



YOUNG SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS COMPETITION 2016/2017

OPEN CATEGORY

RUNNER UP

As Tiny as I am



...As tiny as I am...

*I am as old as the Pyramids of Egypt
 Yet my tiny body defies my age
 I am a vibrant soul that glows with the golden sunshine
 And my hairs are interweaved with a shadow of darkness
 I am loved by a few and ignored by many
 The Melissa's of this world bare my name
 But to many I am a killer
 All are drawn to the sweet honey of my labour
 But hate my sting which can also heal them*

*...as tiny as I am,
 Adorn me with credit for the beauty of your landscape
 Clothe me with gratitude for the blossoming sunflower fields
 Canola oil overflows from my toiling
 Pollination that feeds a nation
 The sound of my buzz is music to many farmers
 The buzz of income to many beekeepers
 Call me nature's economic builder
 Even though I may seem to work less hard than you*

By Tlou Masehela

Tlou Masehela is from Mopane in the Limpopo Province. He is currently employed as a scientist at the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) based at Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden in Cape Town, and leads the programme of work that focuses on monitoring and reporting on the impacts of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) on biodiversity. He was recently awarded his PhD in Entomology at the University of Stellenbosch. Tlou's experience in research covers pollinator deficit assessments, crop pollination, honey bee forage resources, apicultural practices and plant ecology.

He would like people to "start noticing, understanding and valuing the pollination services performed by both wild and managed bees."

He says it is essential to communicate research findings to our communities.

*...as tiny as I am,
You not only starve me, but blind me
You destroy my home and pollute my playground
You claim to echo my importance to your well-being
Yet your actions undermine my significance in your "precious" environment
Or am I as good as what I can do you for?*

*...as tiny as I am,
I hear the threat to my fading existence rattles you, human
Natural systems might go off balance
Economies may collapse with my disappearance
Experts say you will cease to exist without me
Is your value for me as tiny as I am?*



Poem synopsis:

This poem is echoed from the "eyes" of the honey bee. It signifies their importance as pollinators of natural flora and our agricultural crops. Not forgetting the honey they produce. At the same time, we often ignore or just care less about their wellbeing. We destroy their environment (e.g. cutting down their forage and spraying pesticides). This has resulted in the honey bee population declines in most countries. Experts say this not only threatens food security, but food nutrition. I have spent five years of my PhD Degree researching on honey forage plants and the use of manage honey bees for agricultural crop pollination. I have come to understand the life and importance of these "tiny, yet incredible creatures". I also realised that we do not value them enough to ensure their wellbeing or their coexistence with us. With this poem, I hope to enlighten and educate our citizens and communities at large about this tiny insect of significant importance to our economy, lives and nature.

ABOUT THE YOUNG SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS COMPETITION

The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA's) Young Science Communicators competition is an initiative that aims to encourage young scientists to communicate their world to the public, beyond their academic peer community.

It is one of a number of initiatives at SAASTA aimed at developing science communication skills in scientists and researchers.

The competition awards four categories, namely: popular article; video clip; audio clip; and an open category. Participants are encouraged to explore their creativity in communicating their work.

For more information visit www.saasta.ac/competitions/young-science-communicators

These entries are the original submissions of the participants and have not been edited or adjusted by SAASTA



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