

The New York Times Learning Network
2021 Student Narrative Contest Finalists
(in alphabetical order by the writer's last name)

Winners

Daniella Canseco, age 17, St. Mary's Hall, San Antonio: "Lips or Slug?"
Ruhani Chhabra, age 16, Mission San Jose High School, Fremont, Calif.: "T.S.A. and Cinnamon Buns"
Marion Cook, age 14, The Wheeler School, Providence, R.I.: "The Bluff"
Blanche Li, age 13, Diablo Vista Middle School, Danville, Calif.: "The Best Friend Question"
Lyat Melese, age 16, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Alexandria, Va.: "Guilted"
Elise Spenner, age 15, Burlingame High School, Burlingame, Calif.: "504 Hours"
Lillian Sun, age 17, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Alexandria, Va.: "Purple Corn"
Ellen Xu, age 16, Del Norte High School, San Diego: "Autocorrect"

Runners-Up

Bailee Cook, age 17, Hanford High School, Richland, Wash.: "To Cry"
Esther Lee, age 16, St. Paul Preparatory, Seoul: "Warmth Behind Unfamiliarity"
Anjanette Lin, age 14 Groton School, Groton, Mass.: "Orange Nikes"
Jimmy Lin, age 17, BASIS International Park Lane Harbor, Huizhou, Guangdong, China: "The Front Seat"
Robin Linden, age 13, The Wheeler School, Providence, R.I.: "Goodnight, Mom"
Sybellah Kidd-Shugart, age 15, Sprayberry High School, Marietta, Ga.: "A Watch Wound Back Seven Years"
Sim Khanuja, age 17, Kirkwood High School, Kirkwood, Mo.: "An Angel's Eyes"
Maximus Masucci, Harmony Middle School, Purcellville, Va.: "How I Learned to Break Out of My Shell: An Autistic Boy's Perspective on Communication"
Pranav Moudgalya, age 17, University High School, Irvine, Calif.: "Talking Turkey"
Jack Quach, age 17, St. Ignatius High School, San Francisco: "A Mighty Pen"
Ryan Thomas, age 16, Hinsdale Central High School, Hinsdale, Ill.: "The Pyrotechnician"
Sum Yu Tian, age 15, The Hockaday School, Dallas: "The Ever-Moving Train"
Yihan (Laura) Wang, age 13, Shrewsbury International School Bangkok Riverside, Bangkok: "Confession"
Elizabeth Warren, age 17, The Hockaday School, Dallas: "El Xbox"
Stella Wu, age 16, Taipei American School, Taipei, Taiwan: "Anonymous"
Jerry Xu, age 16, Sacred Heart Schools Atherton, Atherton, Calif.: "What's in a Name?"

Honorable Mentions

Claire Beeli, age 15, Woodrow Wilson High School, Long Beach, Calif.: "When Airplanes and Rocket-Copters Were Stars"

Jayda Brain, age 15, Illawarra Christian School, Albion Park, Australia: "The Viking Revenge Flume"

Tony Cai, age 17, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, N.H.: "A Coin Never Delivered"

Czarina Datiles, age 16, Academy of Our Lady of Peace, San Diego: "Bystander"

Jinane Ejjed, age 13, The Seven Hills School, Walnut Creek, Calif.: "The Flying Turtle"

Elena Green, age 17, Washington-Liberty High School, Arlington, Va.: "Modern Education"

Viona Huang, age 16, Diamond Bar High School, Diamond Bar, Calif.: "Born a Crime"

Chloe Jacobs, age 17, Choate Rosemary Hall, Wallingford, Conn.: "Heart Hearth"

Yoo Jin Cho, age 16, Presbyterian Ladies' College, Sydney: "Lost Your Voice?"

Eve Kaplan, age 16, Community High School, Ann Arbor, Mich.: "Boy Crazy"

Liana Kim, age 15, W. T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, Va.: "Echoes of My Blood"

Gwen McNulty, age 14, Lincoln High School, Lincoln, R.I.: "You Don't Dry Them"

Asher Mehr, age 17, De Toledo High School, West Hills, Calif.: "I Remember August"

Atena Mori, age 16, Iolani School, Honolulu: "Not Throwing Away Any Soup"

Eojin Park, age 16, Chadwick International School, Incheon, Korea: "Withering Cards"

Anya Pan, age 14, International School of Beijing: "White Rabbit Under the Sun"

Raymond Pan, age 17, Aurora High School, Aurora, Ontario: "10,000 Kilometers"

Stewart Payne, age 16, Western Albemarle High School, Crozet, Va.: "Playing Games"

Arian Salamat, age 17, Branham High School, San Jose, Calif.: "Boneco"

Alexander Sayette, age 16, Winchester Thurston School, Pittsburgh: "400 Meters"

Lauren Strauch, age 18, St. Mary's Hall, San Antonio: "Two Women Baking"

Cheyenne Toma, age 17, Leonardtown High School, Leonardtown, Md.: "Mourning the Dad I Never Had in Nine Innings"

Paul Wallace, age 16, Glenbrook North High School, Northbrook, Ill.: "Unholy Night"

Madison Xu, age 17, Horace Mann School, Bronx, N.Y.: "Table for Three"

Round 4 Finalists

Farzad A.: "Silence at the Cemetery"

Seojeong Ahn, age 15, Branksom Hall Asia School, Korea: "A Selfish Sacrifice"

Eleanor Babbitt, age 17, Cornwall Central High School, New Windsor, N.Y.: "15 Minutes"

Justin Bao, age 14, St. George's Senior School, Vancouver, British Columbia: "Under Snow"

Sara Bhowmick, age 16, The Harker School, Saratoga, Calif.: "The Bitter Smell of Soap"

Azlyn Bingman, age 14, Gladeville Middle School, Juliet, Tenn.: "Change Of Scenery"

Mahkaila Bivens, age 18, Portsmouth High School, Portsmouth, Ohio: "Why I Enjoy Reading"

Tess Brady, age 13, Irvington Middle School, Irvington, N.Y.: "Colors"

Lindsay Braun, age 16, Kirkwood High School, Kirkwood, Mo.: "Slamming Doors"

Karma Bromwell, age 15, Pecos Cyber Academy, Carlsbad, N.M.: "Nevermore"

Breanna Burke, age 16, Campion College, Kingston, Jamaica: "The Most Beautiful Hands"

Ava Busby, age 18, St. Helena High School, St. Helena, Calif.: "Dance Lessons"

Luke Calabrese, age 13, Irvington Middle School, Irvington, N.Y.: "My Hit"

Suvi Carlile, age 14, Brookline High School, Brookline, Mass.: "Hero"

Ally Carter, age 18, St. Mary's Hall, San Antonio: "Assurance of the Tides"

Bianca Castelant, age 14, Brooklyn Technical High School, New York, N.Y.: "What's Wrong With The Birds?"

Torsha Chakraverty, age 16, Delhi Public School, Mumbai, India: "Keeping My Stilettos High"

David Chang, age 15, Yongsan International School of Seoul: "Twin Popsicle Sticks"

Emily Chen, age 14, University Transition Program, Vancouver, British Columbia: "Foreigner"

James Chen, age 14, High Technology High School, Lincroft, N.J.: "First Shot"

Paz Chico, age 14, George Washington Carver Middle, Newark, N.J.: "I Am Peace. The World Is Not."

Vivian (Si-Wai) Chiu, age 16, International Bilingual School at Tainan Science Park, Tainan City, Taiwan: "A Timely Hug"

Hyeonmin Cho, age 12, Cal and Walts Wester Middle School, Frisco, Texas: "Such Sweet Sorrow"

Catherine Chung, age 17, W.P Davidson High, Mobile, Ala.: "Cowgirl in the Sky"

Michael Collier, age 17, Kirkwood High School, St. Louis, Mo.: "A Basement Ballad"

Shayla Collier, age 17, The Middle College at Bennett High Point, N.C.: "November Sixteenth"

Anna Dabrowski, age 17, Galway High School, Galway, N.Y.: "Dead Man's Special"

Gwenyth Dahl, age 13, Lexington Montessori School, Lexington, Mass.: "Finding Home: A Personal Narrative"

Breanne Daley, age 14, Exeter High School, Exeter, N.H.: "The Word That's Always With Me"

Sophia Davidson, age 14, Linn-Mar High School, Cedar Rapids, Iowa: "Chocolate Rainbows"

Emily De La Cruz Garza, age 15, Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders, Austin, Texas: "El Hechizo"

Boheng Deng, age 16, International School of Beijing: "All Rivers Flow to the Sea"

Maria Clarah Destine, age 18, United World College of South East Asia, Singapore: "The English Class"

Brooke Dubay, age 17, Sayville High School, West Sayville, N.Y.: "Letter of Gratitude"

Max Dujmovic, age 14, Woodside High School, Woodside, Calif.: "Beyond the Closet"

Madison Dumka, age 16, Kearney High School, Kearney, Mo.: "Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness to Thy Neighbour"

Myeisha Dyer, age 15, St. Mary Catholic Secondary School, Pickering, Ontario: "This Is Beautiful Hair, You Know That?"

Gerard Fajarda, age 17, Cornwall Central High School, New Windsor, N.Y.: "Chicken Adobo"

Cecilia Feldmann, age 17, Realgymnasium Rämibühl, Zurich: "Snow"

Michael Feng, age 13, Homeschooled, Hong Kong: "The Words of a Friend"

Amanda Fernandez, age 16, Jose Marti STEM Academy, Union City, N.J.: "The Silk Harmony"

Abigail Forsyth, age 16, Ecolint - La Grande Boissière, Geneva: "The Scone"

Kyle Fredrickson, age 16, Archie Williams High School, San Anselmo, Calif.: "A Goodbye That Stings"

Ruby Friedman, age 14, Clarkstown High School North, New City, N.Y.: "Grylloidea"

Yuyu Fu, age 17, United World College of South East Asia, Dover Campus, Singapore: "Ever Since That Woman From Mandalay"

Ella Furuichi, age 15, Archie Williams High School, San Anselmo, Calif.: "Colors That Make Up Memories"

Caroline G.: "The Blue Bear"

Michael G.: "Spider-Man Underwear"

Shaili Ganeshappa, age 18, St. Mary's Hall, San Antonio: "Christmas: A Time of Confusion, Indignation, and Disillusionment Towards Adult Figures and Their Lies"

Sydney Gaynor, age 16, The Beacon School, New York, N.Y.: "Behind the Counter"

Ariela Gottsegen, age 14, Archie Williams High School, San Anselmo, Calif.: "Happy Birthday!"

Addison Greer, age 18, Westview High School, Portland, Ore.: "Hands That Never Leave"

Cayden Gu, age 16, Palo Alto Senior High School, Palo Alto, Calif.: "Stalling"

Benny Gulis, age 12, Park Forest Middle School, State College, Pa.: "In the Twilight"

Angel Guo, age 15, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, N.H.: "Ah-Gong's Blueprint"

Cole Hanson, age 15, Bishop Miege High School, Roland Park, Kan.: "Pain and Perseverance"

Sadie Harrison, age 13, The Wheeler School, Providence, R.I.: "I Couldn't Read"

Kate Hawley, age 16, Corbett High School, Corbett, Ore.: "Funhouse"

Marah L. Henderson, age 16, Bristow High School, Bristow, Okla.: "Flowering Dogwood"

Ashlyn Hill, age 16, Edgewood High School, Edgewood, Ohio: "Sequins"

Jordan Ho, age 17, The Academy of Our Lady of Peace, San Diego: "Paper Planets"

Aria Hoque, age 17, Hazen High School, Renton, Wash.: "Masalas and Mediocre Racism"

Ava Hosea, age 17, Winsor School, Boston.: "Fish on the Dock"

Theona Hsu, age 15, Princeton High School, Princeton, N.J.: "It's a You Problem"

Alycia Hu, age 14, Hunter College High School, New York, N.Y.: "From Me, to Me"

Jeff Huang, age 16, The Branson School, Ross Calif.: "I'm Not Him"

Alison Hwang, age 15, Sage Hill School, Newport Coast, Calif.: "Tasting My Youth"

Princess Igwe, age 16, Roselle Catholic High School, Roselle, N.J.: "The Crown I Call Hair"

Kailey Jaeger, age 17, Smithtown High School West, Smithtown, N.Y.: "Paint by Number"

Tyler Jiang, age 17, Cheshire High School, Cheshire, Conn.: "Music Is Essential to Life"

Evelyn Jin, age 15, Northview High School, Duluth, Ga.: "Cork Grease"

Ryan Joe, age 16, Princess Anne High School, Virginia Beach, Va.: "The Unicycle and the Sleeping Goose"

Dana Johannsen, age 17, Fredericksburg Academy, Fredericksburg, Va.: "Reclaiming Myself and My Body"

Grace Johnson, age 16, Kirkwood High School, Kirkwood, Mo.: "Floor Duty"

Litzy Juarez, age 18, Morris County School of Technology, Denville, N.J.: "Stop Speaking Spanish"

Emily Jung, age 16, Seoul Foreign School: "Dancing Under the Stars"

C. K., age 18, Greenhill School, Addison, Texas: "I Am Still His Daughter"

Shreya Kamath, age 15, Morris County School of Technology, Denville, N.J.: "Your Words in My Head"

Sreya Kannappan, age 14, Mundelein High School, Mundelein, Ill.: "Mediocre"

Enya Kaonga, age 17, St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Dover, N.H.: "Back Home"

Aanniya Khokhar, age 17, Hatboro Horsham High School, Horsham, Pa.: "The Happiest Place"

on Earth”

- Yujin Kim, age 17, Choate Rosemary Hall, Wallingford, Conn.: “Finding Our Bliss”
- Elle Koontz, age 16, Edgewood High School, Trenton, Ohio: “First Date”
- Ismail Koshul, age 18, SICAS Liberty Complex, Lahore, Pakistan: “Outsider”
- Lindsay Lancaster, age 14, The Village School of Naples, Naples, Fla.: “Sorry Not Sorry”
- Maggy Lang, age 15, The New School, Fayetteville, Ark.: “8 Letters”
- Katharine Lee, age 16, Santa Margarita Catholic High School, Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.:
“She Wears the Pants”
- Thomas Lee, age 16, Seoul Foreign High School, Seoul, Korea: “Flights of Fancy”
- Patrick Leu, age 16, Herricks High School, New Hyde Park, N.Y.: “These Saturday Mornings”
- Sophianne Leung, age 14, Stuyvesant High School New York, N.Y.: “Last Rafts”
- Jerry Li, age 13, Stgeorges School, Vancouver, British Columbia: “One More Deep Breath, One
Shot at a Time”
- Xiao Tian Lim, age 16, Raffles Girls' (Secondary) School, Singapore: “Stay for Dinner”
- Mingyan Liu, age 16, Manhasset Secondary School, Manhasset, N.Y.: “The Obstacle Course”
- Riesling Liu, age 14, Awty International School, Houston, Texas: “The Scent of Fragile Life”
- Ava Liversidge, age 17, Polytechnic School, Pasadena, Calif.: “A Cat May Look Beyond a King”
- Penelope Luna, age 17, St. Mary's Hall, San Antonio: “Under The Sun”
- Kaitlyn M.: “Paper Crown”
- Phillip M.: “A View From Above”
- Nishka Maheshwari, age 14, Morris County School of Technology, Denville, N.J.: “The Worst
Fall”
- Sigal Malka, age 16, Sacred Heart Preparatory, Atherton, Calif.: “Esperanza”
- Alexander Lourdes Medel, age 16, Sacred Heart Preparatory, Atherton, Calif.: “Midnight in
Manila”
- Allison Mi, age 16, Huron High School, Ann Arbor, Mich.: “When Life Gives You Turn-Only
Signs”
- Elaine Mo, age 17, Buckingham Browne & Nichols, Cambridge, Mass.: “American-Born
Chinese”
- Irfan Nafi, age 17, Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology, Alexandria
Va.: “To a Starry Land”
- Cimran Naik, age 18, Notre Dame Academy, Toledo, Ohio: “Telling Herstory”
- Arya Namazie, age 14, La Cañada High School, La Cañada Flintridge, Calif.: “86,400 Seconds”
- Koni P.: “Carbs”
- Jamie Park, age 13, Crestview Middle School, Ballwin, Mo: “Chinglish”
- Nayeon Park, age 18, Hunter College High School, New York, N.Y.: “Silkworm Hands”
- Clara Peng, age 15, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, N.H.: “Staying In”
- Amanda Phan, age 16, Oakland Charter High School, Oakland, Calif.: “I Am
Vietnamese-American”
- Joel Piels, age 16, Livingston High School, Livingston, N.J.: “Sun Bleached”
- Samantha Podnar, age 17, North Allegheny Senior High School, Pittsburgh: “A Familiar
Rhythm”
- Tage Quigley, age 13, Irving A. Robbins, Farmington, Conn.: “You'll Never Be a Boy”
- Zhiyi Rong, age 17, Emma Willard School, Troy, N.Y.: “The Art of Love”

Kiley Rourke, age 17, Captain Shreve High School, Shreveport, La.: "Cassidy Cecila"
 Thomas Samit, age 18, Coon Rapids High School, Coon Rapids, Minn.: "Crime and Punishment?"
 Srithanya Satish, age 16, Green Hope High School, Cary, N.C.: "Trapped With a Five-Year-Old"
 Lamees Abdel Sattar, age 17, Morris County School of Technology, Denville, N.J.: "Intricately Wrapped Shame"
 Poppy Schaffer, age 14, Exeter High School, Exeter, N.H.: "Wishful Thinking"
 Kelly Sellman, age 14, La Canada High School, La Canada Flintridge, Calif.: "Each Inhale Brings Daggers"
 Isabella Shin, age 16, The Potomac School, McLean, Va.: "Pineapple"
 Klaresajane Sivas, age 14, St. Joseph High School, Hilo, Hawaii: "Locks of Love"
 Avery Smith, age 13, Lake Fenton Middle School, Fenton, Mich.: "A Letter"
 Hyeyun Song, age 18, North London Collegiate School Jeju, Korea: "Boys in Pink Pants"
 Charlotte Spohr, age 17, Kirkwood High School, Kirkwood, Mo.: "Friday Night Fears"
 Sakura Stankey, age 17, NUAMES High School, Layton, Utah: "Not a Big Deal"
 Samantha Stashower, age 16, Great Neck North High School, Great Neck, N.Y.: "The Release"
 Yuhan Sun, age 17, Nanjing Foreign Language School Nanjing, China: "Li Jian, K.F.C. and Mom"
 Liv Timp, age 16, Kirkwood Highschool, Kirkwood, Mo: "How Not to Get Your Car Stolen"
 Allison Tohme, age 15, Springfield High School, Springfield, Ill.: "Life Saving Betrayal"
 Isabella Torres, age 14, George Washington Carver Middle, Newark, N.J.: "He Was Just Playing Around."
 Kayla Tran, age 15, ASPIRE Academy for the Highly Gifted at Grapevine High School, Grapevine, Texas: "Lost in Wonderland"
 Annabel Tu, age 15, Phillips Academy, Andover, Mass.: "Foreign Family"
 Sydney VanDeusen, age 17, Cobleskill-Richmondville High School, Richmondville, N.Y.: "Identity?"
 Naomi Vella, age 13, Wellesley Middle School, Wellesley, Mass.: "Middle of the Night, Middle of the Lake"
 Benjamin Wang, age 14, Dougherty Valley High School, San Ramon, Calif.: "Not My Name"
 Hanjing Wang, age 16, Shanghai American School, Shanghai: "Colors"
 Weiran Wang, age 16, Aragon High School, Foster City, Calif.: "To Cover Up a Boo-Boo"
 Hamza Waseem, age 15, Heritage Herricks High School, New Hyde Park, N.Y.: "Hamza"
 Joy Wei, age 14, Phillips Exeter Academy, Exeter, N.H.: "Family Tree"
 Benjamin Wong, age 16, Dalat International School, Penang, Malaysia: "One Day in Summer"
 Allison Xu, age 15, Walter Johnson High School, Bethesda, Md.: "The Last Class"
 Emily Yang, age 15, Old Scona Academic, Edmonton: "Acid Thunder"
 Lily Yang, age 15, Grandview Heights Secondary, Surrey, British Columbia: "The Hair Cut"
 Ziqi (Rosy) Ye, age 15, Nanjing International School, Nanjing, China: "My Grandmother and the Little Mesh Bag"
 Hongyu Zhang, age 17, St. George's School, Vancouver, British Columbia: "Anna Ediger"
 Katherine Zhang, age 16, The Kinkaid School, Houston: "Color in the Keys"
 Yanjia Zhang, age 16, United World College of South East Asia, Dover Campus, Singapore: "Xue Hua Piao Piao"

Ran Zhao, age 16, King George V School, Hong Kong: “Jinyun Shaobing”