

Berkshire student wins major national sociology award

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A short play written by a Berkshire sixth-former has won a major new national sociology prize.

Lauren Seward, a student at Trinity School in Newbury, won the British Sociological Association Sixth Form competition for writing a scene in which a group of students discover why sociology is important today.

Lauren, who wins an iPad 2, and £250 for her school, based the play on her classmates, and “the great fun we had” in sociology class.

This year is the first time the competition has been run, and entries were received from sixth-forms across the country. It is organised by the BSA’s Teaching Group, and sponsored by Polity Books.

The entrants, aged 16-19, were set the task of answering the question ‘why is sociology important today?’ in a 2,000-word written piece or a 10-minute podcast or YouTube clip.

Lauren’s work features six sixth-formers in a class discussing sociology. One, Ellie, says: “I’ve always viewed Psychology as the study of the individual, something that is key in understanding why we think and act as we do, singly. But Sociology is the study of the collective and it’s important in understanding why we behave as well do as a whole.”

Another character, Shaun, says: “History is about the ‘when’, Geography is about the ‘where’, English is about the ‘what’ and Science – Sociology – is about the ‘how’ and the ‘why’.”

The judges, the sociologist Professor Linda McKie and criminologist Professor Maggie O’Neill, both based at Durham University, praised Lauren’s play for being “a compelling and motivational read. The key points are very well made, and the understanding of sociology is good and is expressed well. We can visualise this being performed and filmed.”

Lauren was given her prize at a presentation on 21 October at Trinity School, a co-educational secondary institution with academy status and 1,000 students.

Lauren said: “I took inspiration from my classmates, upon whom the characters are based, and then I just let my ideas flow into many different voices. I loved writing it and I love reading it, because if nothing else it will always remind me of my sociology class and the great fun we had.

“Sociology has helped me to understand the world, in the sense that it made me consider its many flaws and growths, how others see and understand it, and what

exactly it is within society that helps keep it going round and round. It gives a little insight to the many questions all beginning with 'why'."

BSA Chief Executive, Judith Mudd said: "Congratulations to Lauren, who is a worthy winner of our first competition with an entertaining and informative piece.

"We were delighted by the response we had – we have received outstanding entries from across the country. It clearly shows that many sixth-formers realise the importance of sociology today, and no doubt many of these will go on to study the subject at university and benefit from its insights and rigorous research methods in their careers."

Second place was awarded to Andrew Cassidy, of Heaton Manor School, Newcastle, and third place to Oliver Down and Alice Reading, of Sidmouth College, Devon. Randa Najjar, of The Burgate School & Sixth Form Centre, Fordingbridge, Dorset, was given a special mention. The runners-up received a book, and everyone who entered has been sent a BSA t-shirt.

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