



THE QUEEN'S COMMONWEALTH ESSAY COMPETITION 2015

Junior Highly Commended – Adil Khan, age 13, Bangladesh

Topic: 1. The advantages and disadvantages of being youth

Youth, as we all know, is the most predictable and at the same time most unpredictable stage known to the human civilization. It's the time we make stupid decisions, really, really stupid decisions or a rare not-so-smart decision. You just cannot take a smart decision from us seriously. We, by this time, have made very few decisions aside from what flavor of ice-cream we like, how much of a raise in allowance we can bargain for and how to use the latter to get the former. Our potential: world changing. Our experience: let's just say lower than what passes for nil. Youth is the ultimate puzzle of life. It excels in certain areas, falls badly in other areas and fails horrifically in logic.

If there is anything young people have in abundance, it is physical stamina. Anyone who's ever tried to keep up with a young kid can pay testament to that fact. They jump up and down, race with anything in a twenty mile range and then finish their breakfast and start their day. Why do you think people put kids in energy bar advertisements? Along with such hyperactivity comes a huge appetite. Kids can swallow any amount of anything: from a bowl of our daily cereal to several tons of radioactive waste, and not have to worry about the consequences for decades. On another note, it is physically impossible to be a kid without a craving for the newest technologies, knowledge of the latest cars and access to the very best e-shops. Facebook, Amazon, Twitter, Myspace and Instagram are the new generation's best friends. Such an extensive social network means that news passes immediately. This can be tested. Just go to any school on a day an important cricket match is held. If you have a good grasp of the school's gossip you can find the exact number of runs, who's out and whether there was a six at any given moment. Again, this makes kids absolutely perfect for technological advertisement. Finally there is the kid's complete ignorance over the more worrying aspects of life. Instead of a drawback, this is youth's most precious and vulnerable gift.

However, not everything in youth is sunshine and roses. For instance, young people very rarely take responsibility for their actions. If a child loses a race he is quick to accuse the winner of cheating, say that he was tired or blame the weather, rather than admitting his mistake and hoping to improve next time. Children are also very influenced by appearances. We have a tendency to believe that the good looking girl or guy in the newspaper could not have been the mass murderer the newspapers say he was. It works the opposite way too. Every fat boy is a bully and every glass wearer is a nerd.

Youth also has very little experience but streams of overconfidence. We believe that we could ace every subject until we study it, be a captain of every game until we play it, and that we feel and understand more than any other human being until we grow up. Talent is not achieved through nature but through nurture. Experience is the back bone of civilization. It is the reason schools exist - to give us experience, to strengthen and heighten our growth. Youth is not experience and therefore is far less fitted to the real world than its experienced counterparts.

As demonstrated above the advantages and disadvantages of youth are also its most treasured attributes, they are the reason nostalgia makes everything seem better than it was back then, the reason why even the dark ages would seem beautiful to those who were young at that time. Youth is perhaps the most mysterious thing of all. When you are young, you want to hurry up and grow so you can get your own independent life, free to do as you please. When you do grow up, you treat the new kid's lifestyle with skepticism and complain about how boring and uninteresting it is but miss your own childhood like crazy and view it as the golden age of your life.