



PHOTOS: DOLON TALUKDER



# INSPIRING IMAGINATION

MITHI CHOWDHURY

"Imagine - Write Creatively", a joint initiative by The Daily Star (TDS) and United National University (UIU), hosted its latest workshop on March 30, 2016 at the Bangladesh International School and College, Dhaka (BISC). This programme aims to inspire and stimulate creative thinking through the medium of writing.

Rubaia Mahfuz, a freelance trainer at TDS, and Sharmin Sultana, Assistant Professor and Coordinator, English Language Institute, UIU, conducted the programme which saw enthusiastic participation from almost a hundred students. Students from various grades took part in the event.

The interactive workshop started at 12 noon with an introductory speech from the coordinators themselves. The purpose of the workshop - as explained by one of the presenters - was to inspire students to imagine freely, and to think outside of the box to excel at creative writing. After a commencement speech from the Principal, Col. Md. Anisur Rahman Chowdhury, psc (Retd.), the workshop officially began.

All activities of the workshop were designed to decode the three key elements of fiction-writing - character analysis, setting and plot development. The presenters had a unique approach to the workshop - instead of humdrum speeches, they focused on active interaction with the students to stimulate creative thinking. When asked, the students were excited to share their thoughts and ideas with everyone in the room. Syeda Sumaya Obaid, a student of tenth grade, said, "The programme was extremely productive. Initially, I was a little shy to speak up, but the structure of the programme really



helped me get over my stage fright."

The first stage of the workshop shed light on the art of characterisation. Students were shown photographs of various people and asked to develop a narrative about each one. Through the process of describing these images, the students formulated many stories as to who they thought the characters might be. After the activity, Sharmin explained that alongside the appearance of a person, their actions, expressions, age, and background also play pivotal roles in their respective stories.

This activity was followed by an exercise that focused on developing the perfect

setting. Students were asked to describe a certain place, and based on that, the others had to identify the place they described. The students were asked what kind of stories might occur in the places they saw. This encouraged students to stray from merely describing physical aspects of the environment they see.

Next, the students were asked to write about a character by implementing all that they had learnt about characterisation. They had to choose a character from the numerous images in issues of SHOUT provided and develop an intricate back-story about them. This inspired everyone

to let their imagination roam free and many even came up with funny quirks to differentiate their characters.

To understand plot development, the students were blindfolded and introduced to different prompts. They had to rely on their senses of touch, smell and even taste to describe these sensations and create stories about it. Combined, all of these exercises helped the students to challenge themselves and explore the different elements of story-writing. Before the end of the session, Sharmin encouraged the students to submit their own articles to SHOUT, emphasising that the best write-ups would be published in the magazine.

The workshop was a refreshing departure from the monotonous presentations that students are generally used to. Suno Yamada, a 10th grader, said, "This workshop was definitely enlightening. I thought that we were going to be given a topic to write an essay but I never imagined that the session would be this engaging and fun. This workshop has given me the tools to truly excel at writing."

Col. Md. Anisur Rahman Chowdhury, Principal of BISC, was thoroughly impressed by the active participation of his students.

"I would love to see my students participate in more such events. Encouraging students to write and think freely is the most important contributor to their creative development. I believe my students have gathered valuable knowledge on the art of creative writing and thinking through this experience."

Mithi Chowdhury is a dog-loving-movie-watching-mediocrity-fearing normal person. Either that or a penguin. Find out at [mithichy612@gmail.com](mailto:mithichy612@gmail.com)



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