

Students paint their vision of the future – vote for your favourites

Scenarios of year 2053 portrayed in essays, illustrations, videos in storytelling contest

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The world in 30 years could be a desolate wasteland, one where fresh air is a luxury, or one where a juicy hamburger is a rare treat due to dwindling food options.

A young person may grow up living in a bunker, never seeing the world outside. And teens, aided by

technology, could be roped in to fight wars in a world that is even more divided.

These were scenarios of the year 2053 portrayed in some of the winning essays, illustrations and videos in the Future Forecast competition held earlier in 2023.

The storytelling competition, co-organised by Singapore's investment company Temasek and The Straits Times from April 21 to July

31, asked students to describe their vision of the future based on one or more of four themes: digitalisation, longer lifespans, sustainable living and the future of consumption.

While a number of entrants depicted a dystopian future, some of the winning entries were uplifting. They described floating cities or digital courtrooms that could restore justice to victims of cybercrimes.

Others chose to explore how technology could be a double-edged sword, giving people a chance to become near-invincible in a virtual world but neglect them-

selves in real life, for instance.

The top 20 entries – 10 winners in each of two categories – were selected from 561 submissions, with each winner receiving a \$1,000 cash prize. The categories were for students from secondary schools, junior colleges or their equivalent; and for higher education students.

Most of the winning entries were essays, which reflected the proportion of the overall types of entries. Winning illustrations reflected different artwork styles, but presented their stories like comic panels. The only winning entry that was in a video format was by Ms Du

Meijie, 18, who submitted a 2½-minute animation about advertising in the future.

The first-year student at the National University of Singapore said her entry was inspired by her experiences passing by the advertisement display in the lift lobby of the building she lives in, as well as by how online advertising's predictive algorithm pushed to her things she had been searching for.

"Sometimes the ads seem to know everything about me, to the point that it's a bit scary. So I thought, what if in the future, this type of customisation doesn't just happen on digital platforms but also in public spaces? What if the advertisements in public are also tailored to our preferences?"

Another winner, Sarah Kuah, 15, explored the idea of humans migrating to other planets.

The Secondary 3 student at Hua Yi Secondary School said the story was inspired by school lessons and discussions with friends about science and sustainability, as well as shows she had watched.

planets. These things really intrigued me."

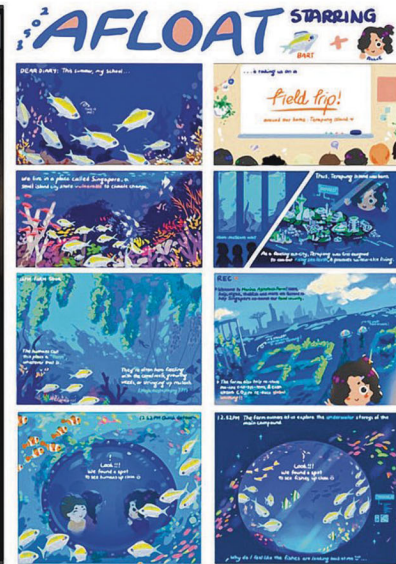
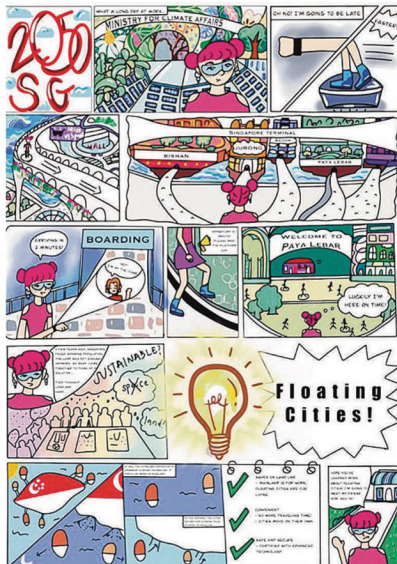
Ms Lena Goh, Temasek's managing director of public affairs, said: "We were highly impressed by the students' remarkable display of creativity, critical thinking and storytelling. It was evident from the submissions that youth think deeply about key issues such as climate change, ageing populations, and the technology revolution affecting our societies and future."

Mr Dominic Nathan, SPH Media's managing editor of English, Malay and Tamil Media, said: "The Straits Times team really enjoyed all the stories, and they gave us an insight into our young people's concerns about the future they will live in. This is the start of many conversations society needs to have about what we are doing today and its impact on the future."

All the winners are now in the running for an additional prize of an iPad Pro.

Singapore residents can view all 20 entries at futureforecast.sg/ and vote for their favourite works in each of the two categories until Nov 6. Voters who provide reasons for their choice stand a chance to win \$50 if their response is judged as the best written.

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Winning artwork entries in the Future Forecast competition. The entries (from left) are titled Singaporean Laputa, The Light Of Day and 2053: Afloat. PHOTO: FUTURE FORECAST

Future Forecast winners

CATEGORY 1: SECONDARY SCHOOLS, JUNIOR COLLEGES OR THE EQUIVALENT

Ananditha Rajalakshmi Ramaswami (Dover Court International School)
Friendless In A Burning World (essay): Ananditha and her friend Alicia live in a world of rising temperatures as the ozone layer has depleted. People rarely interact in-person, and friendships are hard to maintain.

Benaiah Leong Kai Le (Anglo-Chinese Junior College)
Thicker Than Water (essay): Leo-

prius Delta Ackerman tells the story of how he discovered the secret behind his birth, which raises the question of the morality of extended mortality.

Huang Xinrui (Raffles Institution)
2053: Afloat (artwork): To combat climate change and protect the environment, Singapore has constructed a floating settlement named Terapung Island, which youngsters Bart and Allie explore on school-sanctioned field trips.

Low Jia Tong Claire (Raffles Institution)
I'm Still Here (essay): Tania uses artificial intelligence (AI) to cope with the loss of her mother. The technology can make her happier – but does her reliance on it come at a cost?

Kate Low Li En (Methodist Girls' School)
Games Of War (essay): In 2053 post-war Singapore, national service (NS) is compulsory for all teenagers, boys and girls alike. A gamified, digitised method of NS is adopted to engage the youngsters, but what happens when these virtually trained child soldiers really go to war?

Lim Miao Xuan (Dunman High School)
Singaporean Laputa (artwork):

Floating cities at sea are the norm in 2050, offering Singapore's growing population a better living environment. The main island is reserved for work.

Ramirez Ong Kiat Ming (Raffles Institution)
The T Burger (essay): A middle-aged man jumps aboard the hype train for the latest T Burger launched by a restaurant chain, only to discover what truly goes inside it.

Sarah Kuah (Ke YuTong) (Hua Yi Secondary School)
Sacrificed For A World Of Immersive Utopia (essay): A grandfather finds out from his grandmother how their utopian planet was built on the sacrifices of a previous population.

Shriya Harini Chari (Chatsworth International School)
A Fragment Of Humanity (essay): In the year 2053, a desolate world succumbs to the overbearing grip of AI, leaving the once vibrant human workforce in ruins. Against this backdrop, a young girl struggles to save her dying mother.

Yeo Tai Leng, Adele (Nanyang Girls' High School)
The Light Of Day (artwork): A Singaporean girl was born in a bunker on Bukit Timah Hill – an

underground mound where the sunlight never reaches. She stumbles upon an old book filled with pictures of strange things she has never seen.

CATEGORY 2: INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING

Chee Wei Ting (Temasek Polytechnic)
Lending A Helping Bubble (essay): After an encounter with an old man, Clara realises the poor have no reprieve from harsh environmental conditions, and decides to start an organisation to help them.

Claire Tan Xue Min (National University of Singapore)
My Mother's Sand Crabs (essay): The main character grapples with his mother's death and confronts how digitalisation in the form of virtual reality can help people experience things they otherwise cannot.

Du Meijie (National University of Singapore)
Psychic (video): In the future, all advertisements – including outdoor displays – will be fully personalised. While this does enhance the shopping experience, it also leads to problems such as oversteering and privacy concerns.

Low Ler Wei, Sharleen (Nanyang Technological University)
Artificial Connections (essay): After being constantly bullied in childhood, Krystle tries to replace human companionship with artificially intelligent chatbots. Their messages almost exactly resemble those made by humans, and yet, she still feels so lonely.

Meghna Sajeev (Temasek Polytechnic)
Forgotten Futures: Fractured & Forlorn (essay): What is life like in a world where countries no longer exist, a situation caused by a mixture of digitalisation and lack of sustainability on the part of citizens?

Ng Jun Heng, Rayson (National University of Singapore)
Amor Fat (essay): A man struggles with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, a genetic disease that is currently incurable. To what extent can technological developments help patients with incurable diseases live in comfort or lead a fulfilling life?

Pang Ren Jie, Adriaie (National University of Singapore)
Concert Mania In Singapore 2053 (essay): Alex Poon is a boy living

in 2053 who loves retro pop acts like BTS and Taylor Swift. What happens when he gets scammed by a ticket scalper, in the age of blockchain digital currencies and metaverse courts?

Ryan Fan Ruiming (National University of Singapore)
Not To My Taste (essay): Chee Jun reflects on the loss of his wife and the lack of control in his life, as a medical device for everyday use tells him what to eat, when to exercise, and what places or activities to avoid so as to extend his lifespan.

See Rui Qian, Xavier (National University of Singapore)
Touching Grass (essay): Harrison Cloud, the reigning and unchallenged champion of a metaverse game, experiences a crippling reversal of fortune in his digital realm. Harry Chan – the man behind the overpowered character – is compelled to navigate the real world he has neglected and rediscover his place in it.

Tan Wan Lin (National University of Singapore)
Ivory Suites (essay): A young couple seek out the service of a real estate portal, Ivory Suites, to find their dream home more efficiently and with just as much human touch as before.

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