

# Racing along the literary track

When a colleague asked him earlier this year, "Raymond, you're a jock, right?", 19-year-old Raymond Scott Lee was quick to quip: "I have a brain too!"

Since March, Mr Lee had been an intern with The Straits Times Schools department while, at the same time, training for the SEA Games.

In May, he proved his remark true: he made the cut to represent Singapore at the SEA Games and won the Angus Ross Prize, the prestigious international academic prize recognised his outstanding performance in last year's A levels. It has been given annually, since 1988, to the best-performing, non-British candidate in the previous year's A-level English literature exam. It has been won by a Singapore student every year, except for the 1999 A-level examinations.

Said the Hwa Chong Institution alumnus: "On hindsight, I think my so-called secret to winning was to read the library books in Hwa Chong relating to literature."

Poring over books about the Victorian era, for instance, gave him a better understanding of the poetry of the period.

Of the five books that he had to study for the exam, he names Edith Wharton's *The Age Of Innocence* as his favourite.

"I like it because it is about the struggle of an individual to find his identity at a point in his life when he is in transition and caught on two sides," he said. "I

## Angus Ross Prize winner and SEA Games athlete Raymond Scott Lee loves to run and read. ANG YIYING reports

like books where characters delve into themselves and discover themselves."

While in primary school, he read fantasy and science fiction, including the Harry Potter, *Artemis Fowl* and *Percy Jackson*, books.

When he was in secondary school, he became a fan of the *Star Wars* series.

Primary school, too, was where he discov-

ered his athletic ability while playing "catching" with his friends. Recalled Mr Lee with a smile: "I was pretty fast compared with my friends. I was one of the last few to be caught."

When he entered St Joseph's Institution, his sporting potential was uncovered at a sports trial. He was a candidate for the school's hockey and track teams but chose to join the latter.



Through secondary school, he competed in almost every sprint event, with the 400m hurdles emerging as his favourite.

In Secondary 4, he won the event in a record time of 55.04s at the National Schools Track and Field Championships. That was also the year that he joined the national youth team for those aged 17 and under.

Said Mr Lee: "For my major exams, like my O levels and A levels, I split my year into half. The first six months, I dedicated to track. The last six months, I dedicated to studies."

His father, a manager at an American automation firm, and his mother, a housewife, were supportive, he said.

As part of the national senior team, he made his debut at this year's SEA Games, where he recorded a personal best in the 400m hurdles with a time of 54.00s.

On choosing to intern with The Straits Times while training for the SEA Games, Mr Lee said it was a misconception that training required a full day: "When you train, it's about quality training. It could be just two hours."

Mr Lee, who has a younger sister, will be enlisting in national service later this month and hopes to study law, liberal arts or literature in university.



Do you have a question for Raymond Scott Lee? Tweet @STSchools and you may get a reply.

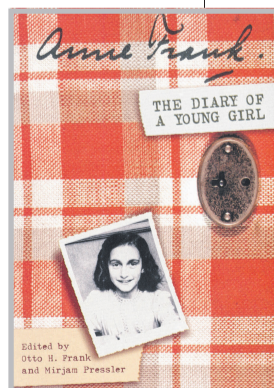
## From a boy wizard to a young refugee, these literary characters inspire Raymond Scott Lee

### Harry Potter from the Harry Potter series by JK Rowling

Having begun my reading odyssey with the boy wizard, Harry heads my list because I've grown as he has grown throughout the seven books.

To me, he will always be The Boy Who Lived: a selfless, courageous defender of his friends even in the face of death.

As Rowling said: "The dedication of this book is



split seven ways... and to you, if you have stuck with Harry until the very end."

### Newland Archer from *The Age Of Innocence* by Edith Wharton

Often, I feel like I am my own version of Newland - his predicament and thoughts are summed up at the end of the novel - "He felt shy, old-fashioned, inadequate: a mere grey speck of a man compared with the ruthless magnificent fellow he had dreamt of being." I wonder if I will be satisfied living a life like his.

### Anne Frank from *The Diary Of A Young Girl* by Anne Frank

Reading her diary made me feel as though she was a living, breathing friend of mine. I was present with her at the Annex, trying to lead a normal life amid the chaos of the war.

Her self-reflection in the hope of being a more amiable and mature per-

son struck me to the core, especially given her youth. When she suddenly stopped writing, it was as if a dense melancholic fog had descended.

### Toru Watanabe from *Norwegian Wood* by Haruki Murakami

My favourite of them all. Watanabe and I are close in age, but worlds apart in terms of life experiences.

Having had to shoulder the death of his best friend, Watanabe must navigate through the turbulent emotions and experiences that come with youth.

In the end, his character is suffused with a lugubrious quality that makes him so compelling.

