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Lahore student named Senior Winner of 2014 Commonwealth Essay Competition

Fifteen year old Raniya Hosain has been named the Senior Winner 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.

Writing on the essay topic: 'Describe what your country has to offer other members of the [Commonwealth] team', Raniya's entry to the competition – which is sponsored by [Cambridge University Press](#) – is the heart-warming tale of an elderly and impoverished Pakistani fruit seller who inspires generosity and laughter in those he meets. This, Raniya writes, is the embodiment of Pakistan.

An excerpt from Raniya's winning entry: *"The reason that this man's story stood out was that his life and the people who were a part of it ARE Pakistan. So if anyone ever asked me what Pakistan had to give to the Commonwealth, I would tell them this story: The story of dried up apples, toothless smiles, stupid toys, juvenile stories, raucous laughter and crystal tears. The story of our people, the story of our country."*

The judging panel said: *"The judges applauded this courageous, sensitive and powerful story which has as its focus the complex spirit of Pakistan."*

Raniya said: *"When I found out about my success I was numb with shock, and then the elation set in."*

Currently studying at Lahore College of Arts and Sciences in Pakistan, **Raniya attributes her success to the support and encouragement of her family and teachers:** *"I have a twin sister, a younger brother and countless cousins. My love of writing has been encouraged by every one of them. My parents, my grandparents, my sister, my brother have all helped me learn how to write like I do today. My school, LACAS, and all of my English teachers especially my tenth grade English teacher have given me so many opportunities over the years and have helped me become the person I am. I have been writing since I was six years old, and I want to continue writing until the bitter end."*

As the Senior Winner, Raniya will be invited to attend a special award ceremony at Buckingham Palace, London in November. The ceremony will form part of a week of cultural and educational activities for both the Junior and Senior Winners.

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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