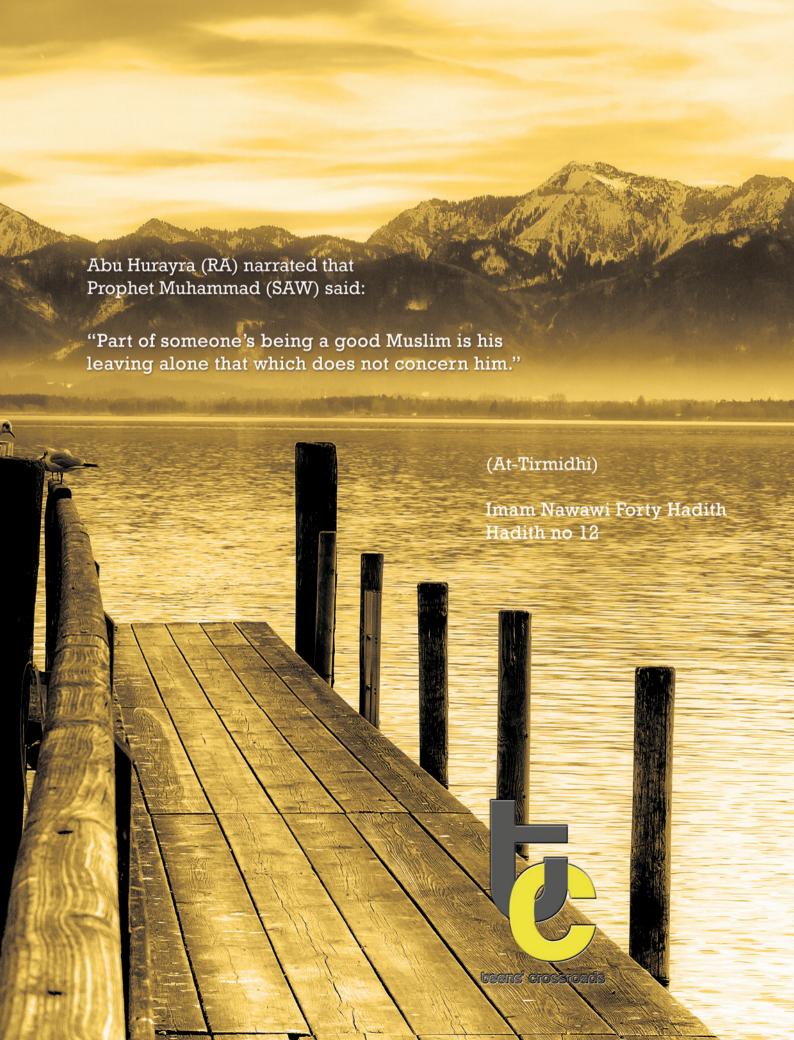


PUSHING LIMITS TO EXTREMES

OPEN LETTER TO FELLOW SISTERS
SMYD - SINGAPORE MUSLIM YOUTH DEBATE
5 IMPORTANT POINTS FOR DEBATERS
THE SHERLOCKIAN - FULL OF MYSTERY & INTRIGUE



CONTENTS

COVER	02 – 04	Pushing Limits to Extremes
FEATURE	06 – 07	An Open Letter to My Fellow Sisters
SPOTLIGHT	12 & 14	SMYD - A National Challenge for Muslim Youths
	13	Interview with SMYD Coach & Chief Adjudicator, Sim Khadijah
IMPRESSION	10 – 11	Two Alternating Tales Full of Mystery and Intrigue
	16	" the speech of my secret choice"
REFLECTION	15	5 Important Points for Debaters to Remember
CENTRESPREAD	08 – 09	Rising every time we fall

EDITOR'S NOTE

Pushing Limits to Extremes

While it is true that determination can propel us towards our goal, even the strongest of determinations could not move obstacles out of our way. We will always be tested in our journey. And there is no escape to these difficulties, if we seek to succeed. Joseph Conrad aptly describes, "Facing it, always facing it, that's the way to get through it. Face it."

This edition of TC highlights the experience of our volunteer who climbed to the base camp of Mount Everest. Her account entails the excitement in the prospects of an adventure in Nepal, her anguish halfway into her expedition, and the bounce she made to revive her spirits. A special presentation on the Singapore Muslim Youth Debate, or SMYD, competition in 2013 reminds us of the past year's efforts to advance the series onto a national platform and sparks more ambitions towards a better quality SMYD in 2014 that is happening between May and June.

Avid readers of TC will notice the new design and feel of this edition. It is

hoped that the spread in TC emits a ray of inspiration for more to write and contribute to our magazine, and catalyse a spark of passion for more to read and appreciate literature in English. May Allah (SWT) guide us towards better knowledge through our readings and writings. "Follow what you are taught by inspiration from your Lord: there is no god but He: and turn aside from those who join gods with Allah."



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COVER

TEXT BY NUR AZEEMAH KADIR

Pushing Limits to

Scaling the base camp of Mount Everest was one of the toughest experiences – mentally, emotionally and physically.

When one reaches their goal, they'd ordinarily like to stay at that spot for as long as possible. On 18 December 2012, when I finally attained my goal, all I wanted was to get out of that situation as soon as possible.

Perched on the South Everest Base Camp in Nepal, at a height of 5,364 metres (17,598 feet) above sea level, I was freezing and could barely muster enough energy to fix my *hijab* (headgear) for a proper photo. My lips were badly cracked and I desperately needed water.

Allow me to retrace my steps to a year before that fateful day.

In January, one of my closest friends asked if I would like to join her on a hiking trip organised by the National Institute of Education or NIE's Travel Club. Itching for adventure, I was drawn to the idea. However, my embarrassingly unfit self was hesitant.

If I did not possess enough stamina to run for 5 kilometres non-stop, how could I possibly carry my body to the base camp of Mount Everest? "Just join the training. It'll be fun," she said.





After surviving the first training session which entailed a half day hike, I racked up enough courage to actually join the expedition. I thought to myself, "You are at the peak of your youth and you'll never get an opportunity like this ever again."

On 2 December, the team met at Changi Airport, at 5 am, to catch the flight to Kathmandu, Nepal. We stayed for one night in Kathmandu, where we collected our windbreakers that could resist extreme temperatures, and purchased our trekking poles. The next morning, we checked-in at the domestic airport to catch a connecting flight to Lukla Airport.

Most Dangerous Airport

Lukla Airport is the most dangerous airport on Earth. If you have not watched videos about this airport, the "airport" is a small building with a grand total of one landing strip. The one landing strip is perched on a cliff, so you would not want the pilot to have forgotten his coffee that morning and miss that landing strip.

Alhamdulillah, everyone in the team managed to land safely, and soon the fear of flying turned into excitement.

We started hiking to our first pit stop, where I realised that this experience was going to be gruelling. We hiked for 4 hours, pausing for minutes just to grab some energy bites. Finally, we reached our first hotel in Phakding.

We were served hot tea. I remained immobile for the next hour until dinner was served. While waiting, I reflected on my hike thus far. We trekked the path for only three hours - yet I was exhausted and embarrassingly homesick. I thought about the long and dreary days to come.

How could I possibly keep up 10 days of non-stop hiking when day 1 already served as such a challenge?

Every Food Seems Gourmet

Dinner was served. I opted for the vegetarian dish since there was no *halal* option available. I was served rice, dhal, and boiled vegetables. It was not the most exciting dish; but when you're tired and hungry, everything seems gourmet.

As I finished my food, my body regained its strength and I was excited to continue my hike once more. Although the long hours of climb still seemed daunting, I was determined to make the most out of this rare experience. I woke up the next morning, shovelled more carbohydrates into my body, and never looked back.

Power of the Mind

It is amazing what a change of mindset can do to a person.

I no longer stared at the long, dusty track, wondering when the next break was coming. I looked ahead at the majestic mountains, and at the crystal clear river flowing underneath. Even the cold winds that I dreaded turned into a gentle reminder that there were forces around me that was supporting my every step.

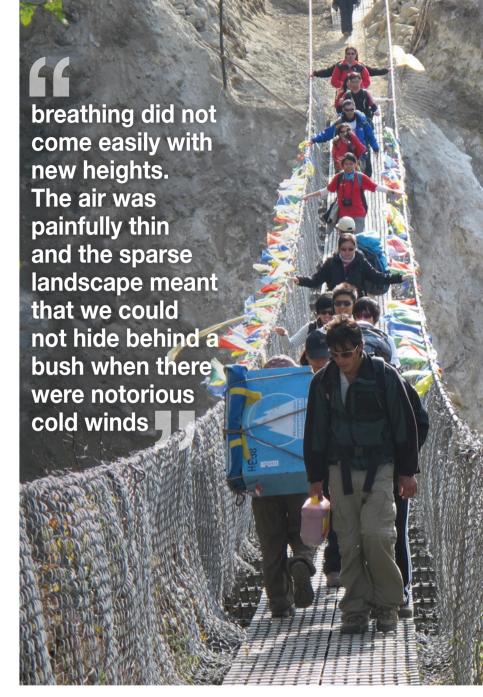
As difficult as it was to remain positive throughout the next few days, I did it with the help of my newfound friends. We took frequent breaks to catch our breath - breathing did not come easily with new heights. The air was painfully thin and the sparse landscape meant that we could not hide behind a bush when there were notorious cold winds.

Day 6 came; a particularly difficult day because we had to climb an ascending terrain non-stop for 3 hours. By then, the fitter people in the team were way ahead of us. My friends and I were no longer supporting each other joviallywe walked silently and relied on our own mental strength to get us to our next pit stop.

We finally reached the hotel shortly after sunset. Upon arrival, I saw a group of guides huddle over one of the fittest member of the group. Breathless and freezing, I could not bring myself to ask what the commotion was all about. I just perched on the nearest bench to close my eyes and rest my screaming ankles.

Acute Mountain Sickness

Suddenly, the group of guides carried said member of the group on their shoulders. My team leader called for a group meeting and reported that said team member was going to be carried back down and sent to the nearest hospital because he was suspected of having contracted Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). This happened when a person's body could not adapt to the oxygen levels in the high altitude. I was speechless. If a person that fit could not make it, what were the chances that I could?







The morale on the next morning was obviously affected. Each member climbed in steady silence. I focused on putting one leg in front of the other. I ignored my sore legs and my persistent thirst. I had come this far - I refused to go back down before finishing up my mission.

Coldest Nights

That night was one of the coldest nights I ever experienced. When I accidentally spilled some water on my jacket, instead of wetting the jacket, the water immediately turned into ice. I finished a bowl of soup - the only thing I could stomach - and went straight into my room at a rundown lodge for an early night.

I woke up at 3 am, startled by my roommates' coughing. I sat up because my head was throbbing. My body was hot because of the 7 layers I piled on; when I removed a single layer, the clawing cold crept up my bones without mercy.

I covered my face with my hands, trying to stop my tears. Suddenly, I felt warm droplets on my palms. I reached for my torchlight and realised that the warm droplets were actually blood.

Almost Giving Up

I was convinced I wanted to quit. I wanted to march out to my leader's room and tell him that I could no longer hike. I was fully aware that the base camp was just two days away, but I felt as though I could no longer propel my body.

Weirdly enough, I fell asleep and woke up the next morning feeling slightly better. My headache was gone and I washed my face with some warm water. I looked around in the lodge's restaurant for my leader, but instead, I saw the tired

I decided to just go on for one more day. By this time, I was no longer admiring the surroundings. I just had one thought finish this well, and then get back down.

We had to wake up at 4 am to arrive at the base camp on time. I remember the path leading towards the base camp. I was surrounded by mountain peaks instead of them being at a far distance. I trekked up and down a narrow path until I saw the majestic glaciers and a flag that said, "Everest Base Camp".

I Did It

My feelings upon arrival were a mix of euphoria and depression. I was too cold to fully appreciate the beauty, but I was happy that I could sit on the rocks and proudly say, "I did it."

Six members of the team had to be transported back down by a helicopter, due to their AMS-like symptoms. Having reached the base camp, I no longer entertained thoughts of giving up. I walked back down, excited for the prospect of normal levels of oxygen.

Going on that trek was one of the hardest journeys of my life. If anyone told you that trekking this trek was fun, they would be lying. It was cold, physically draining and mentally exhausting.

Why do we do it then? Despite the self-inflicted torture, this trip was - to sum it up in two words - intensely fulfilling. It served as a reminder that our minds were stronger than our bodies. It showed us that we could push our bodies to extreme heights. Last but definitely not least, the most important lesson of this trek was that it showed us how weak we really are - how we could only achieve things with the help and the mercy of Allah (SWT).



TEXT BY NURFARAHIN MOHAMED AMIN

FEATURE

An Open Letter to My Fellow Sisters

Dear sister in Islam,

I pray that you read this letter while being in the best of *iman* (faith) and health. I pray that your heart is at peace, that your mind is calm, and that your soul is connected to the Supreme Lord. And if they are not, I pray that you will achieve all that soon.

First of all, you must know that you are a strong, beautiful woman, dependent only on Allah (SWT). You will remember that all that you do, all that you have, all that you are – all of those are just what you have to use to get to Allah (SWT) in the end.

For your goal isn't here; your goal isn't anyone. Your goal is to be the best that you can, for Allah (SWT).

You must know too, that if people do not love you enough, or respect you enough, or admire you enough, you must not despair. People are fickle. The human hearts are fickle. Their change is the only constant. One day they might adore you, the next abhor you.

Isn't there a prayer that addresses Allah (SWT) as 'Ya Muqallibul Quluub', or the One who turns hearts? Isn't that a powerful reminder that human hearts are never fixed and that Allah (SWT) is in charge of hearts? So pray to Allah (SWT). Aim to please Allah (SWT), not others. It is vital that you know and believe

that what people say does not matter, what people feel for you don't matter – especially if you know and believe truly that what you are and what you do are not wrong in Allah's say.

For when you believe that Allah's opinion of you is the most important, everything will fall into place. When you strive to please people, you will end up in despair. Yet, when you strive to please Allah (SWT), you will find joy.

My lovely sister,

If you fall in love with someone special, know that you will not make him your world. You will not let your feelings for him conquer you so much so that you abandon God. He is the Creator of love; do not let your other loves overpower your love for Him. Your skies will not be black and your grounds will not swallow you up because of a man. Should you marry him and become his wife, know that you are meant to be his companion. God has made man and woman unite in marriage so they can enjoy each other's love and company and complement one another. Your relationship is to be of mutual love and respect. You should find peace in him as he should find the same in you.

"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may





dwell In tranquillity with them, and He has put love and Mercy between your (hearts): Verily in that are Signs for those who reflect." (Ar-Room [The Byzantine Romans], 30:21)

God has elevated the status of women in Islam to be the same as men – only their responsibilities and rights differ. You have rights; study them, and learn to earn them, not demand them. Respect your husband, but never forget to respect yourself. Above all, know that your husband must not be your entire world. He will be a huge part of it, certainly, but you are a person, so remember to always take care of yourself as well. Love yourself rightly and love for others will come more easily.

My beautiful sister,

The following verse is extremely important for you to remember and understand.

"I have only created Jinns and men, that They may serve Me." (Adh-Dhaariyaat [The Scatterers], 52:56)

Know that this beautiful verse, one that speaks of the sole purpose of the creation of mankind, is addressing you, a woman, as well. Both men and women are created to worship Allah (SWT) the Almighty. It is not only men who have to worship Allah (SWT). You are of mankind too. So, remember that in every action. Remember that whatever you do will always be a form of worship – whether you are studying, or attending seminars, or helping your family with household chores, or bonding with your parents and friends – if you intend it so.

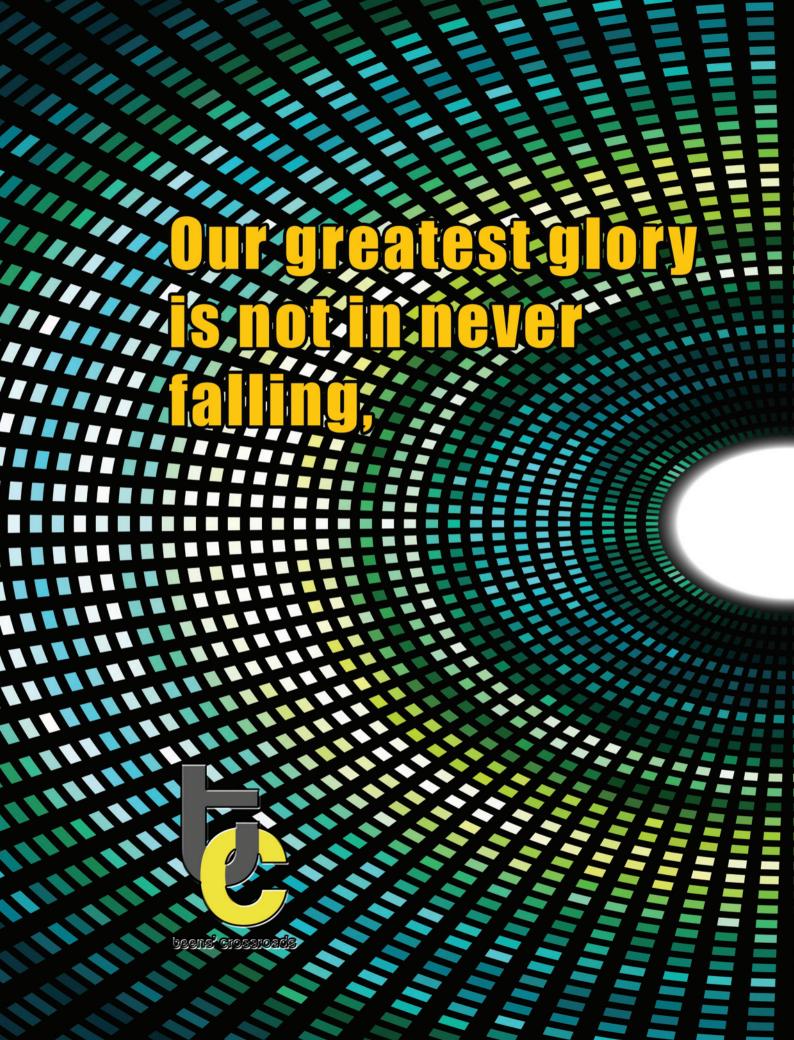
Because everything you do has to be for Allah (SWT), remember also this verse:

Say: "Truly, My prayer and My service of sacrifice, My life and My death, are (all) for Allah, the Cherisher of the Worlds. (Al-An'am [The Cattle], 06:162)

Lastly, know and believe that you are a strong, independent, beautiful woman whose life will be dedicated to pleasing only Allah (SWT). He has created you for a reason – understand the reason, and your heart will be safe in His hands.

Yours sincerely, and lovingly,

Your sister in faith. 5



but in rising every time we fall.

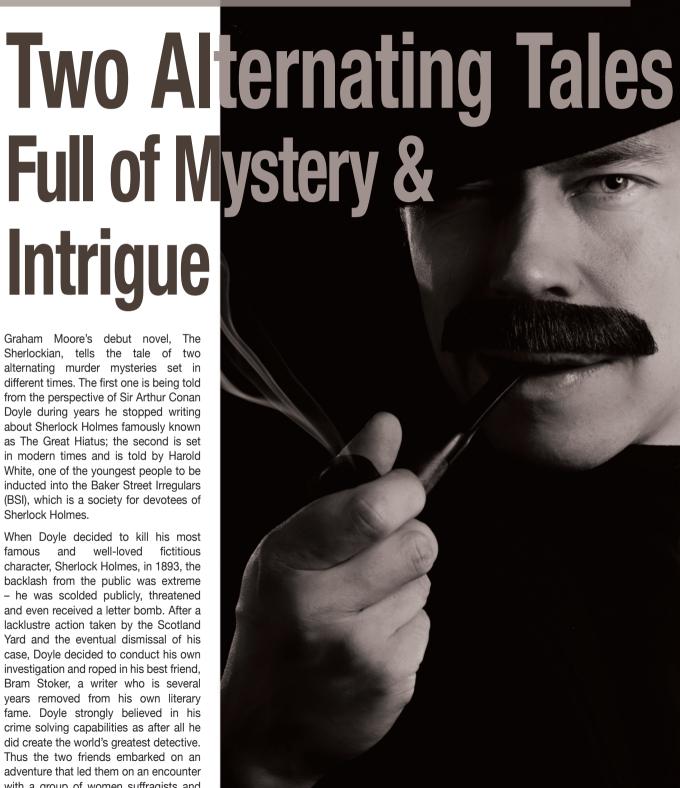
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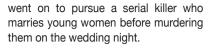
IMPRESSION

Intrigue

Graham Moore's debut novel. The Sherlockian, tells the tale of two alternating murder mysteries set in different times. The first one is being told from the perspective of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle during years he stopped writing about Sherlock Holmes famously known as The Great Hiatus; the second is set in modern times and is told by Harold White, one of the youngest people to be inducted into the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), which is a society for devotees of Sherlock Holmes.

When Dovle decided to kill his most famous and well-loved fictitious character, Sherlock Holmes, in 1893, the backlash from the public was extreme - he was scolded publicly, threatened and even received a letter bomb. After a lacklustre action taken by the Scotland Yard and the eventual dismissal of his case. Dovle decided to conduct his own investigation and roped in his best friend, Bram Stoker, a writer who is several years removed from his own literary fame. Doyle strongly believed in his crime solving capabilities as after all he did create the world's greatest detective. Thus the two friends embarked on an adventure that led them on an encounter with a group of women suffragists and





The contemporary story is based on the actual death in 2004 of a real-life Sherlockian, Lancelyn Green, who claimed to have found the lost diary of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and shortly after, was found strangled with a shoelace. The storyline is readapted by the author in the form of a Holmes scholar, Alex

after making a similar claim and promised to reveal it at the BSI Annual Convention. His body was found by the main protagonist, White, who took it upon himself to find the

Cale, who suffered the same fate

missing diary and solve the crime. He was joined by Sarah Lindsey, a reporter who sneaked into the convention and together they went on a globetrotting journey to uncover the mystery.

Though the book is fast-paced and action-packed, the characters are the literary types who solve the mysteries with their intelligence and wit rather than brawn, and that is the main part of their engaging charm. However between the two teams, my vote goes to the Doyle-Stoker team for their quirkiness and hilarious banter.

"So please grip this fact with your cerebral tentacle. The doll and its maker are never identical" - Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, London Opinion, December 12, 1912 (page 1).

Doyle is a deeply conflicted and flawed character who loathed his own creation for being more

famous than him while Stoker is an engaging character who is skilful enough to tame his egoistical and at times, irrational, friend. With this perfect chemistry, they are indeed the perfect standins for Holmes and Watson.

The author must have done a thorough research on the Victorian period as his description was so vivid and he was able to successfully evoke the moody, gas-lighted ambiance of London's East End. While reading

it, I could picture the dens of sin in the back alleys and almost hear Doyle and Stoker's speech and mannerism as they interact with each other and the people around them.

The modern duo. White and Lindsev. pales in comparison as they are too one-dimensional. Harold is an intelligent and nerdy literary researcher for the film industry who is also a Sherlock fan boy. He is supposedly living his life's dream of being inducted into the prestigious BSI when he found himself entangled in a murder mystery of its leading scholar, Alex Cale, It was then that he met the mysterious Sarah Lindsey. I felt Lindsey is the token female character who comes off as flat and just plain boring. Even the promise of romance between the two characters failed to stir any excitement as I find it hard to imagine the ambitious, manipulative Sarah would ever be attracted to a straight-laced guy that is Harold.

It was inevitable that the two mysteries are set to intertwine with Doyle's diary connecting the action between the two time periods. But the storyline is far from clumsy as the author managed to move from the past to present with grace and fluidity. The novel manages to deliver on its intriguing premise with the two intertwining stories feeding off each. It is this web of mystery and intrigue on multiple levels that will keep readers like me on the edge. The author also did an excellent job of weaving facts and fiction together. Though it does have its flaws, this is a book that can be enjoyed even if you've never read anything on Sherlock Holmes. 5



Title: The Sherlockian

Author: Graham Moore

Published Date: 01/2012

Price: \$13.95

(available at Times, Kinokuniya and other local major bookstores)

SPOTLIGHT

TEXT BY AISHAH HUSSEIN

SMYD - A National Challenge for Muslim Youths

Get creative and explore your oratory talents through the Singapore Muslim Youth Debate by YODA.

The Singapore Muslim Youth Debate, or SMYD, is now a national platform for Muslim youth debaters to showcase their oratory skills. Originally named The Muslim Youth Debate, the competition series is organised by the Youths of Darul Arqam (YODA), to boost the confidence of Muslim youth and help them develop their public speaking skills and creativity.

In 2013, this English-debate competition kicked off with its preliminary rounds on 7 September, with 16 participating teams from various schools, tertiary bodies and organisations. The preliminary and semifinals of the debates were held at Mydin Mosque Auditorium, while the quarter finals were held at Khadijah Mosque Auditorium. The final debate was held on 28 September, at Sultan Mosque Auditorium. It was the fourth year that YODA organised this annual debate.

16 Participating Teams in SMYD 2013

- Al-Falah Youths
- Aljunied Madrasah
- Al-Ma'arif Madrasah
- Alsagoff Madrasah
- Mujahidin Youths
- Nanyang Technological University (NTU)
- National University of Singapore (NUS)
 Team 1 Finalist
- National University of Singapore (NUS)
 Team 2 Semi-Finalist
- Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- North East Mosque Cluster (NEMC)
- PRAXIS (Young AMP + Mendaki Club)
 Finalist
- Singapore Management University (SMU)
 Team 1
- Singapore Management University (SMU)
 Team 2 Semi-Finalist
- Wak Tanjong Madrasah Team 1
- Wak Tanjong Madrasah Team 2
- Youths of Darul Arqam (YODA)

As the debate series was elevated to the national level, the semi-finals and finals were also broadcast on IrsyadRadio, with 'live' streaming coverage by Islamicevents. sg for the finals. With the first prize of \$4,500 cash and a challenge trophy sponsored by SM Jaleel for the champion team, the runner-up team received \$2,000 cash prize, while the Overall Best Speaker was awarded \$1,000 cash prize. Besides SM Jaleel, the other sponsors of the prizes for SMYD 2013 were Salleh Marican, and Mohamed Baiross.

NUS Team 1 students faced the team with representatives from Young AMP and Mendaki Club (known as PRAXIS) in the final round, with the motion, "Cultural and religious diversity in Singapore is tolerated but not celebrated". The event attracted about 150 supporters including the participants from the previous rounds of SMYD.

continued on page 14



What are your thoughts on the Singapore Muslim Youth Debate 2013?

The Singapore Muslim Youth Debate 2013 was a very meaningful event in which the youths were able to engage each other on very real issues facing the Muslim community today. I would recommend that more Muslim brothers and sisters come and join us for such meaningful events in future.

How would you describe the progress of this debate series?

I first became involved in the debate series in 2012, when I was asked to give a short course on public speaking and advocacy to the participants. I am very encouraged by the increase in the number of institutions participating this year and the turnout of the supporters. Insha'Allah, the SMYD will gain even more traction in the years to come and will become a key event that all Singaporean Muslim youths look forward to every year.

What was the skill that the debaters in SMYD 2013 have developed?

I think that through the rounds, the debaters have been able to hone their research and analytical skills and of course, their oratorical skills.

From the training in 2013, what was a common weakness amongst youth debaters?

A common weakness I noticed was that the debaters didn't listen carefully to their opponent's arguments. To engage your opponent properly, you must be able to dissect their argument and attack the weakest point. The only way to be able to do that is to listen carefully.

As a Coach for the SMYD 2013, how would you like to see SMYD 2014?

Perhaps I would like to see a little more style and flare in the way the debaters present their arguments. I know that the competition is fierce, but there is no reason why the participants can't be seen to be having more fun. They could try to make use of wit and humour in their debates, rather than looking so serious and stressed all the time.;p

To the newbies, why should they participate in debates?

First of all, it's a great way to make new friends through a shared experience. Secondly, being asked to defend your opinions sometimes helps you to understand yourself better as an individual. Why you feel the way you do, what are your views motivated by these are just some of the questions you will be asking yourself as you formulate your arguments. Another reason to be involved in debates is to help you hone your oratorical skills and be a better speaker. Finally, of course, the attractive prizes!

The best thing about a debate is...

Learning that there is more than one way to look at a problem.

Interview with SMYD Coach & Chief Adjudicator, Sim Khadijah Interview by AISHAH HUSSEIN

SPOTLIGHT

continued from page 12

PRAXIS emerged as the Champion of SMYD 2013, with the Overall Best Speaker awarded to their team member, Siti Nur Atiqah Abdul Hadi. PRAXIS was made up of Siti Nur Atiqah Abdul Hadi, Nur Zahirah Ismail, Noor Hanisah Noordin, Murnira Sulaiman, and Muhammad Hazig Mohd Rashid.

Although finishing the series as runnerup, NUS Team 1 displayed good performance and engaged the audience with their arguments. They were made up of Abdul Hakeem Mohamed Yunos, Nasihah Husna Abdul Aziz, Nurulhuda Atiqah Sawal, Adibah Mazeli, and Nadiah Agilah Bohari.

The Champions of the Muslim Youth Debate series previously include Madrasah Al-Irsyad Al-Islamiah (2012), 4PM (2011), and SMU (2010). Centred on issues about Muslim youths, as well as current local and global challenges, the motions of SMYD are geared to drive the participating youths to research and to be highly aware of their environment. The debate aims to inspire the youths to create solutions, implement changes, and eventually, be great leaders for the community.

As organisers, YODA envisions SMYD as the platform where youths can holistically develop their intellect, public speaking skills and creativity. YODA hopes to instil motivation and boost confidence in the Singaporean Muslim youths.

The next instalment of SMYD will be between May and June 2014. All are welcomed to watch the debates. Watch out for more announcements on www. darul-argam.org.sg. •





REFLECTION

TEXT BY SIM KHADIJAH MOHAMMED

5 Important Points for Debaters to Remember

Always know your case inside out and make sure your case theory is consistent amongst all the speakers.

Never take an unreasonable stance in your debate. The more reasonable your argument, the less your opponent will be able to attack it.

Preparation is key. You need to have thought through every angle of the motion and prepared for every possible argument your opponent might raise.

It's about quality, not quantity.
You don't have to raise 101
points to win the debate. Focus
on 3 or 4 solid arguments and
develop those fully.

A debate is about the exchange of ideas. Don't just dismiss your opponent's arguments. Engage them on their level and explain how their argument is less sound compared to yours.

Question: How does a debate work as a platform for creative minds?

Khadijah: I was never a debater as a youth, but I have argued many applications in Court as a lawyer. A debate allows you to see a problem from many different angles. Once you are able to have that "bird's eye view" of the problem, you can decide on the best way to attack it. A debate therefore forces you to be creative because you are forced to see a problem from angles you may not have seen before.

IMPRESSION

English was "the speech of my secret choice, of my future, of long friendships, of the deepest affections, of hours of toil and hours of ease, and of solitary hours, too, of books read, of thoughts pursued, of remembered emotions---of-my-very dreams!"

"It's only those who do nothing that make no mistakes, I suppose."

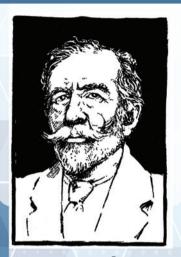


About this author

Born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski to Polish parents, he was raised and educated primarily in Poland. After a sea-faring career in the French and British merchant marines, he wrote short stories and novels that combined his experiences in remote places with an interest in moral conflict and the dark side of human nature.

Conrad joined the British merchant marine after a period of debt and a failed suicide attempt. Employed for 16 years, he rose in rank and became a British citizen. His voyages around the world—he sailed to India, Singapore, Australia and Africa—gave him experiences that he would later reinterpret in his fiction.

Conrad spoke both his native Polish language and the French language fluently from childhood and only acquired English in his twenties.



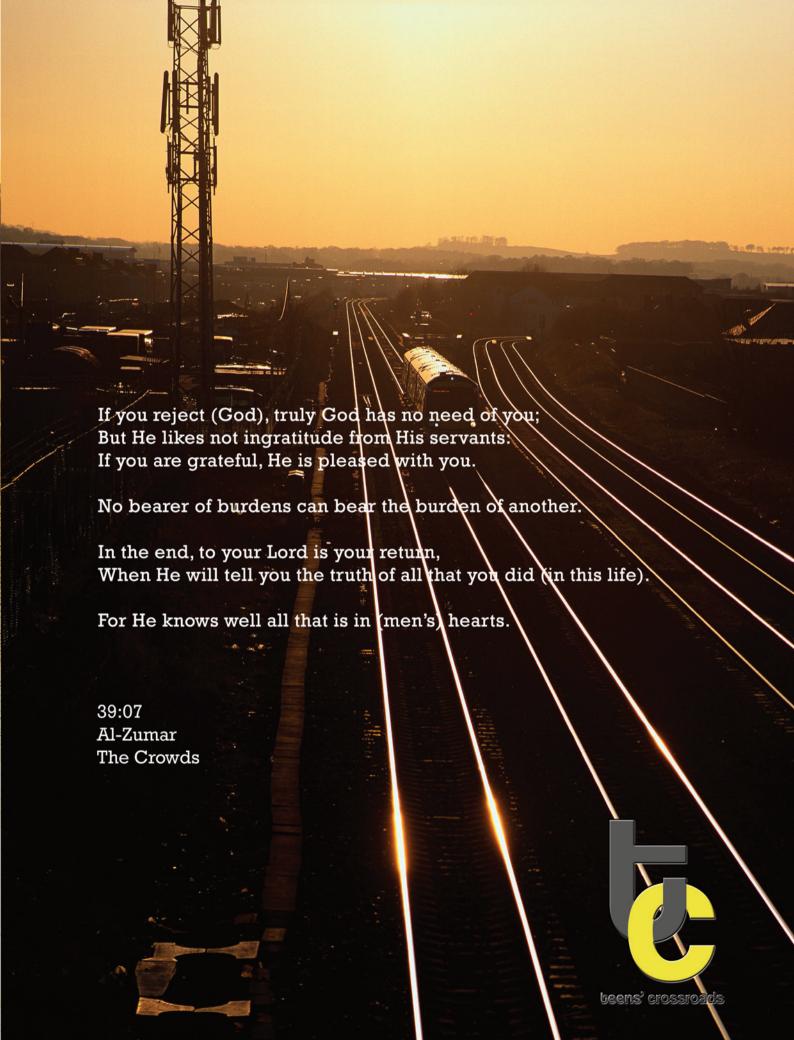
Joseph Conrad

born in Berdychiv, Ukraine 3 December 1857

> died 3 August 1924

An emotional man subject to fits of depression, self-doubt, and pessimism, he disciplined his romantic temperament with an unsparing moral judgment.

Although the ideas in his novels were deemed to be pessimistic, his narration showed a unique style of writing that most writers admire.















a pursuit of knowledge a path to Paradise

May - June 2014

Watch out for dates of this competition @ www.darul-arqam.org.sg



Organised by:



