Student: Ady Lam

School: Island School

I am Ady Lam from Island School, and I was the winner of Poetry Group 4 in the Hong Kong Young Writers Awards 2020. Today I will share some of my experiences and tips for writing and I hope they will help you on your own writing journey!

1. Please share with us a few benefits of entering a writing competition?

Through writing your entry, you can learn a lot about the world around you and you yourself as a writer. Though this primarily applies to writing non-fiction, entering a writing competition allows you to develop your research and organizational skills as you find information that helps you tell your story. Afterwards, even if you don’t win, being able to read other entrants’ submissions will help you become a better writer.

1. Describe how you felt when it was announced that you were the winner of Poetry Group 4?

Covid-19 still hadn’t abated by April, so when I found out, I was sitting at home with my eyes glued to my laptop like they had been for the past two months. An email notification popped up and it was from my English teacher, who congratulated me on winning Poetry Group 4. I was really surprised, because I knew some of the other people who had been shortlisted for Poetry Group 4 as well, and they are extremely talented poets. This, coupled with the fact that I’d won my category the previous year as well, made me feel prouder of my achievement. Poetry has always been special to me, and being acknowledged for doing something I love meant a lot.

1. How did you prepare for HKYWA 2020?

My preparation was somewhat accidental; I had always been planning on entering HKYWA 2020 but I hadn’t started writing my entry until less than a month before the submission date. In early November, I had plans to have dinner with my friends in Tsim Sha Tsui, but they were running late. Rather than walk around aimlessly, I decided to go to Swindon and browse some of the books. I picked up a poetry book and read the whole thing cover to cover (I’m not a fast reader, it’s just that my friends were really late!), and one poem in particular stuck with me. The way it was structured and the emotional depth of the poem was what inspired my entry for HKYWA 2020, although of course I researched the Greater Bay Area before actually writing anything!

1. Do you have any writing tips for students looking to enter this year’s competition? (1 about research, 1 about writing skills)

I would encourage students this year to not just focus on researching cold, hard facts, but looking for anecdotes, traditions or folktales that are related to this year’s theme. Sometimes it is easier to write about what you can emphasise with.

I would also suggest that students should read as much as they can, not just for HKYWA, but in general. I’ve found that my habit of reading for at least ten minutes every day has served as some much needed down time, and has also helped me learn how to write in a way that really engages the reader. Although fiction might be the obvious choice for learning how to write with emotional depth, sometimes well-written non-fiction books can teach you how to make a boring subject fascinating to any reader that picks that book up.