

the
**SUNDAY
TIMES**

SUNDAY
JUNE 8, 2025

FUN DAY TIMES



School teams racing Dragon Boats

Pic. by Eshan Fernando

WINNERS 

POETRY & ESSAYS

PAGES 2 & 6



**ANNIVERSARY
COMPETITIONS**

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LANDMARKS

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ONLINE



**STORY
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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:

June 25, 2025

Telephone: 2479337/2479333

Email: fundaytimes1@gmail.com



Win super books from



Age: 9 years and below

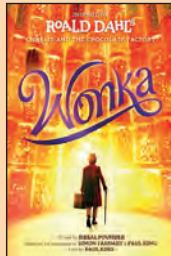
Word Count: 150

Topic: My father

Win: Wonka by Sibeal Pounder

Ever since he was a child, Willy Wonka dreamed of making chocolate and sharing it with the world...

This delicious tale of dreams, friendship and chocolate is based on the motion picture 'Wonka', directed by Paul King who created the story and wrote the screenplay with Simon Farnaby.



Age groups:

6 – 10 years / 11 – 15 years

Word limit: 100 Words

6 – 10 years

Education

Education is the power,
That makes you grow and flower,
It gives you skills and confidence,
And prepares you for excellence.

If school is not your calling,
Look beyond its doors,
The world can be a teacher,
Many adventures are in store.

Education is the key to success,
Education is the gold mine that,
Will never run out of gold,
Education is the most powerful weapon,
Which can change the world.

Suganthan Labisashan
Harvard Int. School, Matale

Please write **the date** at the top of your entry.

Please note that copied poems will be disqualified.



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.

11 – 15 years

Chasing the Moon

The moon sprints and hides,
While I – shout and stride,
"Faster, faster!"
I run after the moon of smiles,
But to her I am merely passing by.

She shines on others, gladly waiting,
What about me? I keep chasing,
I am breathless,
But she is restless,
And I must keep running,
until she waits for me.

Finally, she shines on me after miles,
I cannot help but shower her with smiles,
Moonlight slips through my fingers,
And like a smooth trickster,
She no longer lingers.

Siheli Samarawickrama
Musaeus College, Colombo



OR
fundaytimes1@gmail.com

Age: 10 – 12 years

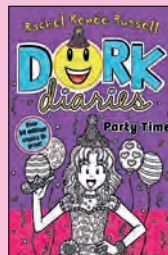
Word Count: 150 – 200

Topic: The Festival of Posen

Win: Dork Diaries – Party Time
by Rachel Renee Russell

When Nikki hears the rumour that Brandon is going to the Halloween Dance with Mackenzie, she makes other plans. But it's not true!

Can she go to the dance with Brandon, her friends... and help at her sister's party all on the same night?



Write at the top of your Essay

■ Book Competition ■ Essay Topic

Age: 13 – 15 years

Word Count: 200 – 250

Topic: Protecting our ocean

Win: The Diary of a Young Girl
by Anne Frank

In July 1942, thirteen-year-old Anne Frank and her family attempt to flee the horrors of Nazi occupation.

Over the next two years Anne vividly describes in her diary the frustrations of living in hiding.

Her diary remains the single most poignant true life story to emerge from the Second World War.



Book Competition WINNERS!

9 years and below

My mother

Rasandi Ranasinghe

Musaeus College, Colombo

10 – 12 years

Vesak sightseeing

Esandi Ranasinghe

Musaeus College, Colombo

13 – 15 years

The significance of Vesak

Nivethikaa Yogendran

St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo



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.



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



Photography Competition

Age Groups: 6 – 10 years and 11 – 15 years
Topic: Nature and the Environment

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

Art Competition

Age Groups: 4 – 9 years, 10 – 12 years and 13 – 15 years
Topic: An interesting event
Art should be sent on A4 Paper
You could use any art medium such as paint, crayons etc.



Closing Date: July 31, 2025



or



fundaytimes1@gmail.com

Entries for all competitions should include your Full Name, Date of Birth, Home Address, Telephone Number and School.
All entries should be certified by a parent or teacher as your own original work.
Winners will be awarded attractive prizes!

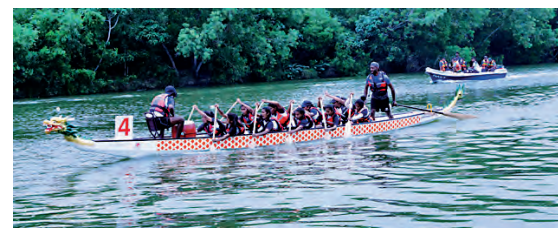
Sponsors



Dragon Boat Championship 2025

Over 200 participants – including school teams (with representation from Jaffna), raced across the Diyawanna waters at the Dragon Boat Championship 2025.

The action-packed event held on May 31 was organised by the National Association for Canoeing and Kayaking in Sri Lanka (NACKSL), together with the Ministry of Sports, the Chinese Embassy and the Amateur Rowing Association of Sri Lanka (ARASL).



Pix by Eshan Fernando

Jaya Sri Maha Bodhiya



Anuradhapura

Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi is a sacred Bo tree (*Ficus religiosa*) in the Mahamevuna Garden in the historical city of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. This is believed to be a tree grown from a cutting of the southern branch from the historical sacred Bo tree, Sri Maha Bodhi, at Buddha Gaya in India, under which Siddhartha Gautama (Lord Buddha) attained Enlightenment.

The Buddhist nun Sanghamitta Maha Theri, a daughter of Indian Emperor Ashoka, brought the tree cutting to Sri Lanka during the reign of Sinhalese King Devanampiya Tissa, whose reign was notable for the arrival of Buddhism. It was planted in 288 B.C., by King Devanampiya Tissa and now stands at the Mahamevuna Garden in Anuradhapura.

At more than 2,300 years old, it is the oldest living human-planted tree in the world with a known planting date. The 'Mahavamsa', or the great chronicle of Sri Lanka, provides an elaborate account of the establishment of the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi on the Island and the subsequent development of the site as a major Buddhist pilgrimage site.

Today, the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi is situated on a high terrace, about 6.5 metres above the ground and is surrounded by four other lower-level terraces with Bo trees called '*Parivara Bodhi*' planted for its protection. The site is currently administered by the Chief High Priest of *Atamasthana* and the administrative body of the *Atamasthana*, and receives millions of pilgrims each year.

However, access to the uppermost terrace where the Bo tree is located is restricted due to the old age of the tree and various acts of vandalism. The site where it stands in the Sacred City of Anuradhapura is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



History

The Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi is the closest authentic living link to Gautama Buddha and it is also the oldest human-planted tree in the world with a known planting date and a recorded history.

About 2,600 years ago, Lord Buddha sat with his back against an *Esathu* (*Aśvattha*) tree on the banks of the Neranjana River in Bodhgaya, India. It was at this moment, as he sat against the tree, that the Buddha is said to have achieved Enlightenment.

In doing so, the Tree also gained a venerated status. It became known as the Sri Maha Bodhi Tree and pilgrims came to see it, even within the lifetime of the Buddha.

The Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi, planted in Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka, has since been cared for and protected by Buddhist monks and dedicated kings.

Statues, water canals, golden fences and walls have been built around the tree over the centuries.

Religious and social significance

Buddhists in Sri Lanka and around the world have a practice of visiting and paying homage to the most sacred Bodhi tree. It is an annual custom for pilgrims from far-away villages in the island, to visit the city of Anuradhapura and to pay homage to the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi. The caretaker of this site provides various offerings on a daily basis.

Buddhists in general have a strong belief that offerings made to the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi have produced significant and positive changes in their life. It has also been customary for many Buddhists to make a special vow before the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi for the safe delivery of their babies and for many other cures. It has also been a long tradition among farmers around Anuradhapura to offer the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi tree the rice prepared from their first paddy harvest. They strongly believe that such offerings lead to a sustained paddy production with the least sufferings from drought as well as pest attacks, including elephant damage.

Source: Lakpura



Famous Landmarks Quiz 61

Q: Name the world's oldest human-planted tree. When and where was it planted?

Famous Landmarks Quiz 60



Jayden Joseph,
Ratmalana

Kindness and Compassion on Poson Poya Day

By Manoshi De Silva

Podi Hamuduruwo of the village temple was explaining the significance of Poson Poya to a few children at the temple.

"So, on that first Poson Poya, Arahant Mahinda Thero introduced Buddhism to Sri Lanka, after stopping King Devanampiya Tissa from the deer hunt!"

"Podi Sadhu," interrupted Sanji, who was very fond of animals, "did the deer manage to run away?"

"Yes, King Devanampiya Tissa was stopped from chasing after the deer," replied Podi Hamuduruwo with a smile. "Poson is a Buddhist Festival that celebrates the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka and is deeply rooted in the Buddhist teachings of peace, kindness and compassion," explained Podi Hamuduruwo.

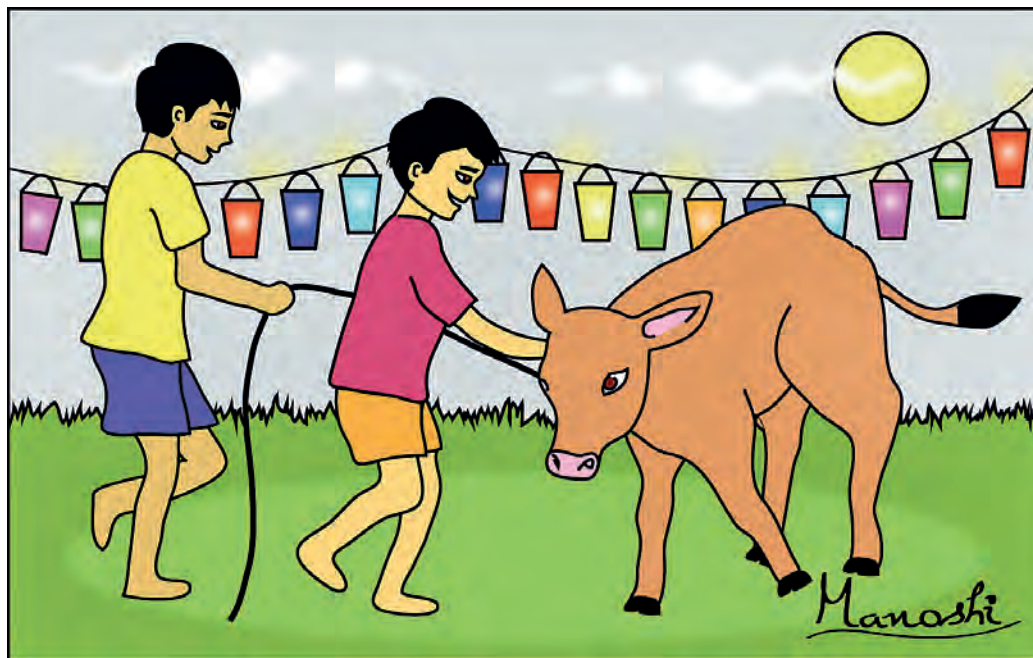
After sweeping the temple premises and worshipping, Sanji and his elder brother Venuka headed back home. "You are awfully quiet," said Venuka. "Yes, I am thinking about the Poson story Podi Hamuduruwo taught us," replied Sanji. "If we also can do something special this Poson, that would be great!"

"We do something special for Poson Poya every year," replied Venuka. "We hang bucket lanterns and go to the temple with *Amma* and *Thaththa*." "Yes, I know. But I meant something more! Something to do with peace, kindness and compassion, like *Podi Sadhu* told us," said Sanji.

After going home, Sanji remembered what Sirithunga Uncle who lived a few houses away, had told him a few days ago. He had a few cows and provided fresh milk to the village houses. There was a brown calf that Sanji went and petted whenever he went past Sirithunga Uncle's land. "I am selling this fellow soon," he had said, watching Sanji pet the calf.

"But why?" asked Sanji, "He's so lovable!"

"Well he's a male calf and he's of no use to me. He's just a burden to feed and look after. If I sell him, I'll get a good amount of money from the slaughter house," replied Sirithunga Uncle who had walked away mentioning the amount he could get by selling the calf.



"Oh no, the poor calf," said Sanji who was shocked and sad at the same time.

"If only I can save this calf, like the deer that was saved at Mihintale on the first Poson Day," thought Sanji. He went and spoke to his brother Venuka about it. Venuka was also saddened to hear about the plight of the brown calf. "But Sirithunga Uncle has stated a big amount. We don't have that kind of money," he told Sanji.

"Ayya, what about our clay coin tills?" asked Sanji. His brother and he had been saving money for a long time to buy two push bicycles.

"Our tills are almost full. Let's break them open and see how much money we have!" The two boys broke their tills and stacked the coins and notes and started counting them. But they were still short of the total amount.

"I know, let's talk to *Podi Sadhu* and see what we can do," said Venuka and the boys ran back to the temple.

Podi Hamuduruwo listened to the boys and nodded. "Poson is a time for Buddhists to reflect on Lord Buddha's teachings of compassion, *ahimsa* and reverence for all types of life, even animals," he said. "It's an act of kindness, therefore I will help you.

Tomorrow I have a '*bana*' session with the village children. We'll ask those who are interested to donate for this cause to help us. Let's see who wants to join this worthy cause!"

The little project of Sanji and Venuka gained more popularity than expected.

Most of the children had seen Sirithunga Uncle's brown calf and had petted it. So they wanted to help save it. The children went from house to house to collect contributions and soon they had enough money to save it.

On Poson Poya Day, the brown calf was brought and tied at the temple premises. Sanji and Venuka's father agreed to adopt the calf and let it stay in their huge land which had enough fresh grass for it to eat. "It's also a good investment for me because I don't need a grass-cutter now," joked the children's father, making them laugh.

"Arahant Mahinda Thero stopped king from killing a deer, showing us the importance of compassion.

This Poya has given an opportunity to all you children to reflect on Lord Buddha's teachings and how to apply them to our lives. Also on how to celebrate religious festivals like Vesak and Poson meaningfully," said the Loku Hamuduruwo of the temple, commending the act of the children.

"You all have set a valuable example of compassion and kindness towards all living beings, on this day. You have given this Poson Poya Day special meaning by doing so," said Podi Hamuduruwo.

After spending some time in the temple, lighting oil lamps and worshipping, Sanji and Venuka walked the brown calf to their own home garden, basking in the golden beams of the full Poson moon smiling down at them.

Book Competition



9 years and below

My mother

My parents are the heroes in my life. From the day I was born, my mother has been a special hero who looks after me with great care.

My mother's name is Upeksha Kodithuwakku. She works at the University of Moratuwa.

My mother can understand my feelings very well. When I'm sad, she tries to make me happy and she consoles me whenever I face a problem. She smiles with me when I'm happy.

She helps me and my sister in our studies and other activities. We have attended many tournaments and competitions, and won them with her guidance.

Kindness, respect, patience and trustworthiness are her good qualities. Her friends also believe in her. We love to listen to her jokes. She likes to sing songs, read books and visit historical places.

As a mother she always gives us advice wrapped with love. I think that I have got the best mother in the world.

Rasandi Ranasinghe
Musaeus College, Colombo

10 – 12 years

Vesak sightseeing

When the Vesak moon peeped from the sky, my sister and I lit Vesak lanterns and decorations enthusiastically. Our father helped us a lot and we were in a hurry to leave for Vesak sightseeing.

In the night on Vesak Day our family went outside to witness the colourful creations our neighbours had made. Then we headed to the main road to watch more attractions. Throughout the road, there were many beautiful Vesak lanterns made of different shapes like lotuses, aeroplanes, spheres and more. We were able to taste sandwiches, cake and a cup of tea provided by a *dansala*. It reminded me of a manioc *dansala* last year.

To see more wonderful work we moved towards Piliyandala town. There was a large gathering in front of the pandal there and we also rushed to see it. The narrators presented the story of Sarana Thero. We were happy to listen to the story and to see the pandal with attractive painting and decorative with multi-coloured lights.

Finally, we visited the temple to worship Lord Buddha and receive blessings from Buddhist priests. We brought happy memories home on the Vesak sightseeing day.

Esandi Ranasinghe
Musaeus College, Colombo

13 – 15 years

The significance of Vesak

Vesak is one of the most important festivals in the Buddhist calendar. It commemorates three events in the life of Gautama Buddha, namely his Birth as Prince Siddhartha, attainment of Enlightenment and passing into *Parinirvana*. Moreover it also has spiritual as well as social significance celebrated by all communities in Sri Lanka in unity.

The arrival of Vesak Day is anticipated by not only Buddhists but also people following various other religions. The *dansals*, Vesak lanterns, exhibition of lights and decorations is a fun filled, exciting occasion for all Sri Lankans.

Vesak holds deep significance in terms of morals. It is a day for spiritual reflection and renewal where Buddhists visit temples, offering flowers and incense as symbols of purity and holiness.

Dansals cultivate compassion and generosity. Many individuals and organizations offer free food and drinks to people of all communities. Moreover, releasing captive animals and offering alms to monks are some other acts of kindness.

Organizing cultural programmes such as singing, dancing and plays depicting Lord Buddha's life, build a sense of spirituality and goodwill.

It cultivates wisdom and purifies the mind.

Vesak lanterns are the main spotlight. These colourful lanterns of various shapes and colours hanging everywhere give a spectacular view during the night time. People wander the streets enjoying food from *dansals* and marvelling at the picturesque surroundings.

Therefore Vesak serves much significance as it unites people of all communities, serving as a powerful reminder of Lord Buddha's universal message of peace, wisdom and compassion.

Nivethikaa Yogendran
St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo



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,
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Experts discover 3,000-year-old lost Mayan city

June 2, 2025

Archaeologists say they have unearthed the remains of a 3,000-year-old Mayan city in the south American country of Guatemala.

Named "Los Abuelos," which translates from Spanish as "The Grandparents," researchers say it once stood around 13 miles from the important archaeological site of Uaxactun, in the north of the country.

The Mayan civilization began around 2000 BC, in what is present-day southern Mexico and Guatemala, as well as parts of Belize, El Salvador and Honduras.

Experts say Los Abuelos, which contains pyramids and monuments, point to its significance as an important ceremonial site.

What did experts find?

The new site is dated to what is known as the "Middle Preclassic" period, which took place from about 800 to 500 BC.

It covers an area of around six square miles and was discovered by Guatemalan and Slovak archaeologists in previously little-explored areas of the Uaxactun park.

According to Guatemala's government, Los Abuelos is believed to have been "one of the most ancient

and important ceremonial centres" of the Mayan civilization in the jungle area of Peten near the Mexican border.

In a statement, it added that the site's pyramids and monuments are "sculpted with unique iconography from the region."

Nearby, experts found a 33-metre high pyramid (longer than a swimming pool) with murals from the Preclassic period and also "a unique canal system," according to the statement.

Los Abuelos takes its name from two human-like sculptures of an "ancestral couple" which were found at the site.

Who were the Mayans?

The Maya first developed their civilisation in around 2000 BC.

They lived in a place called Mesoamerica, an area of land made up of Mexico and part of Central America.



The new site was found close to the ancient Mayan city of Uaxactun in Guatemala, pictured here.

They are known for amazing creations including the spectacular buildings they built, their art, folklore, legends and writing.

They also invented ground-breaking ideas which have helped shape the way we live our lives today.

For example, it's thought that the Maya invented the idea of 'zero'.

In around 1600 AD the Maya were conquered and destroyed by the Spanish invaders.

During the Mayan civilisation, Britain went through the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, including Stonehenge, to Roman Britain, Anglo-Saxon, Medieval and Tudor England.

- CBBC Newsround

World's shortest and tallest dogs meet for a playdate

May 29, 2025

At first glance, Reginald (Reggie), the world's tallest living dog, and Pearl, the world's smallest dog, seem like an unlikely pair.

The seven-year-old Great Dane from Idaho Falls measures 3.3 feet (1 m) tall, while the four-year-old Chihuahua from Florida stands just 3.59 inches (9.1 cm) high.

But a recent playdate showed that when it comes to friendship, size does not really matter.

The fun meet-up, organized by Guinness World Records officials, took place in early April 2025. To spare Reggie the hassle of flying, Pearl and her owner, Vanesa Semler, travelled to Idaho Falls. Reggie's owner, Sam Johnson Reiss, was apprehensive about how the dogs would react to each other.



But she need not have worried. Reggie and Pearl hit it off right away, tails wagging as they sniffed each other in greeting.

To help the dogs adjust, Sam placed both on a couch. Reggie quickly flopped down to Pearl's eye level in a gentle, friendly gesture.

Once the formal introduction was done, the dogs were let loose.

The pair spent the day exploring the house and backyard, with Pearl dashing back and forth around Reggie's massive legs.

At the end of the day, the exhausted pooches settled back on the couch with their owners and promptly fell asleep.

Meanwhile, Sam and Vanesa compared notes and realized their pets had more in common than expected. Pearl is definitely a fashionista. According to Vanesa, she picks her daily outfits, which include dresses, two-piece sets, designer jackets like Gucci, sparkly collars, sunglasses and hats.

But Reggie is no slouch either — he also loves dressing up and has a few favourite sweaters.

- DOGO News

June 3

News in Pictures

**Warner Beach, South Africa**

Fishermen fill crates with sardines netted during the annual sardine run in Warner Beach.

**Lahore, Pakistan**

A herder sits with his camels at a market.

**Manipur, India**

Flood-affected people sit in the scoop of a digger as they are moved to safer places during rains in Imphal East in Manipur, India.

Qingdao, China
Wetland covered with *Suaeda salsa*, a plant also known as seepweed or sea-blite.



June 2

**Catania, Italy**

Mount Etna exhibits a Strombolian eruption, with a volcanic plume rising from the south-east crater. An orange aviation warning has been issued.

**Christchurch, New Zealand**People take photos of *Aurora Australis*, also known as the Southern Lights, as it glows on the horizon over Lake Ellesmere in Lincoln.**Vilnius, Lithuania**

A woman enjoys sliding down the 50-metre-long pink slide during the Pink Soup Fest in Vilnius, Lithuania.

**Paris, France**

Coco Gauff of the USA in action during her fourth-round match against Russia's Ekaterina Alexandrova, which Gauff won.

**Mecca, Saudi Arabia**

Muslims perform morning prayers in the Grand Mosque during the annual Hajj pilgrimage.

Sources: The Guardian & Reuters