

LITERATURE FOR THE YOUNG

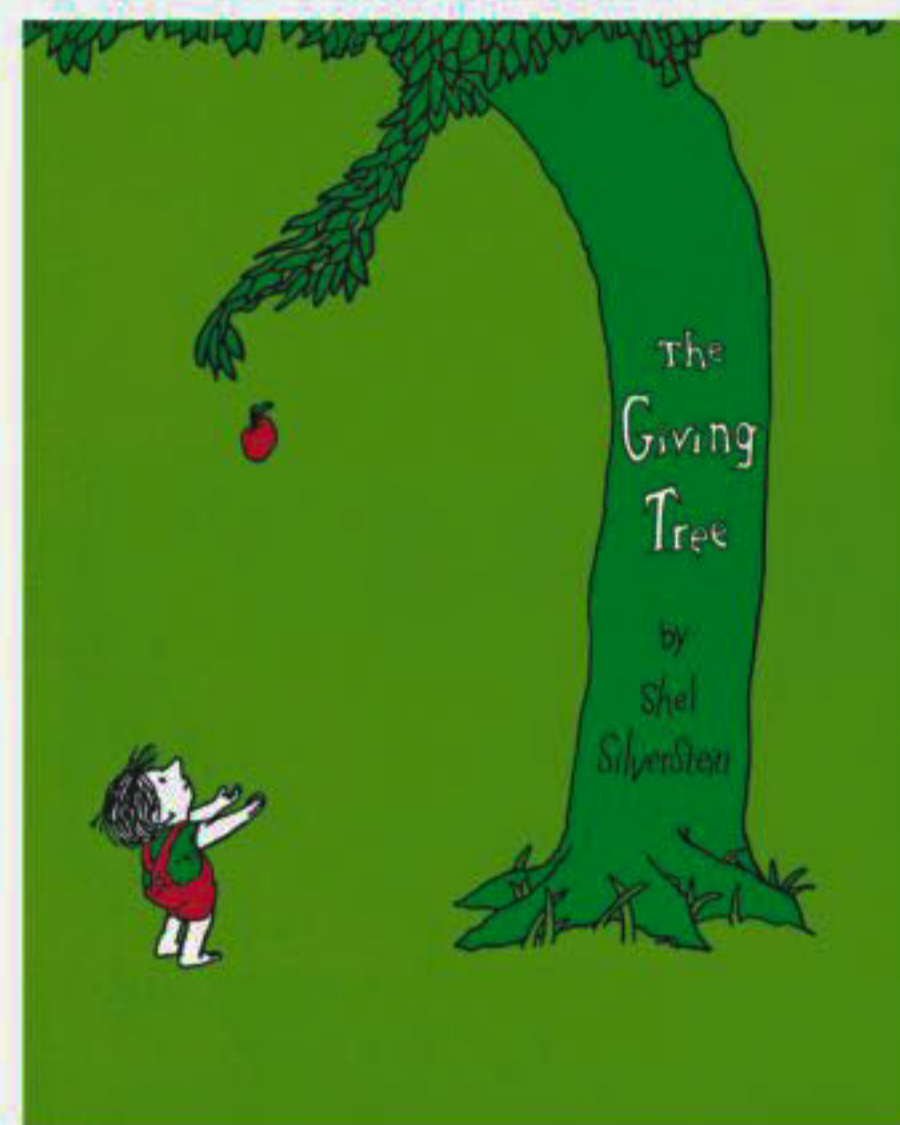
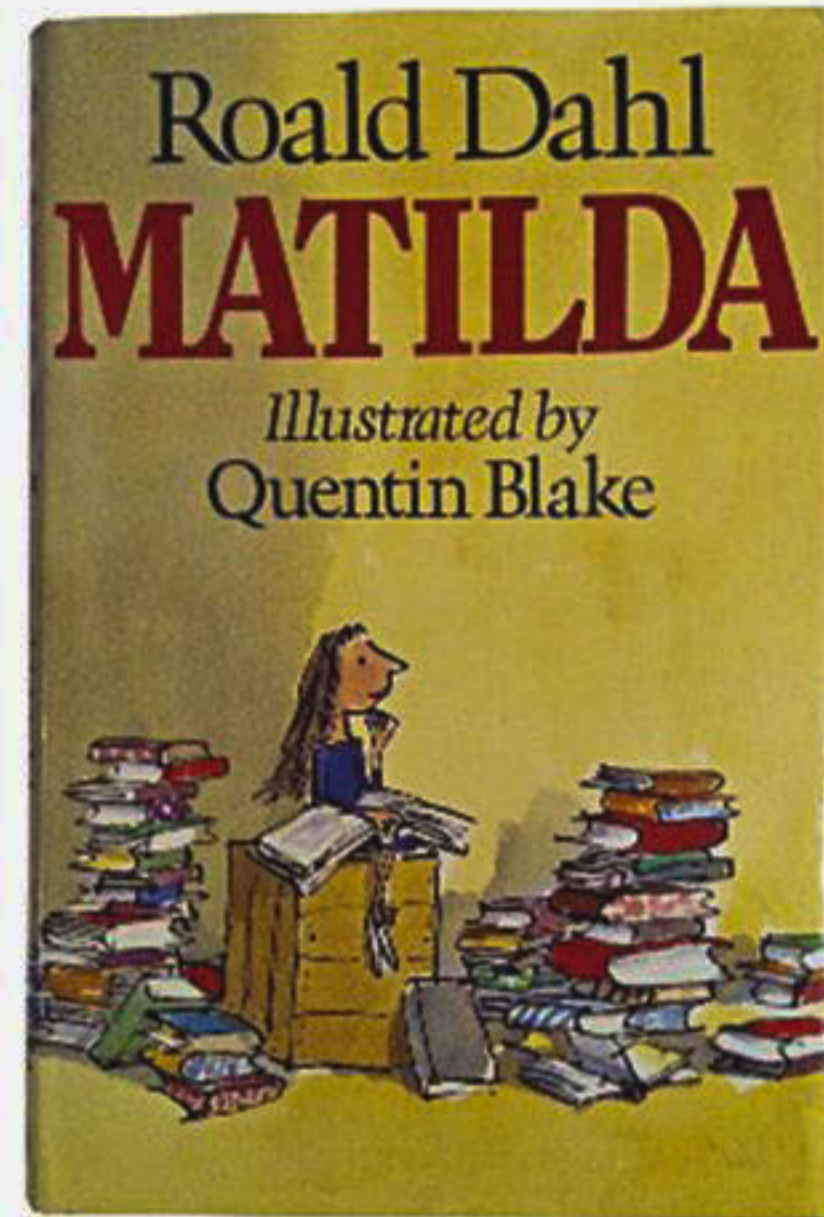
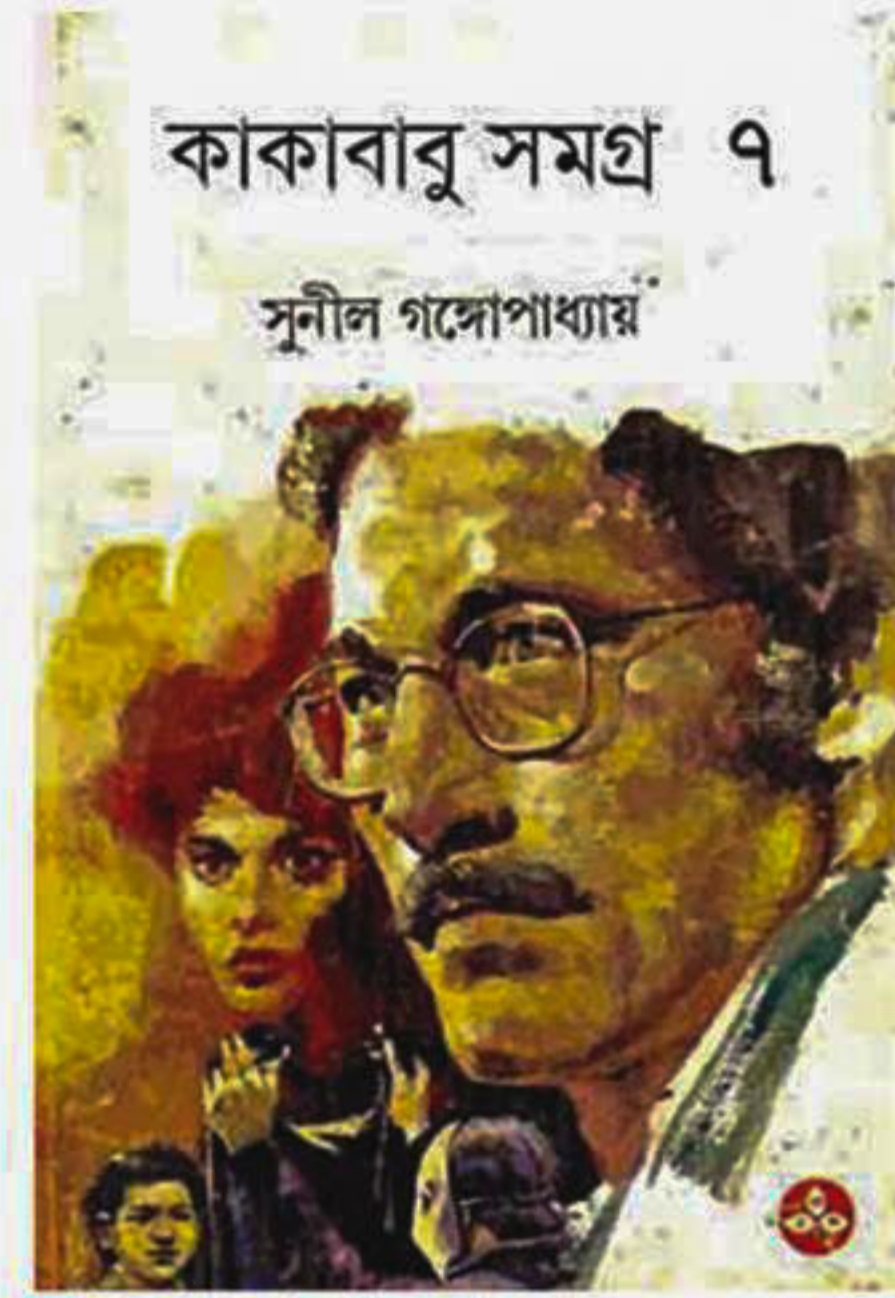
NAZIBA BASHER

Ever since my niece was born, I was determined to make her a book-reader. There are many my age and younger than I who seem to get disgusted at the sight of books- and nothing is more upsetting than a child who hates to read, for reading is the ultimate source of knowledge, of understanding and of adventures. Since she was born, I have been stacking up books comprising of some of my old favourites, and some that I never had the privilege to read. I have also learned that reading out to them from an early age increases their eagerness to read once they have the ability to do so themselves.

The great thing about these books is that they don't have an age-limit. Some books, for example Little Women, are ones I could enjoy now as much as I did was I was eleven. So here, I'm making a list of some books which children can learn from and enjoy, from the time they learn to read.

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak: This is the adventurous story that has inspired many a generation of children to let out their 'inner monsters', portraying how imagination allows for an escape from the chaos of life. It is also a wonderful testament to family love, when young Max returns from his dreams, and found that his mother had saved him some hot dinner.

Matilda by Roald Dahl: This is the book that inspired me to read, and convinced me, at a young age, that when there are books- you seldom need much else. Matilda is a story of a young girl who had a profound love for reading, terrible parents but a wonderful teacher, and how she shows the world that magic exists if you believe in it enough!



The Giving Tree by Shel Silverstein: It is difficult to imagine a story more affecting and touching than the tale of a tree that gives its life for a boy. This story has been interpreted along environmentalist and religious lines, but all can agree on the beauty of its underlying theme—generosity, something we all need to embed into our children early on.

Dipu No.2 by Mohammad Zafar Iqbal: Dipu No.2 has appealed to and satisfied many youths throughout generations. As Dipu faces a clash of culture along with bullies, how he overcomes these obstacles and becomes a hero is what brings this story alive. This detective story teaches one of courage, mystery and making friends. Many young adults still indulge in this story as their favourite detective tale.

Kakababu by Sunil Gangopadhyay: Kakababu is a crippled (handicapped) ex-Director of the Archaeological Survey of India, whose real name is Raja Roychowdhury. Kakababu's adventures are ones you want to instantly become a part of, trapped on several occasions, from which he comes out unscathed. Talent, wit, and a thirst for adventure- you can develop and cherish them all once you read Kakababu.

Professor Shonku by Satyajit Ray: A collection of seven stories, to which two other were added in later editions, Professor Shonku's adventures revolve around the world and importance of science and scientific thinking. While we have many stories that teach us adventure and imaginations, Professor Shonku lets us use them with a more scientific and grounded purpose.

With such a set of books, we can teach children that beside our academics, there are other important things such as kindness, imagination, wit and adventure. While good grades can get us through school, good books can get us through life. ■

LITERATURE

HERITAGE

They don't have any fancy title attached to their names. They are not called calligraphers. Not even artist. But they have quality of little bit of both in them, because they know the art of writing beautiful letters.

They are professional banner writers, who hand write banners, posters, signboards, notice boards, wall and anything you name. But with the ever-increasing popularity of electronic tools, why do we need anyone to hand write a banner for a backdrop of a school cultural program or any political meeting, any more?

Like many other professions, disappearance of this job can simply be attributed to technological advances. "As everyone becomes more reliant on the high resolution printed, vivid inked PVC banners, no one comes to us anymore to get a hand written one," says Shwapan Kumar, a banner writer who has been running the business of banner writing for last 18 years. In fact no one is coming into this business as it's becoming one of the many extinct professions. But Swapan refuses to call the job of banner writing just a mere business. To him and to his fellow colleagues this is no less than a form of art.

Why not? Lettering just like any other art form takes a bit of determination, hours of practice and ounces of perseverance before it looks all perfect. "There is no school for teaching you the fonts. If you practice daily, you'll see great strides in your lettering skills. When we first started learning it, there was no computer. We used to have just an *Adarshalipi* (a standardised book containing Bengali alphabets and basic Bengali grammar). The font that we followed is called *Bidyasagar* font, one that every text book used to follow."

According to Shwapan, writing with enamel paint on a huge sheet of polyester is not an easy feat. In fact there are number of challenges. "All letters need to look typed and neat. Your hands need to be steady while maintaining a particular pace. Your line needs to be straight," he continues. "I learnt this art from my Guru while working under him. It took me three



THE ART OF PENMANSHIP

FAYEKA ZABEEN SIDDIQUA

PHOTOS: PRABIR DAS

years before I started giving this penmanship service," says Shwapan, who studied up to class 8.

Muhammad Khabir Ahmed, who has been in this business since 1988, also has something very similar to share. Khabir, who had always a knack for learning sketches but could not do it because of his financial constraints, thought lettering could be a fantastic way to put his art powers to good use.



"For a four meter hand written banner we could charge almost 400 taka or even more. On the other hand, for a PVC banner, we can charge 20 taka per square. People can get it at a cheaper rate, so they prefer having it in digital print."

There's a beautiful, unique quality to hand-written addresses that computer printers simply can't replicate opines Jafar Islam, a banner writer.

"Once, one of us got arrested, as the police found him writing an anti-government statement on a banner. He was actually copying what he was given by a party member and was writing it without even understanding the kind of consequences he might face," he laughs. "In fact whenever we used to have any assignment of writing a political banner, there was always some sort of risks associated with it. Once we misspelled the name of the chief guest of a political

seminar and the banner writer was called out to the seminar. He corrected it with white ink minutes before the seminar began."

According to Jafar, they have some old customers who were regulars in these shops and would appreciate these lettering efforts. They used to send their children to learn lettering from these banner artists.

No matter how skilled one becomes, for these banner writers, lettering would always require some problem-solving. Every project used to be different; for example, one project may require you to write cursive, while another may demand neat, precise capital letters.

"No matter what you create, it was always guaranteed to be challenging and thrilling," Khabir continues. "A kind of joy that digitally printed banner fails to give the banner writers." ■

ABOUT TOWN

GATEWAY TO INTERNATIONAL CAREER

CareersHub

A GATEWAY TO INTERNATIONAL CAREERS

October 29, 9 am - 6 pm
Le Meridian Hotel, Nikunja, Khilkhet
Hosted by: CareersClub
For more information, visit-
<https://www.facebook.com/events/127937278207587>

BRIDAL FIESTA - SEASON II

October 27-29, 12 - 9 pm
Drik Gallery, Dhanmondi, Dhaka
Hosted by: ThePhotoMaster, Bridal Heritage and Studio EDGE
For Query, visit-
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1090293534381167/>

CONSUMDANY

Self Development Saturday

October 29, 5.30 - 9.30 pm
Lighthouse Bangladesh, Kemal Ataturk Avenue, Dhaka
Hosted By- Don Sumdany
For more information, visit-
<https://www.facebook.com/events/375444776121061/>

