



PHOTOS: ORCHID CHAKMA



IMAGINATION RUNNING WILD

IQRA L. QAMARI

From the grand indoor court, where one was used to the echoes of basketballs being dribbled or the muffled swoosh of a score through the hoops, the STM Hall reverberated sounds of stories being told or fictional characters being made. That was how April 18, 2017 turned out for me as I went to observe a unique workshop, collaboration between United International University (UIU) and The Daily Star (TDS) - IMAGINE Write Creatively - which aims to promote creative writing and storytelling among high school students. It was conducted in the STM Hall of Scholastica, Senior Campus, located in Uttara.

The event commenced at 10 AM sharp, comprising of curious fifth to eleventh graders, exhibiting excitement. They reminded me of my own school days and even I hopped on to this ride of learning. The conductors of the event were Sharmin Sultana, Associate Professor of the English Department, UIU and Naziba Basher, of The Daily Star. The welcome speech was given by the Principal, Brig. Gen. Kaiser Ahmed (Retd.) and Itrat Rahman, Head of Training and Development, who encouraged the young crowd of students to not hold themselves back and let their

imagination run wild so that they can take the most out of the session.

The sessions kicked off with a two-minute physical activity to get rid of the last speck of morning drowsiness. Afterwards, they were made aware of the basic components of stories and all about characterisation. What really attracted my attention was the fact that these kids already had a strong foundation laid - they were only in search of the first layer of bricks to be placed, and then they were good to go.

The workshop gave them just that. The creative and the methodical approach that each of the wonderful hostesses applied, bringing up characters and storylines from Harry Potter and The Hunger Games as references, simply tapped into the emotions and the craze that this bunch of talented kids embodied. It was visible when they had to pick up a character from an issue of SHOUT and assign it with a whole new background and story. A particular student picked Belle from the recently published Beauty and the Beast live-action movie review and gave her character a more enhanced personality. As an observer, I could not help but appreciate the number of hands that shot up excitedly into the air at almost every question asked by the trainers,

eager to share their respective stories.

With the help of an ideal plot and setting, they further learned to implement the concept of showing a story to your readers and not just narrate it. The inspired dreamers made stories out of the air with still images as cue on the screen. They got familiar with the anatomy of a story and excitedly applied the rules to their own.

The two-hour session ended on high spirits just like the way it started. I could not help but hold back a few of them to share their experiences with me. Ryan Farhab, a sixth grader and a writing enthusiast mentioned his affinity for fictions and how he plans to write to SHOUT one day. I also got to hear from two close friends, Zarafsha Anika and Sneha Shayara, fifth graders who were thrilled to be a part of this unique event and hoped for more sessions like this.

I could tell that this workshop would work as a boost to all these budding writers' journey. It wasn't like any regular writing workshop - rather it was a long, interactive session on how to imagine - the most important aspect when it comes to writing. The court that day manifested zeal and excitement just like it happens during any intense game of basketball.



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