



# FUNDAY TIMES



**'Echoes of Excellence'**

Pic. by Akila Jayawardena

**WINNERS**  
**POETRY & ESSAYS**  
**PAGES 2 & 5**



**STORY**  
**PAGE 3**

**ONLINE**  
**REPORT**  
**PAGE 6**

**KIDS NEWS**  
**PAGES 7 - 8**



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.

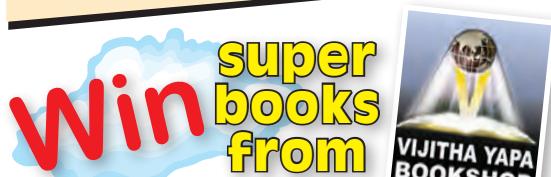
Competition entries without the full details requested above, will be disqualified.

**Closing Date**  
for this week's competitions:

**February 25, 2026**

Telephone: 2479337/2479333

Email: [fundaytimes1@gmail.com](mailto:fundaytimes1@gmail.com)



**Age:** 9 years and below

**Word Count:** 150

**Topic:** An Independence Day Parade

**Win:** Mrs Hippo's Pizza Parlour  
by Vivian French

Business is bad at Mrs. Hippo's Pizza Parlour. So she closes for the day and takes William and Ellie to the beach.

While playing on the beach, William has a brilliant idea!



**Write at the top of your Essay**

■ Book Competition ■ Essay Topic



## BRITISH COUNCIL

**Age groups:**  
**6 – 10 years / 11 – 15 years**  
**Word limit: 100 Words**

**6 – 10 years**



**Mom**

I just want to let you know,  
You mean the world to me,  
Only a heart as dear as yours,  
Would give so unselfishly.

I love you to the moon and back,  
It's a phrase that may seem bland,  
But it's true Mom, with all my heart,  
You're the one who's been there from the start.

For all the times that I forget to "THANK YOU",  
For all the special little things 'you do',  
For all the words that 'go unspoken',  
I need to say, "I love you Mom, I do."

**Faliha Juhar**

Muslim Ladies' College, Colombo

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

Please note that copied poems will be disqualified.



or

[fundaytimes1@gmail.com](mailto:fundaytimes1@gmail.com)

## 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**

**Adventure Awaits**

Adventure begins with a simple step,  
A little courage and deep bold breath,  
It's an unknown path, the unmarked way,  
The thrill of the chase, the light of the day.

It's in the questions we dare to ask,  
The risks we take, the daunting tasks,  
It's not about winning, not all about gold,  
It's about the stories that one day be told.

Adventure's the climb, where your feet feel weak,  
The voice in your head that dares to speak,  
It's wandering through where wild things grow,  
Facing the fears you'd rather not know.

It's in the games we play, the teams we cheer,  
The moments that challenge, where victories near,  
It's in failure, in trying again,  
In learning that effort brings loyal friends.  
So open your eyes, let the journey begin –  
With dreams in your heart an Adventure Awaits.

**Lizanne Paranaliyanage**  
The British School in Colombo

**Age: 10 – 12 years**

**Word Count: 150 – 200**

**Topic:** How Sri Lanka gained Independence

**Win:** Five Have Plenty of Fun  
by Enid Blyton

This summer the Five become Six – and George isn't happy about it. American girl Berta has been threatened with kidnap and Kirrin Cottage is the only place she can hide. Will the Five put their own safety on the line to protect Berta from dangerous kidnappers?



**Age: 13 – 15 years**

**Word Count: 200 – 250**

**Topic:** National heroes who worked towards Sri Lanka's Independence

**Win:** The Battle of the Labyrinth  
by Rick Riordan

Percy Jackson and his friends must stop his arch-enemy Luke, from leading the Titan army directly into Camp Half-Blood.

They quest to find the inventor Daedalus through his ancient underground Labyrinth, with deadly surprises at every turn. This maze was built to keep heroes out and secrets safe within!



## Book Competition



**9 years and below**

**My new class**  
**Nemiah Thambimuttu**  
Ladies' College,  
Colombo

**10 – 12 years**

**Looking forward to a new school year**  
**Lisathma Munasinghe**  
Sujatha Vidyalaya,  
Nugegoda

**13 – 15 years**

**My hopes and aspirations for 2026**  
**Seneli Perera**  
St. Bridget's Convent,  
Colombo



## Naughty and Choaty

By Manoshi De Silva

**N**aughty was a little monkey who was always up to no good. He didn't listen to what the elders in his troop said. He always did what he was told not to do. He was a mischievous little fellow.

Choaty was another little monkey who was in the same troop. But unlike his friend Naughty, he was an obedient little monkey who always listened to his elders' advice. Choaty also liked to help others. Unlike Naughty, he didn't like to do naughty things and get into trouble.

One day Naughty saw Choaty helping some birds make their broken nest. The birds praised Choaty and said that he was a good little monkey. This annoyed Naughty who felt very jealous. Everyone always scolded Naughty, as he enjoyed annoying others or causing them problems and laughing at them.

"I must do something to put Choaty in trouble," decided Naughty. "If I can get him to do something stupid, everyone will laugh at him or he might even get scolded by the others." So Naughty sat down quietly in a tree and started to think of something he could do to get Choaty into trouble.

This was not an easy task. Choaty never did anything he was told not to do by his elders. He wouldn't do anything to bother or create problems to others. So Naughty sat quietly and tried to think of a plan. "I will sit here the whole day if I have to," thought Naughty, "I will come up with a plan to make a fool of that Choaty!"

Naughty soon got bored of staying in the same place without doing something naughty. So he slowly climbed up a branch. As he climbed higher, he heard a buzzing sound. He looked around and saw bees flying busily towards something; a beehive. It was a big beehive full of honey.

Naughty loved to eat honey but the last time he tried to get some, he fell into trouble. He was always advised by his parents, not to go near the beehive or stick his hand into it, as he would get stung by the bees. But Naughty being the naughty little monkey he was, didn't take any of this advice and tried



to scoop some honey off a beehive as soon as he saw one.

That did not go too well for Naughty. He didn't get any honey but got badly stung by the bees. His face looked so swollen that all the other small monkeys had made fun of him for days until it got better. And all the older monkeys scolded him for not listening to them.

"That's it!" thought Naughty. "If I can get Choaty to get stung by the bees, all of our friends will laugh at him and also the elders will scold him a lot." Naughty was very pleased with his evil plan. "I hope that Choaty doesn't know that bees' sting when you go near their beehive. He will for sure put his hand in the hive to grab some honey and the bees will teach him a good lesson!"

Naughty called Choaty and showed him the beehive. "Do you know what that is? That has delicious honey! I was thinking of getting some of it for both of us. But my mother called me just now, so I have to go. Would you mind getting some honey for both of us?" asked Naughty, pretending that he was in a hurry.

Choaty always liked to help others. So he agreed at once. "Sure, I'll get us both some honey from that beehive," he said. Naughty was very happy. "Then quickly get some right now! I have to go and see why my mother called me," he lied, running away because he didn't want to get stung by the bees again.

Naughty went near his house and laughed holding his stomach. "That silly little Choaty will now come here with a swollen face like a pot,"

he laughed. "Looks like Choaty doesn't know anything about those bees. He is in for a surprise!" Naughty waited impatiently till Choaty returned, to laugh at him.

"Here Naughty, let's share this," said Choaty who suddenly appeared with a big piece of honeycomb. Naughty couldn't believe his eyes. He checked Choaty all over. Not only did Choaty have a piece of honeycomb, but he didn't have a single bee sting. "Looks like the bees have become tame and they don't sting anymore," thought Naughty.

"I don't want your honeycomb," Naughty shouted at Choaty, running towards the beehive. "I'll break myself a bigger piece and eat it all alone!"

But moments later, poor Naughty returned with nothing but bee stings. He had no honey at all. "Not again!" shouted his mother after seeing him. "Don't you ever learn a lesson?" "Why don't you ever listen to the advice given to you by the elders?" scolded the other older monkeys. "Look at Naughty's face," laughed the small monkeys, "He looks so funny!" "But how is this possible? Choaty never got stung," cried Naughty. "This is so unfair!"

"I helped the bees to find flowers to collect nectar many times before. Because I was nice to them, they gave me a piece of honeycomb when I asked them. I always help others and I never take something that belongs to others, without asking them first. So they said that I am a good little monkey and they will give me honey whenever I want!" said Choaty.

Everyone understood what Naughty had tried to do, to get Choaty into trouble. Now he had gotten the punishment for it himself. "I hope that you learned a good lesson from this," said his mother. "Remember that when you try to do bad things to others, it can always come back to you!"

Naughty cried and asked Choaty for forgiveness because this time he had learned a really good lesson.

And Choaty promised to help his friend to become a good little monkey.

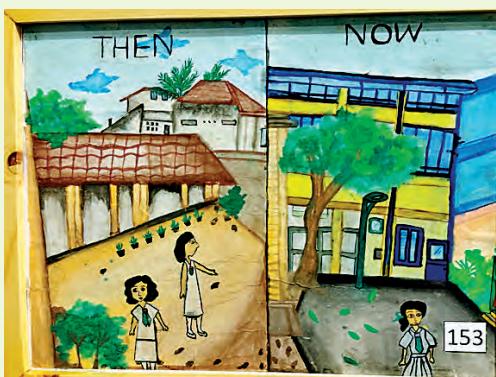
## 'Echoes of Excellence'

It was a feast of talent and creativity as befits a school celebrating 160 years when the students of Methodist College, Colombo 3 presented 'Echoes of Excellence' at the Lionel Wendt Art Gallery on January 27 and 28, 2026.

The exhibition of art and photography was part of the school's 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

Thisari Serasinghe and Rajani Serasinghe, both past pupils, were chief guests at the exhibition which featured the works of students from Grades 5 – 14.

**Pix. by Akila Jayawardena**



### HSBC Ceylon Literary & Arts Festival - Children's Festival

Presented by the HSBC Ceylon Literary & Arts Festival, Edition 3 of the Children's Festival will feature a diverse lineup of interactive sessions designed for young minds under its theme "Create, Play, Grow".

Led by experienced facilitators, each session aims to inspire creativity spark curiosity, and invite young audiences to become storytellers, artists and performers themselves.

Running across three days from February 13 to 15, 2026 at Cinnamon Lakeside, the Children's Fest offers hands-on workshops spanning storytelling, music, art, animation, poetry and theatre for children aged 4 to 16.

Parents can explore the full schedule and book passes at [www.ceylonaliteraryfestival.com](http://www.ceylonaliteraryfestival.com)



In our online issue  
this week:

- **Page 5** – Book Winners' Essays
- **Page 6** – Young Reporter
- **Page 7** – Kids' News
- **Page 8** – News in Pictures

Please log on to the Funday Times website on [www.fundaytimes.lk](http://www.fundaytimes.lk) or check out the Sunday Times epaper on [www.sundaytimes.lk](http://www.sundaytimes.lk) for additional pages of this week's Funday Times.

# Book Competition

# WINNERS

## 9 years and below

### My new class

I am in Grade 1 at Ladies' College, Colombo. My new class is in a big building. There are 29 girls in my class. Each girl has a desk and a chair. I go to my new class in my school uniform. My uniform is a white t-shirt and a red skort.

There is a TV screen in my class. My teacher shows us stories on this screen. My class teacher is Miss. Amanda. Miss. Gunadarshini is also in charge of my class.

Liyara, my good friend from the nursery is in my class this year too. I am very happy about this. My friend from church, Reyha is also in my class.

I learn English, Sinhala, Tamil and Maths in my new class. We have swimming classes on Wednesdays. We learn to operate computers too. I like to learn Maths very much.

I love my new teachers and my new class.

**Nemiah Thambimuttu (5 years)**  
Ladies' College, Colombo

## 10 – 12 years

### Looking forward to a new school year

After enjoying an entire year together, departing from classmates and beloved class teacher is sorrowful. Yet, the excitement about the new class gradually increases.

For a strong kick-start, I shall look back to identify my drawbacks and make room for improvement. I have planned to involve myself in extra-curricular activities along with academics.

Facing the prefect audition is one goal. Prefectship develops leadership skills and brings a sense of responsibility. Also, I am waiting to join the school Media Unit and become a Girl Guide also. To shine better as a member of the school band, I shall practice more tunes.

Regarding studies, I will work hard and achieve a higher rank in class. I want to hear my name at the next prize-giving, amidst applause and cheers. What will my parents feel? It will be a positive change in my life.

My next aim is to develop social skills including teamwork, patience, endurance and flexibility. These will count for a complete citizen. I will be taking the maximum advantage of school's educational facilities to achieve my goals. Hence, I shall obviously spend my upcoming year in a productive way.

**Lisathma Munasinghe (12 years)**  
Sujatha Vidyalaya, Nugegoda

## 13 – 15 years

### My hopes and aspirations for 2026

A new year isn't just the change of a calendar. It is a chance for new beginnings, fresh starts and new hopes. As 2026 has already begun, it's time for new goals and greater ambitions.

This year is a new chance to grow, improve and work hard towards becoming a greater version of myself. A new year reminds me that every year is a chance to reflect on the past, learn from my past mistakes and work towards improvement.

One of my main hopes for 2026 is to improve academically. I hope to be more focused in my studies, manage my time efficiently and stay consistent in my efforts. I want to aim for good exam results and develop a deeper understanding of what I learn this year.

Another one of my main aspirations for 2026 is personal growth. I hope to build more confidence and positivity in me and develop both mentally and socially.

Another one of my main aspirations for 2026 is to set clear goals in my life and stay disciplined in everything that I do. By planning ahead and staying resilient, I hope to make better use of each day and work steadily towards my life goals. This will help me both academically and personally as the year goes on.

I also hope to develop a positive mindset in failure instead of being discouraged and heartbroken. I hope to learn from my failures and use them as stepping stones towards success.

I aspire to improve myself in character by developing good qualities that will help me grow into the more balanced and confident person I dream to be.

Last but certainly not least, I hope to explore new skills and interests this year, whether it's through hobbies, creative projects or trying out something new, that I've never dared to do before. By stepping out of my comfort zone, I can discover my strengths and passions and make life more exciting and purposeful.

Overall, I hope 2026 would be a year of adventure, full of opportunities to grow, learn and just be myself. I may face challenges along the way but with a positive and clear mindset I believe that I would be able to overcome each obstacle efficiently, learning valuable lessons from each experience. With each lesson learnt, I aim to make 2026 a year full of growth, joy and unforgettable achievements.

**Seneli Perera (13 years)**  
St. Bridget's Convent, Colombo

## Jokes



Q: What do librarians take with them when they go fishing?

A: Bookworms.



Q: What do you call a student with a dictionary in their pocket?

A: Smarty pants.



Q: What did the paper say to the pencil?

A: You have a good point!

From a Funday Times Young Reporter

## Remembering some National Leaders of Sri Lanka

Independence Day is celebrated every year on February 4<sup>th</sup>, marking Sri Lanka's freedom from British rule in 1948. This 78<sup>th</sup> year of independence is a reminder of the struggles and hard work of our Sri Lankan leaders and those who fought for our nation's freedom.

### Anagarika Dharmapala

- Revived Sri Lankan patriotism and pride in local culture and Buddhism.
- Worked on publications like 'Sinhala Bauddhaya' and preached in public on nationalism.
- Helped shape the ideological foundation of the independence movement.



### D. S. Senanayake (Father of the Nation)

- Led peaceful negotiations with the British that resulted in Sri Lanka gaining independence in 1948.
  - The United National Party (UNP), under the leadership of D. S. Senanayake, won public support and formed a government through the 1947 parliamentary election.
  - Introduced major agricultural and irrigation projects (like the Gal Oya scheme) to strengthen food security and rural development.
  - Worked toward national unity and peace in the country.



### D. B. Jayatilaka

- Was a senior leader of the Ceylon National Congress.
- Actively participated in constitutional reforms and negotiations with the British.
- Worked closely with D. S. Senanayake in the final stages leading to independence.
- Became the first Speaker of Parliament of Sri Lankan in 1947.



The efforts of our leaders highlight that our nation's freedom was built through unity, perseverance and dedication.

As young Sri Lankans, it is our duty to respect this legacy and contribute positively to our nation with true love for our motherland.

Aysha Manaal  
Ilma Int. Girls School



## 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: .....

## Carlos Alcaraz makes tennis history

February 4, 2026

On February 1, 2026, Carlos Alcaraz defeated 10-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic, to claim his first Australian Open title. This was Alcaraz's seventh Grand Slam title. With this victory, he has completed a Career Grand Slam. This means he has won all four major tournaments — the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and US Open.

At 22 years and 272 days, Alcaraz is the youngest male player to achieve this. Rafael Nadal, who was present at the match, previously held the record. Nadal was 24 years and 101 days when he completed the feat at the US Open in 2010.

After the match, Alcaraz signed the broadcast camera with a simple message: "Job finished. 4/4 complete."



Carlos Alcaraz is the youngest male player to complete a Career Grand Slam.



Alcaraz with his French Open trophy in 2024.

Alcaraz's journey to this historic moment began in the small village of El Palmar, Spain. Born into a tennis-loving family, he picked up a racket at age four under the guidance of his father, a former professional player.

At 15, Alcaraz began training at the Equelite Academy with former world No. 1 Juan Carlos Ferrero. There, he learned to channel his intense energy and focus on the game.

In 2022, the then 19-year-old captured the US Open title, becoming one of the youngest Grand Slam champions in recent history.

Two French Open titles, two Wimbledon titles and a second US Open followed, showing his skill on all surfaces — hard court, grass and clay. This latest win firmly establishes Alcaraz as one of the world's most accomplished tennis players — and he is just getting started!

## Legendary Groundhogs Phil And Chuck predict an extended winter!

February 2, 2026

Every year on February 2, thousands of people gather in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to celebrate one of the most unique American traditions — Groundhog Day.

The star of the show is Punxsutawney Phil, a groundhog famous for predicting the weather. According to custom, if Phil sees his shadow, winter will last six more weeks. If he does not, spring will arrive early.

This year's festivities began at 3:00 a.m., local time. They included live music, dance performances and a fireworks show.

At sunrise, a tuxedo-clad member of the Groundhog Club pulled a sleepy Phil from his burrow. The legendary groundhog carefully looked around and whispered his prediction to one of his handlers.



Groundhog Day is celebrated annually on February 2.

The handler quickly shared the message with the eager crowd: "It is my job this February 2 to look to the skies and report that I see a shadow on my ground. That means six more weeks of winter."

Meanwhile, over in Staten Island, NY, Phil's main rival, Chuck, emerged from his burrow at about 7:30 a.m.

Just like Phil, he saw his shadow — signalling that winter still had a few weeks to go.

Groundhog Day was started by German settlers who came to Pennsylvania in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Today, many animals across the country are part of weather-predicting traditions, but Phil remains the most famous.

The legendary 139-year-old groundhog is said to owe his long life to a magic potion.

He is also an international celebrity, thanks to his starring role in the 1993 movie 'Groundhog Day'.

Also called land beavers or whistle pigs, groundhogs are the largest members of the squirrel family.

February 4

## News in Pictures

**Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Army Women's Corps personnel take part in a military parade to mark the Sri Lanka's 78th Independence Day.

**Salvador, Brazil**

A worshipper honours Lemanja, the Goddess of the Sea, in the syncretic Afro-Brazilian religion Umbanda, during a traditional ceremony at Rio Vermelho Beach in Salvador.

**Tokyo, Japan**

A maiko or apprentice geisha and a participant wearing traditional kimono throw beans during the annual Setsubun bean-scattering ceremony to celebrate the upcoming arrival of spring and ward off evil spirits at Takahata Fudoson Kongoji Temple in Hino, Tokyo.

**New York, USA**

A Doberman named Penny sits next to the awards after winning the 'Best in Show' competition at the 150th Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York City.

**Yiwu, China**

A batch of toys at the city's wholesale market went viral because of a production mistake that gave them sad, rather than happy, faces.

**Beijing, China**  
Robots perform a dance at the opening of the city's Spring Culture Festival.

**Pennsylvania, USA**

Handler A. J. Dereume holds Phil the groundhog, as Phil makes his prediction on how long winter will last, during the Groundhog Day festivities, at Gobbler's Knob in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania.

**Berlin, Germany**  
Klaus Ludwig Fess, President of the Federation of German Carnival Associations (Bund Deutscher Karneval), walks up the stairs on the day German Chancellor Friedrich Merz receives carnivalists at the Chancellery in Berlin.

**Bangkok, Thailand**

People queue to buy and sell gold inside a gold shop in Bangkok, following a recent drop in prices from record highs.

Sources: The Guardian &amp; Reuters