

The Queens Commonwealth Essay Competition

Key information for librarians and schools

About The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition

The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition is the world's oldest schools' international writing competition. Run by the Royal Commonwealth Society since 1883, it offers all Commonwealth youth aged 18 and under the opportunity to express their hopes for the future, opinions of the present and thoughts on the past.

Every year, thousands of young people submit their writing on a given topic, and one winner and runner-up will be chosen from each age group. Winners and Runners-up will be flown to London for a week of educational and cultural events, culminating in a special Awards Ceremony.

The competition is open to all citizens and residents of Commonwealth countries, and to residents of Zimbabwe. That means if your readers are under 18 and from The Gambia, The Maldives, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia or Rwanda, this competition is perfect for them.

The benefits of taking part

Benefits don't end for the winners! Every young writer who submits their entry correctly will have their piece read by a judge somewhere in the Commonwealth and will receive a Certificate of Participation. Every participant will also have the chance to win a Gold, Silver or Bronze Award (which will be shown on your Certificate) - a great confidence boost and perfect for job or further education applications.

For teachers and librarians, the competition is a fantastic opportunity to motivate young writers, encouraging them to practice their English and building their confidence.

Increasing participation from Africa

The Royal Commonwealth Society wants to hear from young people from across the Commonwealth and from all walks of life, **but far too few African young people are taking part!**

Book Aid International and The Royal Commonwealth Society are working together to ensure more young people across African Commonwealth countries take part. As librarians and teachers, you work with talented young people every day – and this is their chance to have their voices heard.

What you can do

1. *Encourage young people to submit a piece of writing.* We have provided a poster which you can put up in your library or school to raise awareness of the competition.
2. *Include the competition's theme in your library.* The competition's theme is '*A Connected Commonwealth which is expressed through various topics.*' If your library has books which relate to this theme, you could create a display, encouraging young people to read these books and submit a piece of writing on the topics they have read about.
3. *Incorporate the competition into your school's lessons.* Talking about the competition provides an opportunity to talk about countries in the world that are part of the Commonwealth and topics related to the theme, such as the environment. You could relate these themes to a planned lesson. The included 'top tips for teachers' you sheet also provides ideas for beginning to talk to your students about plot and story structure. A class writing exercise for the competition also provides a great way to motivate students.

4. *Use your existing creative groups.* Submissions can take the form of poems, folk tales, songs, stories or even pictures. If your school or library already has a writing group, theatre group or other creative group of students encourage them to make the competition part of their activities.

How to enter

When supporting young people, please ensure that they follow these three steps:

1. Get familiar with the topics

The Queen's Commonwealth Education Competition submissions must be on a particular topic. This year, that topic is: A Connected Commonwealth. Entrants should choose one of the below topics to write on:

SENIOR CATEGORY (Born between 2nd June 1999 and 31st May 2004, 14-18 years of age)

1. 'You are the most optimistic, connected generation the world has ever known.' HRH The Duke of Sussex. How can you use Commonwealth connections for positive change?
2. Connected by the oceans; can we work together to protect the environment?
3. 'We are all now connected by the Internet' – Stephen Hawking. What does the future hold for humankind?
4. Family, Community, Nation, Commonwealth. What are the opportunities for shared, sustainable growth?

JUNIOR CATEGORY

Born after 31st May 2004 (under 14 years of age)

1. My cultural connections.
2. An overseas visitor is coming to your town for the first time. How would you connect with them?
3. A place I feel connected to.
4. The Commonwealth connects people across borders - what can we learn from our neighbours?

2. Write your entry

Entries can be in the form of essays, poems, stories, folk tales, scripts, letters, diary entries, monologue or other written style. Photos and drawings are encouraged, particularly in the Junior Category. However, **note that submissions must not exceed the word limit: 750 for juniors, 1500 for seniors.**

Encourage young people to create multiple drafts of their entry – remember that entries receive a bronze, silver or gold award, so you can encourage your students to go for gold. Students can also proof read one and other's work.

3. Submit your entry

Entries must be submitted by 1 June, 2019. Submissions are only accepted online. The RCS are building a new online platform for entries which should launch by the end of February. Once it is ready, go to: essay.thercs.org, enter your name, email address and choose a password then upload your file. The system will give you a reference number – keep this safe, you will need it to download your certificate.

FAQ

Can I encourage young people to enter outside of school?

Yes! Young people do not have to enter through their schools.

Can submissions be made by post?

Unfortunately all submissions must use the online system. If you have questions about how to make your submission, please contact the Royal Commonwealth Society using the details below.

Must I write on just one of the provided topics?

Yes! To ensure fair judging, everyone must choose one topic.

I am a librarian or teacher, how can I submit students' essays?

Register online as 'A teacher, on behalf of pupils' and enter information for each individual student. You'll be given an individual reference number for each student - keep this safe!

I am over 18 years old, can I enter?

Sorry, this Competition is only for under-18s.

Is there a word limit?

Yes - 1500 words for Seniors, 750 words for Juniors.

Find out more

To learn more, contact the Royal Commonwealth Society or visit them online:

- competitions@thercs.org
- thercs.org/competition
- Twitter - @CWEssayComp
- facebook.com/CWEssayComp