

A World without Polymers

"Chuck was woken up by a ray of sunlight, but something was different from the previous day: his alarm clock had not rung yet and he was in a cotton hammock, which seemed strange because he was sure that the day before he had fallen asleep in a bed. But it wasn't the only thing changed; his computer had disappeared and he had a candle instead of his lamp. He got up and went to his bathroom but instead of the bathroom there was a door overlooking the river with a waterfall. He was completely shocked! His neighbors were having a shower so he decided to look for his soap because his plastic shampoo bottle had disappeared. After this refreshing shower, he looked for his clothes but found only buffalo skin. He wondered if he had gone mad or if everything had really changed. He wore the buffalo skin and went to his kitchen. Once more, everything had changed: no more refrigerator to keep his food cool; his chairs and table were made of wood, his pan of clay, his plates, knives, spoon, and forks of ceramic. He was completely bewildered! After finding his cereal in a wooden box, he returned to brush his teeth with a toothbrush made of bone and hair."

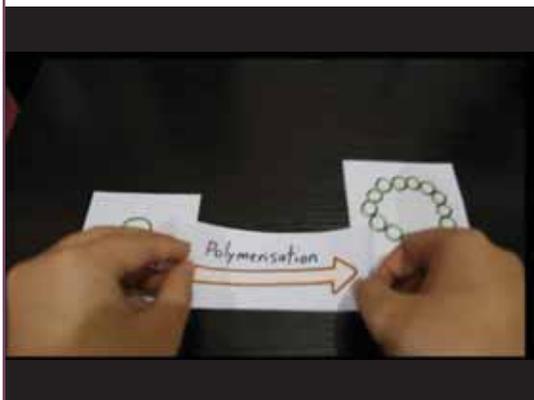
Chuck's story, narrated by Marylou Dauch, Bérengère Escuyer, Angélique Lebon, and Magali Reynard from the Lycée Pierre-Gilles de Gennes in Paris, France, is one of the award-winning essays of the IUPAC Polymer Division's IYC Contest. The contest, titled "A World Without Polymers," was organized by Giancarlo Galli (University of Pisa, Italy) and Majda Zigon (National Institute of Chemistry, Ljubljana, Slovenia).

The video/essay contest was open to university and high-school students in each of IUPAC's 60 member countries. Students were asked to submit either a video or an essay on the theme of "A World Without Polymers?", that is, to consider how the world might be if, as absurd as it may sound, there were no polymers in the present or future. The objective was to encourage an improved understanding of the significance of polymers and polymeric materials to everybody's quality of life.

The Polymer Division contacted polymer societies around the globe and received numerous entries for both the essay and video competition. A panel of distinguished polymer chemists selected three winning videos and three winning essays were selected. These are posted on the IUPAC Polymer Education website at www.iupac.org/polyedu.

The winners in the video category are as follows:

1. **Yvonne Choo Shuen Lann**, 1st place (Asia). Yvonne recently finished high school and is pursuing her first-year degree in Pure Chemistry at Universiti Sains Malaysia.
2. **Andre Gomes & friends**, 2nd place (Europe). Andre was part of a group of five teenagers who just wanted to have some fun while studying polymers for chemistry class.
3. **Carol Newby & Melissa Kunkel**, 3rd place (North America). Carol is a graduate student at Cornell University. Melissa was a senior at Cornell majoring in Materials Science and Engineering. This video was written and edited by Melissa, while Carol helped film the movie and did some of the voiceovers.



Stills from the video by Yvonne Choo Shuen Lann, which won first prize in the IUPAC Polymer Division's IYC 2011 video competition.

IYC Competitions



The winner of the “A World without Polymers?” video contest poses with members of the IUPAC Polymer Division and members of the Malaysian delegation. Front (from left): Mrs. Lann, Yvonne Lann, Zuriati Zakaria; back (from left): Jung-Il Jin, Dennis Smith, Mr. Lann, Christopher Ober, Robert Stepto, Majda Zigon, and Ting-Kueh Soon.

The winners in the essay category are as follows:

1. **Charlotte Stenman** (Europe). Charlotte is a high school student in Sweden and was one of several entries from her English class.
2. **Emmanuel Ochoche Peter** (Africa). In 2009, Emmanuel obtained his Master's Degree in Analytical Chemistry at the Bayero University Kano, Kano State, Nigeria.
3. **Marylou Dauch, Bérengère Escuyer, Angélique Lebon, and Magali Reynard** (Europe). All four

students in this group have graduated from high school and are in the midst of further chemistry studies, largely planning for careers in industry.

Each winning entry earned a year's subscription to *Chemistry International* and a copy of the IUPAC Polymer Division's Purple Book, generously provided by the publisher, the Royal Society of Chemistry. The first-place winners in each category were invited to attend the 2011 IUPAC Congress in San Juan. The six winning individuals and groups were announced at a formal ceremony held at the Symposium for Younger Polymer Chemists.

First-place winner Yvonne Choo was able to take part in the ceremony. Also in attendance were her family and members of the Malaysian delegation. During the ceremony officiated by Christopher Ober, president of the IUPAC Polymer Division, Yvonne spoke briefly about the creation of her video and held a screening of the video which was enjoyed by all in attendance. A recording of the ceremony and her video can be found at <www.iupac.org/polyedu/page42/styled-14/styled-15>.

As a sign of how social media is changing interactions, Yvonne met the winner of the Physical and Biophysical Division's Student Chemistry Cartoon Competition (see p. 22), Jessica Hough, on Facebook and the two winners spent time together at the Congress, attending talks on energy and sustainability.

 www.chemistry2011.org/participate/activities/show?id=1139

