



YOUNG SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS COMPETITION
ARTICLE CATEGORY
HIGHLY COMMENDED

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The fall of mathematics: A blessing or a curse?

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Sitting in class, staring at the teacher with utmost concentration as she explains the solution to the mathematical problem on the chalkboard. You wonder why it is necessary to study mathematics when you know you don't need it to be a musician. You ponder why you always have to find 'x'. Finding 'x' has nothing to do with your dream. You anticipate the end of the boring class and hate being 'matter'- occupying space with zero understanding. Feeling drowsy, you check your watch counting minutes until the end of the class. You breathe a sigh of relief and with a smile on your face, proceed to do something you deem productive with your time. You wish mathematics would fall. You can't help but imagine how sweet life would be without mathematics.

Waking up to the best news of your life, a dream come true. Mathematics has fallen. Feeling excited, you hurriedly get dressed and leave home for this will be an interesting day. On the streets, there are youths rejoicing and one of them walks up to you and says 'the so-called queen of science has fallen'. You laugh hard and remember the appointment you have with your music producer. You check the time and you are taken aback for a moment, you can't check the time. You shrug it off and say 'this won't ruin my day'. You head to the train station,

upon arrival you are told that trains won't function anymore. You ask 'why?', and you are told that mathematics has fallen hence there are no signals since railway signalling makes use of simple mathematical equations including the equations of motion. Now you realize why you were unable to check the time. You can't go by bus because payment can't be made. Walking, you decide to listen to your favourite songs on iTunes. 'Oh! Come on, not this too!' you exclaim. This is really getting serious, it is not as fun as you thought it would be. Lost in thought, you walk through the commotion on the streets. No one seems to understand what is going on. The world has suddenly gone still. There is no internet connectivity, flights are being cancelled, no online shopping, financial institutions are not functional, nothing seems normal.

The worst is that you can't communicate with friends on Facebook. Gosh! It seems as if this is the Stone Age. You say to yourself 'I can still make music', but little did you know that is improbable. Upon meeting your music producer, he tells you that work can't be done because the sound system's volume can't be regulated. This is more than you can handle, your dream of becoming a musician has been shattered, just be-

cause mathematics has fallen. Heartbroken, with eyes raining tears you walk back home. How can things suddenly fall out of place? Just yesterday things were normal. You vividly remember boarding a train to school, playing video games, watching your favourite sports on DSTV. The list is endless. You suddenly realize that all these were products of mathematics. Now, you recognize the significant role of mathematics in the advancement of knowledge in society. In recognizing the beauty and elegance of mathematics, you see the need to understand mathematics. How you wish you could turn back the hands of time. You wish mathematics had not fallen and you are frightened of what tomorrow will bring. From a distance you hear your name, you open your eyes. You are covered in sweat, immediately, you reach for your watch and realize it is half past six in the morning. With unimaginable joy you scream 'It was a nightmare! Mathematics has not fallen!'. As you get ready to begin a new day, you decide to stop being 'matter' but listen with utmost concentration in mathematics classes. It is evident that society

cannot thrive without mathematics, for a day without mathematics is like a day without sunshine. On this note, you affirm that 'Mathematics must not fall' because mathematics is our way of life.

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