

**The New York Times Learning Network**  
**2020 Student Narrative Contest Finalists**  
(in alphabetical order by the writer's last name)

**Winners**

“Love at First Offhand Compliment” by Leah Gomez, age 17  
“The Bottom of a Swimming Pool” by Annie Johnson, age 15  
“Contraband” by Yana Johnson, age 14  
“Perfectly Pan-Fried Tofu” by Charis June Lee, age 16  
“A Friday Afternoon in Spring” by Madeleine Luntley, age 17  
“Pink Paper Gowns” by Katin Sarnier, age 18  
“Peach Pie” by Elisabeth Stewart, age 15

**Runners-Up**

“Mourning Dirt” by Yuan Gao, age 17  
“Crows by the Beach” by Huda Haque, age 17  
“Potato Salad” by Connie Jiang, age 15  
“Trembling Confidence” by Aarti Kalamangalam, age 16  
“What's My Name?” by Yeheun Kim, age 17  
“Fish Eyes” by Naomi Ling, age 15  
“Abigail Adams: The Second First Lady of America and the First Lady of My Heart” by Elly Pickette, age 17  
“That's the Thing -- I Don't Remember” by Anna Popnikolova, age 13  
“Self-Reliance” by K.R., age 17  
“Homecoming” by Charlotte Rediker, age 16  
“Blame It on Me” by Daphne Wang, age 14  
“BLOOM” by Paxton Woodard, age 15  
“Don't Apologize”

**Honorable Mentions**

“شكرا -- Thank You” by Sarah Alamir, age 16  
“Authentically Korean” by Lucy Alejandro, age 17  
“Autumn in New York” by Emeline Blohm, age 17  
“The New Normal” by Peyton Burton, age 16  
“Three Strikes and You're Out” by Hannah Chen, age 16  
“Connection Found” by Sonia Cherian, age 15

“Child's Play” by Maggie Craig, age 16  
“My New Shoes” by Said El Kadi, age 16  
“Roadkill” by Isabella Fan, age 17  
“How to Eat Lunch at School (Except You Have No Friends)” by Finley  
“A Funeral to Remember” by Korbin Kane, age 17  
“I Just Wanted Some Tea” by Sujin Kim, age 16  
“Chocolate Towers” by Niko Malouf, age 15  
“Growth” by Asher Mehr, age 16  
“Do Not Underestimate a Jellyfish” by Eleanor Mills, age 18  
“Cows and Bullets” by Aylin Miranda, 17  
“June” by Jacqueline Munis, age 17  
“Jump Roping” by Cloris Shi, age 13  
“Up There in the Sky” by Olivia Theaker, age 16  
“The Young Boy and The Sea” by Gabriel Thomas, age 14  
“Perpetual Worry and Other Afflictions” by Sakshi Umrotkar, age 16  
“Flash” by Qi Wu, age 18

#### **Round 4 Finalists**

“Fake Caffeine” by Lila Aspin, age 16  
“Did Not Finish” by Eleanor Babbitt, age 17  
“Longboat Key” by Lilly Beck, age 17  
“Calm and Rational” by Marla Bingcang, age 15  
“Crybaby Fighter” by Emily Braddock, age 17  
“A Broken Family” by Arturo Castanon, age 16  
“Vom King” by Preston Chan, age 17  
“The Slower the Better” by Ryan Chen, age 16  
“Noticed” by Gracie Couden, age 16  
“旗袍 (The Qipao)” by Kaitlyn Cui, age 16  
“Living to Die” by Sophia Curcio, age 17  
“Fascination” by Priya Dhananjaya, age 15  
“Sophie and the Mishaps of a Teenaged Bisexual Lady” by Sophie Dingman, age 13  
“Visit to Swansons” by Naomi Fina, age 16  
“Pennies” by Remy Finn, age 17  
“A Journey Up the Scale” by Melina, age 16  
“First Flight” by Megan Glasgow, age 16  
“Quarantine Basement” by Cayden Gu, age 15  
“Nice bro, u be u” by Gabriella Guzmán Mercado, age 14  
“A Place of Worship” by Zinnia Hansen, age 17

"X." by Lainey Hogg, age 16  
"Automobile Trouble" by Charlotte Hughes, age 17  
"On Grandfathers and Silence" by Yong-Yu Huang, age 16  
"An Unlikely Rescue" by Iris Jenssen, age 16  
"The Jacket" by Lyra Johnson, age 14  
"A Rude Awakening" by Mallory Johnson, age 17  
"Ten Seconds" by Lau Julia, age 14  
"I Hold the Key" by Kalista, age 15  
"The School" by Osman Kojic, age 17  
"The Bees" by Ellie Kovalick, age 14  
"Finding My Balance" by Scott Levy, age 17  
"The Bubble" by Yuval Levy, age 14  
"McDonald's" by Jasmine Li, age 14  
"Under the Moon" by Emerald Lin, age 18  
"Hua Hua" by Stella Lin, age 16  
"The Gray Apartments" by Jaden Liu, age 16  
"Have You Eaten?" by Esther Lo Zisan, age 17  
"Daisies Covered in Chipped Paint" by Vanessa Lois, age 17  
"You Can't Save Everyone" by Lola, age 14  
"The Expedition" by Yingyan Lu, age 18  
"Hand Prints on Glass" by Rachel Marshall, age 18  
"When the Lights Go Out" by Isamar Marte, age 17  
"My (Mom's) Minivan" by Kelly McLoughlin, age 17  
"The Door to Story" by Yidan Mei, age 18  
"War and Peas" by Diego Mercado, age 15  
"Summer Nights" by Taliesin Miller, age 13  
"The Line Leader" by Ava Minogue, age 15  
"Dumplings" by Eileen Mou, age 16  
"American Boy" by Ignatius Mudoh, age 18  
"The Lake's Spray" by Bailey Nathan, age 16  
"Order for Sarah" by Sa Nguyen, age 15  
"Give and Go" by Katheryn Nogueira, age 17  
"Crash Landing" by Aviva Notkin, age 15  
"Empty Stage" by Gabriella Officer-Narvasa, age 16  
"A Birthday Surprise" by Karen Pham, age 15  
"Alone at Last" by Oghenerun'or Pinnock, age 15  
"The Frigid Metal" by Conrad Pratt, age 14  
"Oreo" by Rachel  
"On the Tip of my Tongue" by Fatema Rahaman, age 17

“Before the Silence Settles” by Jordyn Randolph, age 16  
“The English Project” by Becca Ryan, age 17  
“Crystal Maneki-Neko” by Ron Ryuga Akaishi, age 17  
“November of Separation” by Leslie Sandoval, age 17  
“Growing Up African” by Dina Santiago, age 13  
“Late Night Talks” Sarah, age 17  
“American Girl” by Ananda Nicolle Scott, age 14  
“Into the Machine” by Amith Shetty, age 16  
“Lámen” by Fernanda Shimabukuro, age 17  
“Saudade” by Vivian Simpson, age 17  
“Aspiration” by Isabelle Smith, age 14  
“Aniccha” by Sohini, age 17  
“Just Try” by Michael Solomon, age 13  
“Waiting for a Chance” by Alejandra Marina Soriano, age 14  
“Ever Louder” by Audrey Starck, age 15  
“The Dark Blue Blanket” by Sophie Stern, age 16  
“Tumbling and Trembling” by Emily Stewart, age 16  
“Amalgam” by Henry Trinh, age 17  
“The Ones Who Are Always Moving” by Amelia Tsai, age 17  
“A Crown That Shines Bright” by May Tun, age 15  
“A Gun Can Stop Us” by Renece Vernon, age 16  
“Grandpas Are Too Old to Get Plastic Surgery” by Beatrice Villaflor, age 17  
“Becoming Axel” by Axel Wallace, age 16  
“Chives” by Justina Wang, age 14  
“Reunited” by Katherine Wang, age 16  
“The Unexpected Visit” by Joy Wei, age 13  
“Picking Stones” by Koon Wei Pheng, age 16  
“Plastic Plants” by Anna Weiner, age 15  
“Naked” by Whitney Whitehurst, age 16  
“Oh, the Humanity” by Zoe Xi, age 16  
“I Can't Read” by Anna Yang, age 15  
“Cooper” by Abby Yuan, age 16  
“I Don't Want to Be the Frog” by Mao Yi Yun, age 16  
“Dream Garden” by Elai Yu, age 19  
“Captain She” by Aoran Zhang, age 17  
“Hate to Wake Up” by Xinyuan Zhang, age 17