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Trees 'speak out' in UN writing competition to save forests



Wang Sa from China and Charlée Gittens from Barbados are this year's top letter-writers

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Two teenagers' powerful pleas from the imagined standpoint of a tree to save the world's forests beat out two million competitors to [win](#) gold medals today in the United Nations International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People.

Charlée Gittens from Barbados, [writing](#) as a great oak in Guyana's Windsor Forest, and 13-year-old Wang Sa from China, in the [voice](#) of an observant small tree 'prepared to care for humanity,' were declared victors in the 40th UN Universal Postal Union (UPU) competition, which this year marked the International Year of Forests by asking young people to imagine themselves as a tree writing a letter to someone to explain why it is important to protect forests.

"Despite living in an increasingly digital age, the more than 2 million often hand-written letters the competition generates worldwide annually shows the tremendous value of the written word," UPU director general Edouard Dayan said of the competition, which is open to youngsters up to the age of 15.

"The UPU is pleased that its 40-year-old competition continues to foster an appreciation for the art of letter-writing, encouraging young people to express their deepest and most insightful thoughts on topics that concern us all, while teaching them the importance of proper addressing."

The international jury called the Barbadian entry "a powerful, personal and touching composition dealing with the issue in a very global manner. Comparing the plight of forests to

some of the world's great crises sends a strong message about the importance of protecting forests.”

The jury called China's entry “a well crafted and whimsical composition. Using a parable of two villages to tackle the theme, the writer does an excellent job of bringing readers into the story in a way that people are able to relate to it.” This is the first time that Barbados and the fifth time that China has won top prize.

Grenada's Jonathan Andrew, 14, won the silver medal for a “well handled and educational” presentation of the benefits of forests, while Botswana's Charlene Tiagae, 15, was awarded bronze for “a delightful and personal composition explaining the benefits of the many plants and trees found in forests and why they need to be protected. The writer brings in lovely references about how some cultures perceive or depend on plants and trees.”

The jury consisted of Jan McAlpine, director of the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat; Jean-Paul Paddack, director of the network initiatives support unit; Daniel Shaw, head of communication at the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and Jean-François Thivet, philately expert at the UPU International Bureau and a passionate collector of forest stamps.

Next year's [theme](#), marking the London 2012 Olympics, asks youngsters to “write a letter to an athlete or sports figure you admire to explain what the Olympic Games mean to you.”

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