



PHOTOS: DOLON TALUKDER



# HONING CREATIVITY

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To bring out the innate creativity of school students through writing, "Imagine - Write Creatively", a joint initiative by The Daily Star (TDS) and United International University (UIU), held its latest workshop at DPS STS School in Uttara on October 13, 2015.

Shiwa Forkan, Freelance Trainer, TDS; and Sharmin Sultana, Assistant Professor and Coordinator, English Language Institute, UIU; presented the programme to over a hundred motivated students from the school.

The focal point of this creative writing workshop was fiction, but it was far from the traditional approach of teaching and introducing fiction to young minds. Instead of regular speeches, lectures and presentations, the workshop featured a distinctive approach, based on actively engaging the students and promoting thoughts, ideas and reflections from them. It hit off with a fun warm-up to break the ice and then progressed into the deeper elements of fiction writing. The workshop targeted the three key pieces behind the puzzle of story-writing: characterisation, the setting and plot progression.

Beginning with characterisation, the students were shown photographs of different people and asked to describe them. By describing a variety of photographs and using words to not only show how the person looked like but rather explain them on an emotional level, the students realised during this experience that characterisation builds on not only appearance but also action and background.

Following the exercise on characterisation, the aspects of creating the perfect setting were discussed. Students were asked to describe a place without giving away the name of the place. Adding to the challenge further was that their peers had to guess the place they were describing. This taught the students how to illustrate a vivid picture rather than just pointing out the physical features



of their scenery when describing it.

Next, the trainers explored the ideas of plot development. By blindfolding some students, they introduced unique prompts and urged the students to guess what they were feeling, smelling or even tasting in order to create stories based on those sensations on the spot.

Helping the students broaden their horizons and embrace their inner creativity, the students learnt how to tell their stories from multiple perspectives and combine them to make a complete narrative.

Hridita Raihan, a ninth grader, said, "Our imagination is going beyond what we used to think. Previously, I used to imagine the usual things like a storyline where a person is in a classroom studying and stuff. I had my hand in moisturiser but I thought it was mud and I got this crazy storyline right in my mind. It really allows your imagination to run wild."

Throughout the entire workshop many of the tasks and activities compelled the students to speak up about the ideas that came to them. It also encouraged communication between each other. Ehtesham, an eighth grader, commented on the friendly atmosphere that urged expression, saying, "I frequently write stories on my own, and I think this programme will help me write even better because the trainers explained the essential elements of storytelling. Now I would think of sending my stories to SHOUT."

Kumkum Habiba, the English Language teacher of Grades 6 and 7 of the school, praised the workshop, saying, "The students are attentive and getting involved. I can see the students are gaining interest and that's the main thing. The skill of creative writing is very important to develop and I think it's a great initiative."

By the end of the workshop, the students felt more motivated to write, which speaks in volumes about the success of the programme. Ninth grader Farhan Al Raihan, said, "I'd love to see more of these events as I found that there is a lot to learn."

When asked about how the upcoming workshops were going to progress, Sharmin said, "We find the students to be very cooperative. We get to take ideas from students from every workshop which inspires us to do more innovative things."

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