

the
**SUNDAY
TIMES**

SUNDAY
MAY 11, 2025



FUNDA DAY TIMES



Lanterns for Vesak

Pic. by M. A. Pushpa Kumara

WINNERS!

POETRY & ESSAYS
PAGES 2 & 5



**ANNIVERSARY
COMPETITION**

PAGE 3



STORY
PAGE 4

ONLINE

KIDS NEWS

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Please send competition entries to:

Funday Times
C/O the Sunday Times
P.O. Box 1136, Colombo.
Or
8, Hunupitiya Cross Road,
Colombo 2.

Please note that competition entries are accepted by email.

Write the name of the competition and the date clearly

at the top of your entry and include the following details:

Full Name (including Surname).

Date of Birth, Address.

Telephone Number and School.

Please underline the name most commonly used.

All competition entries should be certified by a parent or guardian as your own work.

Competition entries without the full details requested above, will be disqualified.

Closing Date

for this week's competitions:

May 28, 2025

Telephone: 2479337/2479333

Email: fundaytimes1@gmail.com



Age groups:

6 – 10 years / 11 – 15 years

Word limit: 100 Words

Poetry Competition

This is your chance to get your poem published here. Entries should be in your handwriting and clearly certified by a teacher or parent as your own creation. Your poem should be posted to Funday Times with 'Poetry Competition' written at the top of the entry. The winner of each age category will be awarded a British Council Young Learner's Library membership.

6 – 10 years

Moon in the Night Sky

Oh, bright round ball,
I cherish you each night, recall.

You cast your shiny light,
Creating a beautiful sight.

Oh moon! You are a boat,
Floating softly on the sea's coat.

The sky becomes a vast sea,
Filling my mind with glee.

You hide yourself during the day,
But spread your rays at night's display.

Surrounded by twinkling stars,
You hide all the scars in the sky from afar.

R.H. Saeef-ul-Haq
Matale Int. School

11 – 15 years

Fish

Vibrant colours,
Swimming in tanks,
Rivers, lakes,
But not on land.

Amongst reefs,
Corals and clams,
Sharing beauty,
To sea and sand.

Striped, spotted,
Colourful tails,
Hide well from,
Sharks and snakes.

Fastest swimmers,
Man has seen,
Dive deeper,
Than a submarine.

Yonal Batuwita
St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10



Please write the date at the top of your entry.

Please note that copied poems will be disqualified.



or

fundaytimes1@gmail.com

Age: 10 – 12 years

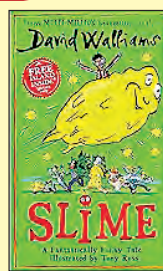
Word Count: 150 – 200

Topic: Vesak sightseeing

Win: Slime by David Walliams

Slime by David Walliams is a hilarious and heart warming children's book that combines the author's signature humour with a story of courage, adventure, and self-discovery. Set in a magical world full of quirky characters, the story follows Gwendolyn, a young girl who embarks on an unexpected journey of transformation and empowerment.

The novel takes place in a land where slime is a source of magical and mischievous power.



Age: 13 – 15 years

Word Count: 200 – 250

Topic: The significance of Vesak

Win: Partners in Crime by Agatha Christie

Tommy and Tuppence Beresford are restless for adventure, so when they are asked to take over Blunt's International Detective Agency, they leap at the chance.

The first case is a success – the triumphant recovery of a pink pearl. Other cases soon follow. But can they live up to their slogan, 'Any case solved in 24 hours'?



Book Competition



10 – 12 years

What you know about Earth Day

Bihandu Keerthisena

Maliyadeva College, Kurunegala

13 – 15 years

The Festival of Easter

Ramesh Nileshkanth

Rajawella Hindu N.S.

Win super books from



Age: 9 years and below

Word Count: 150

Topic: My mother

Win: Three Cheers Secret Seven by Enid Blyton

When Peter and Jack go looking for their lost model aeroplane in an old abandoned house, they find a surprise. Who is living there and why?



Write at the top of your Essay

■ Book Competition ■ Essay Topic





25th Anniversary

Funday Times turns 25 years in August this year. To celebrate this milestone we are planning a grand competition in four segments, Essay, Art, Poetry and Photography, for our young readers. We thank you all for being with us through the years and hope you continue through the coming years as well.



Essay Competition

Age Group: 9 years and below

Topic: Reading as a hobby

Word Count: 150 – 200

Age Group: 10 – 12 years

Topic: Benefits of reading

Word Count: 200 – 250

Age Group: 13 – 15 years

Topic: What you find interesting in newspapers

Word Count: 250 – 300

Poetry Competition

Age Groups: 6 – 10 years and 11 – 15 years

Entries for Poetry Competition could be sent on **any topic of your choice**. The topic should be clearly stated on your entry.

Word Count: 100 – 150

Art Competition

Age Groups: 4 – 9 years, 10 – 12 years and 13 – 15 years

Topic: An interesting event

You could use any art medium such as paint, crayons etc.



Photography Competition

Age Groups: 6 – 10 years and 11 – 15 years

Topic: Nature and the Environment

Closing Date: July 1, 2025



or



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In our online issue this week:

- **Page 5** – Book Winners' Essays
- **Page 6** – The Chernobyl disaster
- **Page 7** – Kids' News
- **Page 8** – News in Pictures

Please log on to the Funday Times website on www.fundaytimes.lk or check out the Sunday Times epaper on www.sundaytimes.lk for additional pages of this week's Funday Times.

Hi Kids,
Please send in your Articles and Art for Kids' World, to be published in the Funday Times online edition and website.

FROM THE EDITOR

As you can see, we have space only once a month for Kids' World articles and art in the print edition.

Therefore, we are planning to carry them every week in the Funday Times online pages as well as on the Funday Times website.

We also invite schools to send in their students' work for a school page in the online edition and website.

Thanking you in anticipation of your positive response.



Or



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Sri Lanka's First Stamp Featuring Natural Imagery

Sri Lanka's first stamp featuring natural imagery was issued on May 1, 1935. This was the first stamp ever issued in Sri Lanka with natural imagery. The name of the country, 'CEYLON,' is indicated on it, along with a value of two cents. The stamp depicts the image of a woman harvesting rubber, and on the top right side, it features a profile of King George V.

This stamp highlights the importance of Sri Lanka's economy in the 1930s, particularly the rubber industry. It was the first stamp issued to showcase daily life and the economy of Sri Lanka. Prior to the release of this

stamp, stamps in Sri Lanka featured images of King George V and this was a significant milestone in the development of Sri Lankan stamps.

At that time, the British ruler was King George V, while Sir Malcolm Sargent was serving as the Governor of Sri Lanka. King George V, also known as George Frederick Ernest Albert, was born on June 3, 1865. He became the Duke of York from 1892 to 1901, then became the Prince of Wales from 1901 to 1910, and was crowned King on June 22, 1911. He passed away on January 20, 1936, and was succeeded by his eldest son, Edward VIII.

This stamp is significant as it represents the role of the rubber industry in Sri Lanka and highlights the importance of agriculture. It also perfectly showcases Sri Lanka's role in the global rubber market.



Sandil Keerthisena (Grade 8)
Maliyadeva College, Kurunegala



Amma's Heart

By Manoshi De Silva

"Amma, can you take us to the park this evening?" Kavi asked her mother. "I don't think that's possible," said her mother, who was weaving a cane basket. "I have to finish weaving these baskets and give it to the shop, at least by tomorrow." "But you didn't take us yesterday also," complained Kavi. "I'll try to take you there tomorrow," replied her mother. But Kavi was not happy.

Kavi's father was a fisherman and they lived in a small house by the sea. Her father went fishing on his boat and he was rarely at home. Her mother stayed at home and looked after Kavi and her two younger brothers. In order to earn extra money, Kavi's mother weaved cane baskets, and sold them to a nearby shop. On some days she even weaved baskets late at night, while Kavi and her brothers slept.

"I put some washed clothes out to dry. Can you bring them in?" Kavi's mother asked her, while she continued to weave the basket like a machine. Kavi went out sulking, because she wanted to go to the children's park that evening. Kavi was feeling angry and disappointed with her mother. So she carelessly pulled the clothes out from the clothes-line, one by one.

The school uniforms and the coloured clothes of the children looked clean and new. But as Kavi took off her mother's clothes, she noticed how faded and old they were. Some of her mother's clothes were even slightly torn. "I wonder when Amma last bought any new clothes for herself?" thought Kavi, feeling sad for her mother.

Usually Kavi left the washed clothes on the bed for her mother to fold. But today she felt sad to leave them there for her mother to do it. "She's busy all the time. Once she stops weaving the baskets, she'll go to the kitchen to make dinner for us. Then she'll wash us and put us to bed and start weaving again,"



thought Kavi, as she neatly folded the washed clothes.

Once Kavi finished folding the clothes, she went towards the seashore, which was just outside their small garden. Kavi's mother lifted her head and said, "don't go too far. Stay within my sight." "Okay," nodded Kavi. "Even while being that busy, Amma is still alert about our safety and cares so much about us, thought Kavi. "I've never stopped to realize how much effort she puts into our lives to protect and care for us."

For the first time Kavi wanted to do something to make her mother happy. "If only I could give her a gift. Maybe a nice new frock. Maybe some jewelry or even a nice cake," Kavi walked a little distance away and sat down on a rock by the sea and looked back at their house. She could see her mother who was seated on their door step still weaving the basket non-stop. "But I don't have any money," thought Kavi, with tears running down her cheeks.

Kavi stared at the sea, There were some fishing boats far away. Maybe one of them was her father's boat. He worked hard to provide for the family. But while he was away, it was her mother who managed the entire house, keeping it tidy, providing food and caring for the children, and spending all her extra time to earn additional money for their family by making baskets. "A mother like that is

a treasure," thought Kavi, "how can I thank her and make her happy?"

"But the truth is, I won't be able to give her any gift because I have no money", thought Kavi, wiping off her tears. She started walking back home with her head held low, feeling very disappointed. A sea wave gently touched her feet and something stopped by her feet. "What's this?" Kavi bent down to pick it up.

It was just a piece of coral but in the perfect shape of a heart. "How beautiful," thought Kavi. "Such a rough piece of coral turned so smooth, and perfectly shaped like a heart.

This would make a perfect gift for Amma" She looked around happily and saw a shrub at the edge of the shore, with some tiny white flowers dancing in the wind. Kavi went and plucked a few of them.

When Kavi walked in, her mother asked her whether she was hungry, while weaving the basket without stopping even to lift her head up. "I'll finish these baskets tonight and somehow take you three to the park tomorrow, I promise" she said. "No need Amma. You stop that and rest now. You can finish them tomorrow. Let's go to the park on another day, when you are free," said Kavi, putting her arms around her mother's neck.

"These flowers are for you Amma. And this coral heart is also a gift for you! I know that our lives are rough like the corals. But like the sea waves that has smoothed this corral, and turned it into something beautiful, your love and care has made our lives beautiful. Thank you for all that you do," Kavi said kissing her mother's soft cheek.

Happy tears ran down the cheeks of Kavi's mother, as she took the little gifts given to her with a smile. "How easy it is to make her happy," thought Kavi wiping her mother's tears away, "even the simplest things can make Amma's heart happy. She has the purest heart filled with so much of unconditional love. There is nothing else on earth like Amma's heart!"

Book Competition **WINNERS!**

10 – 12 years

What you know about Earth Day

Like a gentle reminder from nature, Earth Day arrives every year on April 22, calling us to pause and care for the world we live in. It is a global event dedicated to protecting our environment and promoting love and respect for our planet.

It began in 1970 in the United States and is now observed by millions of people around the world. The main goal of Earth Day is to remind everyone about the importance of taking care of our planet. People from all walks of life come together to plant trees, clean rivers, reduce pollution and spread awareness about climate change.

It reminds us that even small steps, like recycling, using less plastic or conserving energy can have a powerful impact. Earth Day also encourages us to think about our daily actions and how they affect the environment.

Earth Day is not just a celebration; it is a promise to protect our planet. It teaches us that Earth is not just a place we live, it's a living system that depends on us just as we depend on it.

Bihandu Keerthisena
Maliyadeva College, Kurunegala

13 – 15 years

The Festival of Easter

Easter is one of the most important festivals celebrated by Christians worldwide, commemorating the resurrection of Jesus Christ from death. It marks the end of the Holy Week, which begins on Palm Sunday and culminates on Easter Sunday. The festival is a symbol of new beginnings, hope and renewal.

The date of Easter varies each year, as it is determined by the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox. This means it can fall anywhere between March 22 and April 25. The days

leading up to Easter are filled with significant religious observances, including Good Friday, which remembers the crucifixion of Jesus.

On Easter Sunday, Christians gather for church services, where hymns are sung, prayers offered and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is celebrated. The resurrection signifies victory over sin and death, offering hope and salvation to believers.

Aside from the religious significance, Easter also has cultural traditions. The Easter egg, symbolizing rebirth and new

life, is a common feature of the celebration. Children often partake in Easter egg hunts, where colourful eggs are hidden and found.

The Easter Bunny, a mythical creature is also associated with the festival, bringing joy to children during the festivities.

In conclusion, Easter is a time for Christians to reflect on their faith, while also celebrating the joy of life and renewal with family, friends and community.

Ramesh Nileshkanth
Rajawella Hindu N.C.

Young Reporters

If you are interested in joining as a Funday Times Young Reporter please fill in the coupon given and send it in to us along with a recent report or interview not exceeding 300 words.

Photographs or illustrations would enhance the report.

Young Reporters who have already enrolled with us, please send in new reports for publication.



Or



fundaytimes1@gmail.com



Young Reporters Coupon

Name:

Date of Birth:

Address:

Telephone:

School:

Parent's approval: Date:

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The Chernobyl disaster

Compiled by Cecilia Hewavitharana

On April 26, 1986, reactor 4 at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant exploded due to a design flaw and lax safety measures, sending a cloud of radioactive material into the air and causing the worst disaster in human history.

While the disaster claimed the lives of around 31 people at the inception, the radiation exposure is estimated to have caused between 4,000 to 93,000 deaths and lasting health issues since then for future generations.

(Varying estimates have been given by different organisations). Furthermore, the surrounding landscape was also severely affected by the radiation.

The incident was not reported until Swedish authorities noticed the increased radiation levels and



used wind direction to piece together that a nuclear accident had occurred somewhere in the Soviet Union.

Around 335,000 people were eventually evacuated from the

surrounding area and a 30km exclusion zone was created around the reactor. However, millions remained in environments with adverse affects caused by continued residual exposure.

Radionuclides

Radionuclides (or radioactive material) are chemicals whose atoms have unstable nuclei and achieve stability through changes in nuclei.

Radionuclides include caesium-137, iodine-131, plutonium, radium, and uranium.

Environmental impact

An area of approximately 6 km² within the exclusion zone came to be known as the 'Red Forest' because many trees changed to a reddish-brown shade and died as they had absorbed high levels of radiation. Today, even though many trees have grown back, some wildlife species have been found to have increased levels of cataracts and albinism, while the rates of beneficial bacteria are lower. However, the wildlife population has increased in the exclusion zone due to the absence of humans.

The true extent of the damage caused by the Chernobyl disaster may never be properly quantified, due to its far-reaching and devastating impact.

Sources: United Nations (UN), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), World Health Organization (WHO), National Geographic, International Commission on Radiological Protection



Health impact

The radioactive cloud spread over significant parts of the former Soviet Union (now Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia), exposing nearly 8.4 million people to radiation. Smaller amounts of radiation reached as far as France.

When people are exposed to excessive radiation, it increases the risk of certain types of cancers. For example, iodine-131, if breathed in or swallowed, concentrates itself in the thyroid gland and increases the risk of thyroid cancer, particularly for children. Evacuating the area early would have helped mitigate the effects of radiation, because iodine-131 is most dangerous in the initial 8 to 16 days after being released. The main radionuclides to which people were exposed were iodine-131, caesium-134, and caesium-137.

As a result of the Chernobyl accident, those exposed to radiation were affected by radiation sickness, radiation-induced cataracts, and cancers. Furthermore, due to radiation-induced mutations, the damage to the DNA may be passed on to up to two generations.

Book found wrapped in ancient King Arthur story

May 1, 2025

Scientists working at the Cambridge University Library have discovered a lost story from the middle ages about King Arthur and Merlin. The story was hiding in plain sight – it had been used as a book cover. Now scientists have carefully “unfolded” the book cover digitally, revealing the hidden story.

In 2019, an old book that listed property records caught the eye of Dr. Irène Fabry-Tehranchi. The book dated from the 1500s, but looked even older. The cover was parchment (made from animal skin), and was folded around the book and stitched onto it. Old French handwriting covered the parchment.



The story had been used as a book cover

By studying the cover, Dr. Fabry-Tehranchi learned that the writing was about King Arthur and the wizard, Merlin. It was part of an old French story that came after the story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

The French tale is known as the “Suite Vulgate du Merlin”. There are fewer than 40 manuscripts – hand-written copies – of this story. Each copy is different because they were all written by hand.

The colours and the writing style helped the scientists figure out that the book’s cover was created between 1275 and 1315.

The book’s cover was clearly of great interest. But the parchment was old and fragile. The writing on it had been rubbed off in some places. Worst of all, most of the writing on the parchment was hidden.

Scientists at the library worried that the parchment would get damaged if it were removed. Removing it would also ruin the book it was covering, which was also of historical interest.

To protect the parchment and the book, the researchers decided to try to digitally “unfold” the parchment. They took high-quality photos of the parchment using

light of different wavelengths. These images revealed details that hadn’t been noticed before.

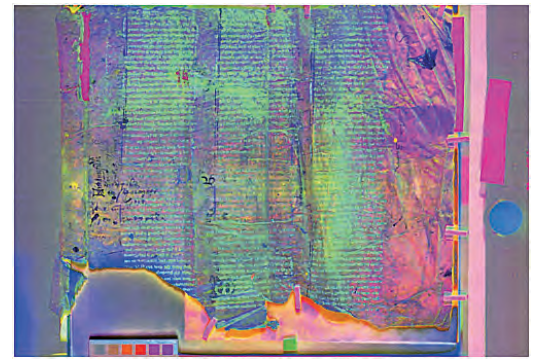
The team then used a CT (computed tomography) scanner to take 3D X-ray images of the book. This led to a 3D model, which allowed the scientists to see how the parchment was folded and sewn into the book.

Once they understood this, the researchers were able to use special equipment to take even more pictures of all the different parts of the cover – even the hidden ones.

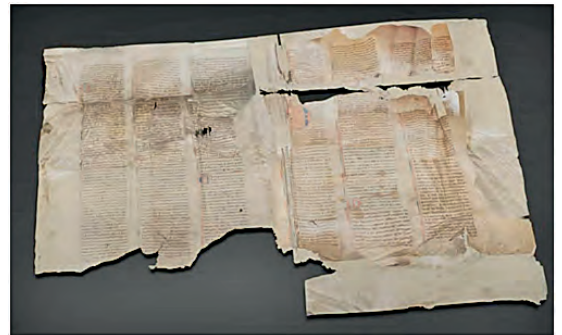
Then, by carefully putting all these pieces together, the team created a digital image of what the cover would look like if it were unfolded. Dr. Fabry-Tehranchi said it was “like solving a puzzle.”

The scientists were now able to read everything written on the parchment. They learned that the parchment told two stories. One was about a battle in which Arthur’s nephew, Sir Gawain, fought with his magic sword, Excalibur. The other story was about Merlin appearing to King Arthur disguised as a blind musician. Later, in battle, Merlin turns King Arthur’s flag into a dragon.

The five-year effort wasn’t just about uncovering these King Arthur stories. Dr. Fabry-Tehranchi says the project helped the researchers develop new methods of studying old documents that are easily damaged and have hidden surfaces. They think their methods will help libraries around the world unlock even more secrets hidden in fragile documents.



These images revealed details that hadn’t been noticed before.



A digital image of what the cover would look like if it were unfolded.



There are fewer than 40 manuscripts – hand-written copies – of this story.



Above, working to create a 3D scan of the cover.

Did You Know...?

You can explore the parchment in more detail on Cambridge University Library’s website.

SOURCE: News for Kids

May 6

News in Pictures



Hong Kong
A child is hoisted up during the PiuSik parade at the Bun festival in Cheung Chau Island, Hong Kong.



Vatican City
A view of the Sistine Chapel ahead of the conclave to elect the next pope at the Vatican.



Mexico City, Mexico
A man fires a rifle loaded with blanks during a parade honouring the battle of Puebla, which commemorates the clash between Mexican and French troops in 1862.

New York City
Diana Ross poses during the Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum in New York City.



San Francisco, US
The former home of Al Capone and other notable inmates was known for tough treatment, including pitch-black isolation cells. It was billed as America's most secure prison given the island location, frigid waters and strong currents.



London, UK
A military fly-past passes over The Mall and Buckingham Palace at the end of the procession marking the 80th anniversary of VE Day and honouring those who served during the second world war.

London, UK
(left to right) the Prince of Wales, Prince George, Prince Louis, the Princess of Wales, and Princess Charlotte stand on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, London, to watch the fly-past featuring the Royal Air Force's Red Arrows as well as present-day and historical military aircraft.



Hanoi, Vietnam
Members of the guard of honour prepare for a ceremony to welcome the Sri Lankan president, Anura Kumara Dissanayake, at the presidential palace.



Hebron, West Bank
Palestinians carrying belongings after the Israeli army demolished several Palestinian-owned buildings in Masafer Yatta, south of Hebron city, claiming that they were 'unlicensed'.

Sources: The Guardian & Reuters