



FINAL REPORT FILE

-AVANTHIKA P

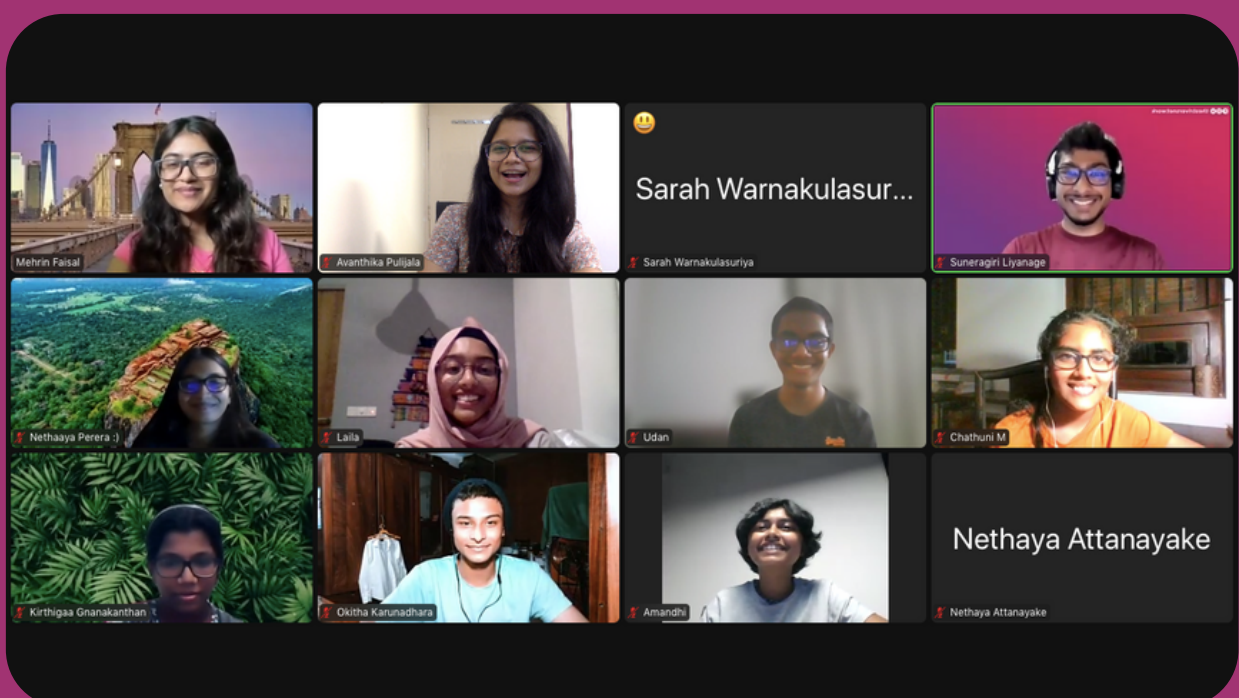


About The Strivers' Network

Our incredible host organization, The Strivers' Network is a youth-led initiative aiming to improve access to top-tier universities for underserved public-schoolers in Sri Lanka.

Suneragiri Liyange is one of the the Founding Members and helped us immensely throughout the facilitation. During our first ever meeting with Sunera, we learnt about our superstar participants, namely eleven young adults from Sri Lanka (aged 15-18).

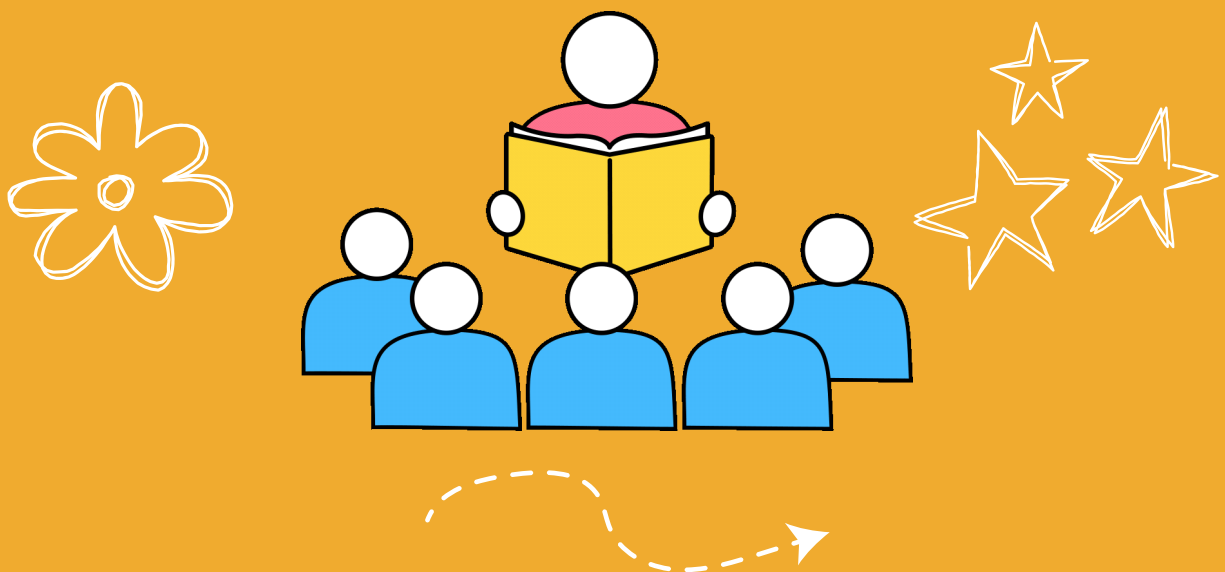
Our group consisted of Amandhi Marasinghe, Chathuni Marapperuma, Kirthigaa Gnanakanthan, Laila Sulaiman, Nethaya Attanayake, Nethaaya Perera, Okitha Karunadhara, Rahul de Silva, Sarah Warnakulasuriya, Shemali Abeygunawardene, Udan Marapperuma.





Plan of Action

- We decided to conduct 10 sessions via Zoom from June 29th 2022 to July 29th 2022.
- Sessions were held twice a week, i.e. every Wednesday and Thursday from 6pm to 8pm.
- During our initial meeting with Sunera, we learnt more about the current economic and humanitarian crisis in Sri Lanka.
- Thus, we came up with the following themes to cover during our Pre-Texts sessions; understanding oppression, interpreting conflict, dehumanization, implications of media and misinformation.
- The integral essence of our sessions was to promote creativity and critical thinking, encourage diverse perspectives and enhance our students' reading and writing skills.



Choice of books

1. Animal Farm by George Orwell
2. Resurrection by Leo Tolstoy
3. The Alexiad by Anna Komnene
4. Heart Bones by Colleen Hoover
5. The Invisible Life of Addie La Rue by V.E. Schwab

Weekly Sessions

Week 1:

6/29/22: Our introductory session started off with quirky questions as ice-breakers. Mehrin and I focussed on everyone being a facilitator during our sessions. I read out loud a passage from George Orwell's Animal Farm as the participants doodled away. We questioned the text, published our questions anonymously and took turns answering it. As a group, we asked each other about our choice of questions. This was followed by a round of reflections and asking each other, "What did we do today?". Despite frequent power cuts during the session, our Strivers were charged and enthusiastic.



7/1/22: After another round of introductions, we started off with tangents. We took around 15 mins to go through all the tangents and pick one. We spoke about our choice of tangent and reflected on what we did so far. This was followed a sound and movement activity which left us in splits. Nethaaya P was chosen as the Lector for the next session. We finished the session with a final round of reflection.

Week 2

7/7/22: We started enjoying building rapport with each other. Nethaaya P read to us, "Resurrection" by Leo Tolstoy. After publishing our doodles anonymously, we questioned the text and reflected on it. Our discussions started picking up momentum and we started probing further.



We felt that the atmosphere was friendly and there were no right or wrong answers.

7/8/22: Tangents unanimously turned out to be our favorite part of the session! The discussion which followed was intense, invigorating and everybody shared such diverse perspectives. After a brief reflection, we listened to *Primavera* by Ludovico Einaudi, marked the text and attempted to establish a relationship between both the text and music. We reflected on what we did and Kirthigaa was chosen as the Lector for next week.

Week 3

7/14/22: Quirky questions were definitely bringing us closer together through our responses and shared experiences. We listened to Anna Komnene's "Alexiad" and found it rather challenging to dive into history. But, this pushed us to question and analyze the text further. We concluded the session with reflections and ideas to co-construct activities for the upcoming sessions.

7/15/22: Our tangents just kept getting all the more interesting! Themes of our discussion ranged from women in Science, gender based discrimination and

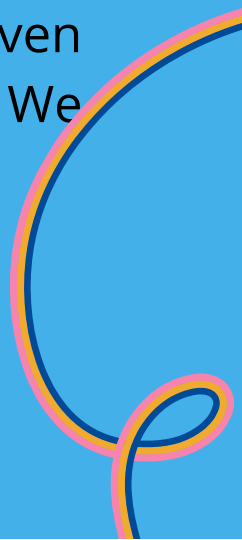
climate crisis to religion. After reflecting on what we did so far, we decided to create blackout poetry and use them as tangents later. Shemali was chosen as the Lector for the penultimate week.

Week 4

7/21/22: Shemali picked out Colleen Hoover's "Heart Bones" and got us emotionally hooked to the text. Our Strivers demonstrated great maturity and empathy while talking about heavy topics pertinent to adolescence such as substance abuse, depression, and relationships. We were able to associate themes from all the texts so far and compare them to important and contemporary issues. Our reflections started getting deeper and more introspective. We went through each others' blackout poems and ended the session with a note to bring in tangents tomorrow.

7/22/22: Educational disruption and COVID were recurrent points of discussion during our check in. Tangents started bringing us closer too. We even started guessing each others' choice of tangents. We reflected and chose Sarah as the next Lector.

Week 5



7/28/22: Sarah read to us an excerpt from *The Invisible Life of Addie La Rue* by V.E. Schwab. The Strivers began to check in with each other, facilitate, ask preferences and make decisions throughout the session. We questioned the text and reflected on how we had now started approaching the text differently. We shared our favorite quotes with each other and spoke about their significance. The session ended on a heartfelt and personal reflective note.

7/29/22: We were not prepared for this to end already. We wanted to see each other for 2 hours, twice a week, every week. Tangent discussion significantly opened us up a whole lot! We reflected on our collective experience and absolutely fell in love with the process.



Joining the pre-text x strivers summer programme, I was nervous but excited to learn and better myself and skills, knowing that I had been given a great opportunity to sharpen my critical thinking and to learn to analyse texts.

Throughout the sessions, we learned to associate our ideas and articulate our thoughts as well as to analyse the text presented in different ways. Eg:- Doodling while the text is read, forming questions and answering them using our understanding, creating tangents, and listening to music while reading the text and trying to connect the text to the music. I believe these different methods used to analyse the text helped us in understanding the text in a deeper manner, and also helped us to form our own thoughts and ideas regarding the text.

For me, it really made me analyse the text and scrutinise over every sentence and ponder over the meaning behind each word, and also made me more creative with how I approached the text. (Listening to songs I felt that were associated or reminded me of the text, sketching and doodling) Through these activities, I really feel that my critical thinking skills, how I express my ideas, how I expand on my ideas, my writing skills, my approach to things and how I explain my ideas have developed and improved significantly, so for that, I am incredibly grateful to the wonderful facilitators:

Avanthika, Mehru, & Sushinaga

Thanks to this programme, I have developed an interest in
- analysing things and diving deeper into the text and the
message or meaning it holds. I can say sincerely that I enjoyed
analysing the texts and also enjoyed and was excited about
the diversity of the texts that were shared. (Animal Farm, Resurrection,
The Alexiad, Heart Bones and the Invisible Life of Addie La Rue)
I also really liked hearing the different perspectives of everyone.
It was wonderful to see how we had our own ideas and
made our own connections to the texts shared. It really opened
my eyes to a lot of different things and I learnt new things
every session, whether that be science, history and philosophy.
(The element Polonium, the speech of Mark Antony)

We were all given the opportunity to be a lector for a session
and to share a text with everyone and I think it was a really
inclusive decision of our facilitators, because it gave us the chance
to share a text and enlighten everyone, and I can gladly say
that I took advantage of this opportunity that we were given,
so thank you for giving me and all of us a chance to share
a text with everyone to analyse.

What really stood out to me was how our facilitators were
always very open with us and spoke to us as if we were
friends and not students, as if we were all there with one objective
- to learn. It was really nice and it honestly surprised
(pleasantly) me because this is something that I am not used



- to here, in Sri Lanka in relation to education and learning. We were all given the chance to speak freely and share our ideas and to just talk about anything, even how our day went, which really made me feel more comfortable and open. We were even given the chance to decide what to do during - our session.

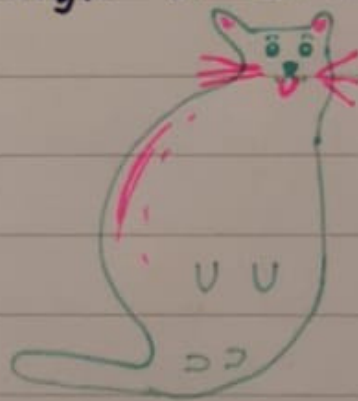


I would definitely recommend this programme to others as it helped me immensely in my creativity, critical thinking, analytical skills and how I express my ideas.



Thank you so much again, for creating this programme because it has helped me so much, and thank you for taking time to teach us and help us with our learning. A MASSIVE thank you to Avanthika, Mehrin and Suneragiri for conducting such a - wonderful programme!!

- Nethaaya Perera-
(Proud Striver 😊)



My Initial Expectations

I didn't know what to expect. I've always loved stories, books and literature. I've spent hours theorizing what a particular passage meant or why a specific colour was used. I was intrigued by what the program had to offer and honestly a little scared of what was in store. I'm glad to say the fear vanished pretty quickly.

Q. What did we do?

A: We learnt how to absorb a text to its fullest. Being students, our attention and focus can be snatched away in an instant, the doodling grounded us and embraced our creative abilities.

We questioned the text making sure everything we learnt wasn't just skin deep. We poked and prodded the various texts and answered the questions others had.

Q. Why did we do this?

A: To develop our analytical skills and to increase our understanding of these texts. To share our favourite stories and experience them as a group. We also learnt how to enjoy the text and relate it to various interests we had/have.

Fun Times

Tangents! It was the highlight of the program. We managed to talk about McDonalds and Meth and the cyclic effect of addiction in the same breath which truly showed how vast our interests really were.

The most fascinating observation I made was learning that when asked about their future, almost everyone pictured a quiet, calm life. Especially right now when chaos has been ingrained in our lives being able to admit we just wanted a little peace was therapeutic and calming.

Transferring my Knowledge

→ I can definitely use this in my education in order to retain my interest and love of various topics. Additionally by thinking critically and analyzing texts I can gain a deeper understanding while teaching others to do the same. In the future when I read I'll be reading more actively than I did before.

Family ♥

I think this program can definitely engage the family. A suggestion I had was interviewing parents and siblings on the text and getting their views and opinions on the subject matter and tangents we discovered. My parents were glad that I took part in the program especially when they saw how enthusiastically I was looking for tangents. Dinner time discussions were peppered with strange facts.

Feedback

I would 100% recommend this program to others, I made a lot of new connections and friends all while learning new and interesting things. Fridays and Thursdays were suddenly fresh and exciting. A suggestion I had was including more visual association with the text. For example: Making moodboards and using photography and visual skills.

I'd like to end by saying that it was an extremely fun and thought provoking program. From blackout poetry to making animal noises, we learnt how to think deeper and to analyze and question the things we are exposed to. I hope I can carry this on in the future and I also hope Udan just gets to eat some pizza.



Group Reflections

"Amazing session so far! We started off with a new lector and explored many heartbreaking yet real themes which reflect in our society, such as substance abuse, neglect, dysfunctional families, etc."

"I cant wait for the immense discussions tomorrow. I felt like this will become the opening for everyone to pour out their observations regarding such real issues in society, which will be amazing to hear. The Blackout poetry was very interesting. I had never heard of anything of the sort and was quite amazed when I heard about it from the workshop. Its crazy how you can edit something to completely change its meaning or make it poetic, beautiful and have something possibly more meaningful. Its unfortunate we are at our last few sessions, hope it lasts longer :)"

"I personally learnt a lot today and I'm very grateful for that. It's unfortunate that I wasn't in the best of spirits though :(But this meeting made me feel better :D"