



THE QUEEN'S
COMMONWEALTH ESSAY COMPETITION 2019

GOLD AWARD



2019

This is to certify that the Royal Commonwealth Society, on
recommendation of the judges, has awarded this certificate to:

Raaida Noor Mahbub



Dr Linda Yueh
Chair

Dr Diana Owen OBE
Chair of Junior Judging Panel

Vicki Wienand
Chair of Senior Judging Panel



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

Senior Category, Topic 4

Aurora

Our hearts sought solace in the arms of tomorrow; our minds calmed as we inhaled the fresh air; and our eyes waited with anticipation to witness the sun break through the clouds; all while our hands rested on the leaves that shed from the aged tree, which stood bold and gallant amongst the throngs of flowers and thorns. Alas, we lost ourselves in the garden of hope, and became the dreamers of the dawn.

Yet across the vast ocean whose emptiness reflected those who gazed onto it, sat a father with a heart so bruised and fragile, that it nearly shattered when the waters crashed with the shores in brutal agony. His mind and eyes were distraught, images of horror threatening to overwhelm his sanity. His soul was inert, feeling nothing but intense regret, for the tears that cascaded down now were those of the blood he spilled. His calloused palm was graced with scars that so elegantly and truthfully wound past each other, unveiling only a glimpse of the untold story of his suffering, and his body became the canvas upon which the rest was laid bare- the aftermath of a war that cost him everything. The channels of veins that protruded from his skin are green, as verdant as the venom that breathed loathe into him; a stark contrast to the red, albeit cold, blood that flows within.

This, this was the man a torn world had turned him into.

A short distance away, a lone, petite girl slowly walked forward, her right hand barely dragging a plushy along the sand. With each step her shoulders slumped a little more, and she sighed a little deeper, the sand now feeling like knives stabbing the soles of her bare feet. Her once fierce red hair that served as a reminder of the everlasting flame of courage that burned in her, now perished to the blood red hue of her losses. The fluffy figure, on the other hand, seemed to be merely holding on, the stitches that were constantly redone now ultimately

wearing themselves out, causing its flesh to fall out piece by piece. Even then, the redhead grasped it like her lifeline, for this was all she had left.

She scrutinized the silhouette sitting almost lifelessly along the shores. As she cautiously tip-toed her way through, the man sensed her presence, and turned. Her eyes bore into his soul, confusion gracing her delicate features, as she had not expected the waves of remorse and guilt radiating off of him.

“What did they do to you?” she inquired.

“They raised their walls high, and so I bled while climbing them.”

Feeling the familiarity deep inside, she surrendered as she sat beside him and gazed ahead, joining his sorrow and weeping with the waters itself. “And they ripped apart the pieces of my puzzle that I called happiness.”

This, this was the girl a torn world had turned her into.

Secluded far away from all this misery, we strolled through the garden of hope, contemplating dubiously on the future we are stepping into. Nevertheless, each foot put forward was done so boldly, for we knew the dawn was all but dark.

We have dwelled in this garden for what feels like a lifetime, feeding on the blissful fruits of serenity and sweet nectar of success. Needless to say, it was a dream we dreamt with our eyes open; a premonition we envisioned when we gazed longingly at the stars of the night sky. *Together*, we preserved this blessing we have been gifted, basking the plants in love and the flowers in joy. Fittingly, the thorns of malevolence became outgrown in this place.

Our intertwined hands, which held not only the promise of our bond, but also the proof of our unity, grew as firm and linked as the branches that emerged from the aged tree. *Viribus*- we had lovingly named the profound being, for it duly fulfilled its meaning-*strength*. The sheer magnitude of the foundation of its roots spiraling through the soil was indescribable, although its comparison to the colossal branches was as absolute as a star in a

constellation. The lush green leaves that extended as far as our eyes could see were so awe strikingly beautiful, that often we wondered if nature was the true jewel of humankind, and man became the impurity that overshadowed it. Nonetheless, its majesty was merely confined, for the tranquility that flowed in its veins now permeated through our hearts. Albeit we were often accustomed to this sight, each time was different. Each time we were more enlightened; each time more determined to seek what we dream of.

As we reached the boundaries of our garden, we were baffled, to say the least. Contrary to our conventions, the world ahead was dark, and gloom was ever so evident. As we stepped forward and out of our sanctuary, we were almost instantaneously suffocated by the corruptions of man that hung densely in the air: abhorrence, greed and selfishness, yet we strived to progress.

With great challenge, we ventured across what they named the ocean of despair, our oars of perseverance cutting through the waters filled with regret. The failures of man formed the high tides, depicting bloodshed and suffering as they raged through.

What has this world become, we pondered. Society has torn itself apart, all in pursuit of materialistic wealth and power. They equipped themselves with lust, and guarded themselves with walls erected from deception. Thus the links of friendship were severed, and it became the shackles of sin that restrained them. Civilization evolved from a safe haven for all, to a survival of the fittest. And the helpless and innocent? Well, they bore the label “collateral damage”.

We were freed of the battle of morality that rampaged through the ocean at last. We knelt down, fisted our hands in the sand and watched it slip through our fingers, as effortlessly as the pain that was imprinted on this earth. As if on cue, we spotted two figures in the far distance, although their muffled cries were heard as if they were an arm’s reach away. Their heart-wrenching outpour of emotions weighed us down, yet we desperately

carried ourselves forward with a newfound urge to aid those strangers. It seemed so fate opposed our will, as we suddenly found ourselves amidst a monstrous storm, the furious black clouds screaming ignorance, and raining its droplets with unprecedented wrath. The gush of winds that whipped across our faces strained the strings that held our hands together. So we held on with dire urgency, lest we were afraid we would break apart.

Their wails grew unbearable now. Their bodies, drained of all life and spirit, could only do as much as pour the last bit of their efforts into deafening pleas of help. Adrenaline spiked in our veins as we squinted our eyes and dragged through the storm.

With undeniable relief, we now stood a mere foot away from them.

“Take our hands!” we shouted as we extended out to them. “We can end this *together!*”

The man hesitated.

“No...hope is dead.” The girl whispered while vigorously shaking her head. “The doom is inevitable.”

Even through the persistence, we silently begged them with tears brimming in our eyes, pouring out all our words could not express. Our eyes shone the images they were alien to; the images of a world where the sun’s rays filled the horizon and enriched the soil; where all of creation coexisted, *undivided* and *harmonious*. They glimpsed a humanity that spoke and advanced as *one*; a single nation where the colors of life reverberated through it. With a flicker of courage now birthed in them, they carefully, and ever so doubtfully, wrapped their fingertips around ours.

And the world instantly changed.

The skies became clear, the rain and winds brought into an abrupt halt, as mankind finally descended into *peace*. The air was cleansed of all evil, and for the first time in ages,

the sunlight seeped through the skies and illuminated our hearts, souls and eyes, and *hope was reborn.*

I took the man's hand in mine with everlasting affection. "Let us rise from our scars, my friend," I soothed. "The dawn has come." The father and daughter sighed with deep contemplation, mesmerized by the scene around them.

Thus began a new era; *the era of unity.*