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Singapore student named Senior Runner-up of 2014 Commonwealth Essay Competition

Sixteen year old Selina Xu has been named the Senior Runner-Up in the Royal Commonwealth Society's 2014 Commonwealth Essay Competition. Her winning entry was chosen by a panel of Commonwealth judges from more than 3,500 Senior entries.

The theme of the competition – which is sponsored by [Cambridge University Press](#) – was 'Team Commonwealth' and Selina's entry is a skilful and revealing exploration of the culture of competition in her own community.

An excerpt from Selina's winning entry: *"There is this word in my local slang that never fails to amuse with the contours of its syllables and the eclectic amalgamation of cultures that gave birth to its letters – "kiasu". Speaking the word forces one to pull back her teeth and bark out the last sound. The result is a fierce declaration, one with a smiling lack of tact and diplomacy, but rich in spirit."*

The judging panel said: *"The Runner-up, Selina Xu, focusses on the concept of 'kiasu' or fighting spirit in her balanced and sophisticated essay on competition."*

Talking about her win, Selina said: *"It's unbelievable. I am absolutely thrilled and extremely grateful for the affirmation – there can be no better news for a young writer other than to tell her 'Yes, you've written a piece along with youths from all around the globe, and we like yours very much indeed'."*

Currently studying at Nanyang Girls' High School, Singapore, Selina was born in New Zealand and raised in Singapore, but has never been caught between two cultures; instead, she says that the East and the West coalesce in her writing. Selina writes to express, soul-search and inspire, and she reads and globetrots to be inspired. On a regular day, Selina labours in science class, debates during lessons and helms the Student Council in her school.

As the Senior Runner-up, Selina's entry will be published in the launch of the new RCS magazine and she will receive a commemorative pen, symbolic of her achievement.

Mike Lake CBE, Director of the Royal Commonwealth Society said: *"The Commonwealth Essay Competition is an annual opportunity for young people to have their voices heard. Year after year I continue to be amazed by the creativity and talent of the entrants and this year is no exception. The winning entries, although diverse in subject-matter, are alike in their ability to grab the reader's attention. At times witty, at times thought-provoking, the winning entries are original throughout and a true joy to read."*

Notes to Editors

Senior Winner: *Team Commonwealth! How would you describe what your country has to offer other members of the team?* Raniya Hosain, Pakistan, age 15 <https://www.thercs.org/assets/Essay-Competition/2014-Senior-Winner-Raniya-Hosain.pdf>

Senior Runner-up: *What part does competition play in people's daily lives?* Selina Xu, Singapore, age 16 <https://www.thercs.org/assets/Essay-Competition/2014-Senior-Runner-up-Selina-Xu.pdf>

Junior Winner: *Being a Team Player*, Max de Bourcier, Jersey UK, age 10
<https://www.thercs.org/assets/Essay-Competition/2014-Junior-Winner-Max-de-Bourcier.pdf>

Junior Runner up: *United We Stand*, Leah Annia Plante-Wiener, age 13
<https://www.thercs.org/assets/Essay-Competition/2014-Junior-Runner-up-Leah-Annia-Plante-Wiener.pdf>

The Commonwealth Essay Competition was founded in 1883 and is the world's oldest and largest international schools' writing contest. For 2014 the competition was sponsored by Cambridge University Press and received more than 9,500 entries from over 500 schools in 44 Commonwealth countries and territories.

The Junior category is open to entrants aged 13 years and under, and the Senior category is open to entrants aged 14 – 18 years.

The theme of the 2014 competition was, 'Team Commonwealth', which is also this year's Commonwealth theme. It touches upon the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games and the spirit of friendship between Commonwealth nations.

The Royal Commonwealth Society is a network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. Founded in 1868, the Society is constituted by Royal Charter (amended 2013) and is a charity in England and Wales (226748). The Society engages with its youth, civil society, business and governmental networks to address issues that matter to the citizens of the Commonwealth. Its primary focus is the promotion of young people throughout the Commonwealth. www.thercs.org

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