Exploration

<b>1. Create a scene from the story</b>	<p>As a group, create the landscape of the estuary using your bodies to form inanimate objects and create sounds inspired by the description in the story. One person can take the role of a narrator to describe the landscape. Some members of the group could depict the water, the grass, birds hiding in the marsh, the moon, the tide ebbing and flowing and a water seer lurking somewhere.</p>
<b>2. Freeze-frame</b>	<p>In small groups create a freeze frame for each of the following plot-points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Chand and mum walking through the estuary on their way to Sandlings.</li> <li>o Chand discovering and reading the letter from his aunt.</li> <li>o Chand returning to the estuary in moonlight.</li> <li>o Chand discovering the Water Seer.</li> </ul>
<b>3. In the hot seat with the Water Seer</b>  	<p>In pairs, one of you will act as the Water Seer, while the other will be a visitor who asks them questions. Take it in turns to act out these roles, staging a conversation to discover more about the magical water seer. Questions could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o What creature are you?</li> <li>o Can you change shape?</li> <li>o What are you made from?</li> <li>o What is your purpose?</li> </ul>
<b>4. Elemental creature role-play activity</b>	<p>Divide into groups of four. Each member of the group represents a different element (earth, fire, water, air). Each person will be a fantastical creature that can control one of these elements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Decide what kind of creature you might be. Think about what animals your element reminds you of and consider what they would look like if they had extra powers.</li> <li>o Make a freeze frame or short dialogue showing the different creatures interacting.</li> </ul>

## Part 4: Creative writing development

### Activity 1: Character profile

Independently, students design a profile of their own elemental creature, using ideas from the previous drama activity. The creature is connected to one of the four elements and has the power to make the world a better place.

*Students may use [Resource C](#) as a framework.*

### Activity 2: Story

Creative writing: write about a time where you, or a character, are called to help your elemental creature. Use [Resource D](#) for a scaffold, and [Resource E](#) for a modelled example.

- o Start with a description of meeting or spotting an elemental creature that you have been drawn to.
- o Describe in detail what the creature appears to look like, what they are doing and how seeing them makes you feel.
- o Write a conversation between you and your elemental creature where you discover how they need your help to heal the world in some way or prevent a natural disaster.

*Students may find [Resource F](#) useful for ideas and facts on natural disasters.*

## Part 5: Extension activities

### Activity 1: Research of a naturalist

Look at the creatures that are mentioned throughout the text, such as 'Gold Crest,' 'Sand Martin,' 'Marsh Harrier.' Create a one-page animal summary of information on their species, skills, and habitat. Draw and annotate a picture.

### Activity 2: Literary analysis

Sita Brahmachari loves to play with the form of stories. She writes in stanzas, with a variety of line lengths, and likes to experiment with different typefaces and layouts. Discuss and feedback.

- o Choose a stanza and look at the way the lines have been broken up, often mid-sentence. It can have the effect of emphasising the last word or first word of a line. Can you see any interesting places in which this happens?
- o Find two examples of different layouts of words. Why do you think the author made these choices? Does it reflect what the words are saying?
- o Find two examples of different typefaces. Why do you think she chose these typefaces for those particular words?
- o Find some examples of rhyme, or assonance. What is the effect of these word choices?
- o What is your favourite line in the whole text? Why is that?
- o What is your favourite word in the whole text? Why is that?
- o Generally, would you like to read more stories written this way, or would you prefer standard text? Explain your answer.

## Further reading

- *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* by William Kamkwamaba
- *The Song That Sings Us* by Nicola Davies
- *The Water of Life* by Brothers Grimm:  
[www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/the-water-of-life](http://www.storymuseum.org.uk/1001-stories/the-water-of-life)
- *The Lost Words* by Robert McFarlane  
[www.thelostwords.org/lostwordsbook/](http://www.thelostwords.org/lostwordsbook/)
- *Birdgirl* by Mya-Rose Craig
- *Wrath* by Marcus Sedgwick
- *Climate Crisis for Beginners* by Andy Prentice and Eddie Reynolds
- *Green Rising* by Lauren James
- *The Summer We Turned Green* by William Sutcliffe
- *Where the River Runs Gold* by Sita Brahmachari
- *FloodWorld* by Tom Huddleston
- *The Wild Folk* by Sylvia V Linsteadt
- *The Dog Runner* by Bren MacDibble
- *Exodus* by Julie Bertagna

## Films

- *Princess Mononoke* (1997) Hayao Miyazaki
- *Avatar* (2009) James Cameron
- *Avatar: The Way of Water* (2022) James Cameron et al
- *The Last Airbender* (2010) M. Night Shyamalan



Resource A



Image © Grace Emily Manning



## Resource B

Label the images 1-4 in order that they are described in the story



IMAGES LICENSED UNDER CC BY 2.0

- Un feto - a handwritten case study of a teratological case Wellcome L0074570.jpg
- The Medway Estuary ,Gillingham,Kent by john47kent
- Dragonfly by whologwhy
- Moonlight over still waters by E.Mellino

## Resource C

### Design a profile of your own Elemental Creature

Create your own creature that is connected to one of the four elements and has the power to make the world a better place.

#### My Elemental Soul Creature:

Your creature's name

.....

Draw a picture of your creature here

#### Write a description of your creature's appearance:

*They first appear as...*

*They move like...*

*At first you see... and then...*

#### Make a list of adjectives to describe their personality.

*Try to link to their element, eg if they are a 'fire' creature then you might describe them as 'ferocious' or 'vibrant'*

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#### What is your creature's elemental power? How do they use it to heal nature?

*Eg my creature controls earth and has the power to absorb materials like plastic and metal, biodegrading them into seeds and flowers.*

## Resource D

### Writing scaffold

Fill in the table below to plan your creative writing before you copy it out in neat. Each of the blue boxes will form a section of your story.

1. Start with a description of meeting or spotting an elemental creature that you have been drawn to.	2. Describe in detail what the creature appears to look like, what they are doing and how seeing them makes you feel.	3. Write a conversation between you and your elemental creature where you discover how they need your help to heal the world in some way or prevent a natural disaster.
<p><b>Sentence Starters:</b></p> <p><i>They appeared in front of me...</i>  <i>At first, I could see...</i>  <i>I didn't know where I was walking but it was like I was being pulled by something...</i></p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b>            Drawn, pulled, amazed, awed, astounded.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b>            inextricably, unintentionally.</p>	<p><b>Sentence Starters:</b></p> <p><i>They glowed...with enormous...</i>  <i>Emerging from the shadows, they...</i>  <i>My hands tingled with excitement...</i>  <i>They smiled a mischievous grin...</i>  <i>My heart stopped...</i>  <i>Their limbs were... and they moved like...</i></p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b>            Magical, emerald, ginormous, elated, surprised.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b>            intricate, exceptional, surreal, effervescent.</p>	<p><b>Sentence Starters:</b></p> <p><i>"You can control ... can't you?" I asked excitedly, hurrying over to...</i>  <i>"Why are you doing that?" I asked, curious as to why the creature was...</i>  <i>"You're a..."</i></p> <p><b>Vocabulary:</b>            Determined, eager, intrigued, curious, waste, pollution, disaster, crisis.</p> <p><b>Challenge:</b>            destitution, contamination, regeneration.</p>



## Resource E

### Creative writing

Write about a time where you, or a character, are called to help your elemental creature.

1. **Start with a description** of meeting or spotting an elemental creature that you have been drawn to.
2. **Describe in detail** what the creature appears to look like, what they are doing and how seeing them makes you feel.
3. **Write a conversation** between you and your elemental creature where you discover how they need your help to heal the world in some way or prevent a natural disaster.

### Model example

Inside the dump, rubbish was piled high in great ugly mounds obscuring the sunlight. Out of the dust, I saw a creature begin to form. It looked as if it were made of vines, reaching out from deep inside the earth. It wrapped its leafy tendrils around the broken glass, bits of old discarded cans, tyres, clothes, plastic bags and one by one it consumed them, changing them from pieces and things into flowers and seedlings.

My hands hummed with excitement. I walked towards it, eager to help, but unsure of how to start. It seemed to understand, crawling out in its full form to meet me. It had two kind eyes at the centre of what looked like an old tree trunk.

A voice reached the inside of my head. "You must help me."

"I-I don't know how."

"Do what I do, and you'll see. You're an earth-walker like me."

I picked up a bottle cap, placing it carefully in my palm. A heat pooled where it once was, transforming it into a seed. I dropped it into the soil.

"See." Their voice lulled and I grinned back.

We began to work together, transforming rubbish into nature...

## Resource F

### Natural Disasters and Climate Issues

<p><b>Water pollution</b></p> <p>More than 80% of the world's wastewater flows back into the environment without being treated.</p>	<p><b>Earthquakes</b></p> <p>More than 23 million people have been affected by the Turkey-Syria earthquake in 2023.</p>	<p><b>Tsunamis</b></p> <p>The deadliest tsunami recorded in documented history was on 26 December 2004, and is known as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. It was caused by an earthquake with a magnitude of 9.3.</p>	<p><b>Water pollution</b></p> <p>10-15% of wildfires occur on their own in nature. The other 85 to 90 percent result from human causes, including unattended camp and debris fires, discarded cigarettes, and arson.</p>
<p><b>Further research</b></p> <p><a href="https://nrdc.org/">Water Pollution Definition - Types, Causes, Effects</a> (nrdc.org)</p> <p><a href="#">Water – at the center of the climate crisis</a> (United Nations)</p> <p><a href="https://blog.gov.uk/">The state of our waters: the facts - Creating a better place</a> (blog.gov.uk)</p>	<p><b>Further research</b></p> <p><a href="https://nationalgeographic.com">Earthquakes</a> (nationalgeographic.com)</p> <p><a href="#">2023 Turkey-Syria Earthquake</a> (Center for Disaster Philanthropy)</p> <p><a href="https://redcross.org.uk">Turkey and Syria earthquake: latest news</a> (redcross.org.uk)</p>	<p><b>Further research</b></p> <p><a href="https://natgeokids.com">Tsunami facts: check out the mighty wave!</a> (natgeokids.com)</p> <p><a href="https://kiddle.co">Tsunami Facts for Kids</a> (kiddle.co)</p>	<p><b>Further research</b></p> <p><a href="https://nationalgeographic.com">Wildfires can move shockingly fast</a> (nationalgeographic.com)</p> <p><a href="https://who.int">Wildfires</a> (who.int)</p> <p><a href="#">Maui wildfires of 2023   Causes, Damage, Death, &amp; Facts</a>   Britannica</p>



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- Earthquake damage - road by martinluff
- Wildfire in the Pacific Northwest by BLM Oregon & Washington