

WELLINGTON MONUMENT

A poem by Steven Switzer
2022 Arts Programme Participant

The duke commands... as he did in life
This time your attention
Spanning the north aisle he towers
Like an atlas of determined intention
Spanning the visitors' hours

An epic construction
Arthur Wellesley sits mounted on top
His black horse calm as he surveys
The tourists, guides and the rest of the crop
The numerous hoi polloi and their 'plebian' ways

Below his horse a massive plinth
Stands a solid arch on columns doric seen
Valour versus cowardice engaged in strife
Showing the battle between...
And truth versus falsehood the struggles of life

Beneath a Triumphal arch lofty
In effigy bronze our hero lays out
Above a pile of sculptured spoils, cannons, shields
seemingly scattered about
In his massive sarcophagus a virtual power he still wields

Dominating the Cathedral
Like the Spanish fields he did of old
The man with the coup d'œil feel
Stands out still and bold
His presence solid as steel

So when, dear visitor, you depart
And the outside world beckons you well
Spare for the man on the horse
And the men he led through shock and shell
A thought as your existence continues its benign course



This piece, a creative response to the Wellington Monument in St Paul's Cathedral (above), was written for the *50 Monuments in 50 Voices* project, a collaboration between the Department of History of Art at the University of York and St Paul's Cathedral.