



PHOTOS: DOLON TALUKDER



INSPIRING YOUNG STORYTELLERS

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After a brief hiatus, Imagine – Write Creatively, an initiative of The Daily Star and United International University (UIU), kicked off again on January 28, holding its latest workshop at Chittagong Grammar School, Dhaka (CGSD). The programme resonated well with the students from Grade 7 to Grade 10 of the school.

Khadija Afzal, Head of Secondary School, CGSD, appeared at the event to give a commencement speech. She said, "First of all, I'd like to thank The Daily Star and UIU for organising this workshop on creative writing. It is very important to be able to express yourself properly and to be able to write in the correct language. I am sure this will help the students academically. I am glad to see so many of the students have come forward to participate in it. I wish you all the very best."

Following a fun warm-up and ice breaking session, Sharmin Sultana, Coordinator and Assistant Professor, English Language Institute, UIU, dove into one of the core principles of fiction writing – characterisation. The students received several visual prompts, including ones from various issues of SHOUT magazine, and were asked to describe them. The students were asked to go beyond just physical appearance, but also take into consideration the actions, expressions, and the potential mindset of the characters they saw.

The programme then changed the focal point to developing a setting – the perfect place for the characters to thrive. Again, with visual prompts, the students got the opportunity to integrate their imagination



with what they saw, but this time around, they had to disguise the name of their chosen setting, and dub it "coffeepot", while their peers tried to guess which setting they were actually talking about.

To further emphasise the significance of setting, some of the students were called forward to take part in another interesting activity where they were blindfolded and their senses put to test. Some of their responses were truly novel. One of the

most notable impromptu stories came from a 10th grader, Rahul Abir, who thought of being in the world of Hansel and Gretel, prompted just by the taste of a lollipop.

Subsequently, Sharmin taught the students about the basic mechanisms of plot. The participants were shown how a story could be built from the characters and set to a climax followed by a resolution. Once the students had understood

the key factors that drive a plot forward, they then had the opportunity to exercise their understanding by inventing plotlines from images. In this activity as well, the students exhibited amazing ingenuity and creativity.

When the workshop ended, the students appeared invested and eager in trying their hand at fiction. Many of the students identified the areas they wanted to improve upon. Adiba Amreen, a 10th grader, said, "This workshop has helped me have a better understanding of plot and setting." Similarly, Sarwa Ayesha Amin, an 8th grader, reflected, "It was interesting and kind of fun. I think I might do better in creative writing after this session I had."

Shama Siddique, Head of English Department of CGSD, spoke highly of the event, saying, "It was very insightful – a learning experience for both the students and the teachers." She believes she will be integrating some of the things from the workshop into her classes.

The programme, overall, was successful in terms of bringing out the inner creativity of the students. What made the event even more of a triumph was that the students came forward with the will of writing and getting published.

Furthermore, even the teachers expressed that they wished their students become more immersed in the world of creative writing.

With a keen eye and a broken brain to mouth filter, Mahejabeen Hossain Nidhi has a habit of throwing obscure insults from classic novels at random people who may or may not have done anything to warrant them. Drop her a line at mahejabeen.nidhi@gmail.com

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