

Headline	Poetry rock hard? Not so		
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Description	The article features two of this year's recipients of the Inspiring Teacher of English Award. Mr Alan Johnson of St Joseph's Institution uses music to teach English; Anderson Junior College's Mr Ong Chin Meng was a former science student who decided to pursue his interest in English, despite coming from a Chinese-speaking family.		

Poetry rock hard? Not so

Teacher uses songs to teach English

SIA LING XIN

ENGLISH teacher Alan Johnson, 33, uses rock songs to teach his students poetry – and bagged one of this year's Inspiring Teacher of English awards.

Mr Johnson – who teaches at his **alma mater**, St Joseph's Institution (SJI) – hit on the idea to show students that poetry exists in familiar things, and is not as difficult to comprehend as they think.

"I didn't expect to win. It was a huge surprise and honour to be even nominated," he said.

His student, Colin Tan, 14, called him "a motivational teacher who makes learning fun".

Mrs Sandra Lee, SJI's head of English Language and Literature, **lauded** him for being "dynamic and talented".

Mr Johnson was among 10

winners, picked from 124 nominees, who received their award yesterday from Senior Minister of State (Trade and Industry, and Education) S. Iswaran.

Other winners include Mr Ong Chin Meng, 31, from Anderson Junior College.

The former science student from a Mandarin-speaking family did not dare to pursue his interest in English until halfway through university, when he realised that he wanted to be doing something he was passionate about. He switched to studying English from mathematics.

Each winner received a trophy and a \$2,000 cash award, and their schools were each given a plaque. Other nominees received a certificate each.

The award – given by The Straits Times and the Speak Good English Movement and supported by the Ministry of Education (MOE) – aims to recognise teachers who have helped



ROCK ON: Mr Alan Johnson, 33, uses rock music to teach his students at St Joseph's Institution about poetry. He is among 10 winners of this year's Inspiring Teacher of English awards. (PHOTO: JAMIE KOH)

to **ignite** a love for the English language in their students.

It was open to all English, English Literature and General Paper teachers from primary and secondary schools, junior colleges and Millennia Institute.

When it was launched last year, it had nine winners, selected from 163 nominees.

The 11 judges, from The

Straits Times, Speak Good English Movement, British Council and MOE, looked for passionate role models who use innovative ways to engage their students.

The Speak Good English Movement's chairman, Mr Goh Eck Kheng, said: "Each of us who speaks fluent English can be an inspiring English teacher."

lingxin@sph.com.sg

HELPDESK 我的字典

Alma mater: 母校 mǔ xiào

Lauded: 称赞 chēng zàn

Dynamic: 生气勃勃的 shēng qì bó bó de

Ignite: 激起 jī qǐ