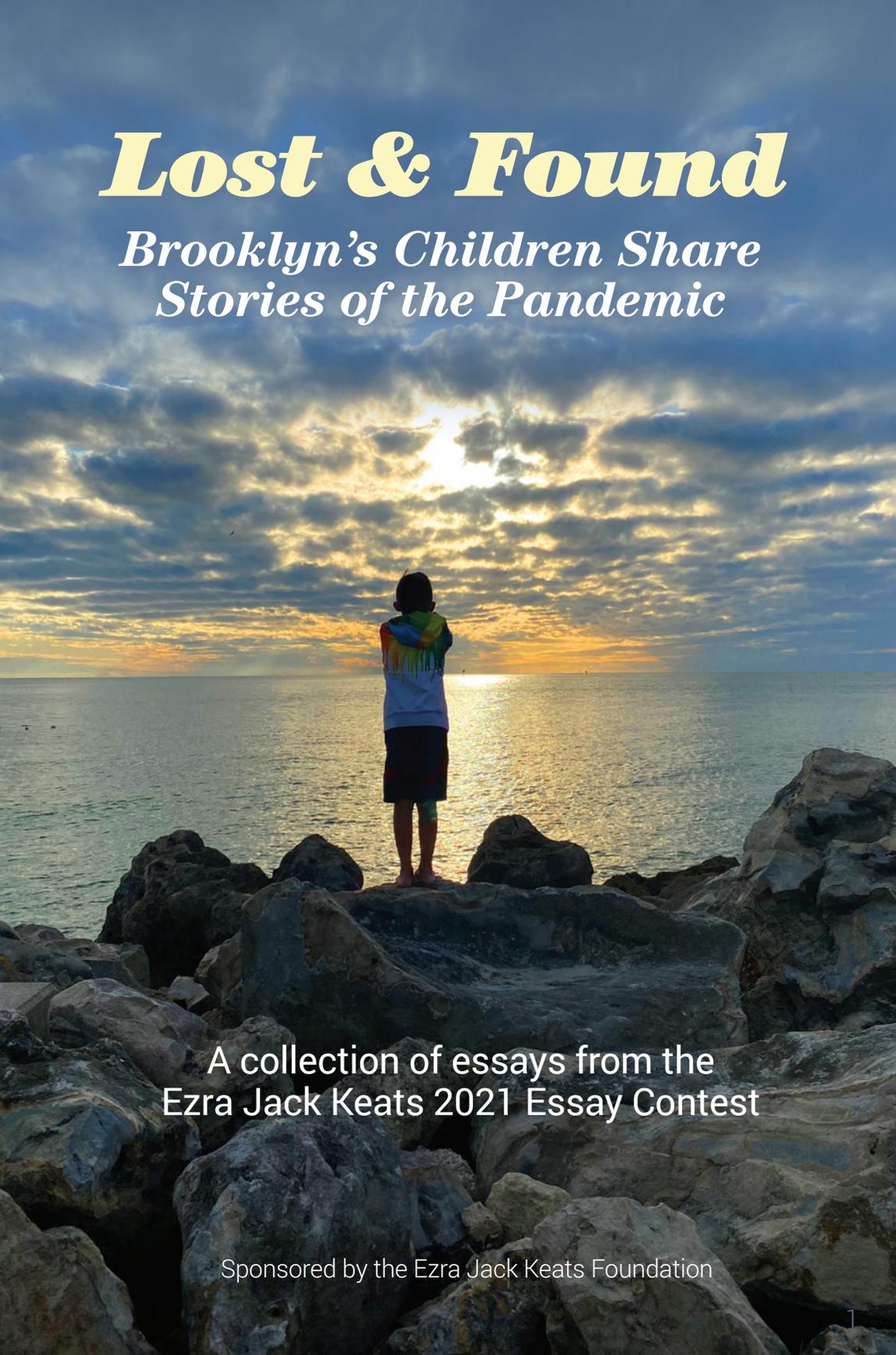


Lost & Found

*Brooklyn's Children Share
Stories of the Pandemic*

A child stands on a large rock in the foreground, looking out at the ocean under a dramatic, cloudy sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a golden glow across the water and sky. The child is wearing a colorful, patterned shirt and dark shorts. The rocks are dark and jagged, creating a textured foreground.

A collection of essays from the
Ezra Jack Keats 2021 Essay Contest

Sponsored by the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation

Lost and Found: Brooklyn's Children Share Stories of the Pandemic

A collection of essays from the Ezra Jack Keats 2021 Essay Contest

For 34 years, New York City public schoolchildren have written and illustrated enough books to fill a small library by participating in the Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition. The program is the result of a longstanding partnership between the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, Brooklyn Public Library, and the New York City Department of Education. Due to the pandemic, the competition was postponed in 2021. In its place, Brooklyn Public Library had the honor of hosting a unique essay contest for children in grades 3-5.

Focusing on current events, students were encouraged to write about their circumstances around the pandemic, lack of socialization, coping skills, anti-racism, school and family life, the election, and any emotions that may be coming up for them during these turbulent times in support of positive social emotional development.



Cover photo by Theresa Aberle

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About the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation

The **EJK Award, Bookmaking Competition** and **Mini-Grant Program** together further the two central goals of the Ezra Jack Keats Foundation to support public education and to promote the creation of outstanding diverse literature for children.

The Ezra Jack Keats Award, now in its 34th year, recognizes children's authors and illustrators early in their careers, encouraging them to continue creating exceptional books that reflect our diverse culture. Many past winners are now celebrated leaders in the field.

The Ezra Jack Keats Bookmaking Competition was designed to give teachers an effective teaching tool and demonstrate to students that learning can be fun. The program has flourished in New York City for over 30 years and has expanded to San Francisco and Atlanta.

Ezra Jack Keats Mini-Grants support public school teachers and librarians for their own special programs that enhance the learning experience. Since 1986 thousands of grants have been awarded to educators in all 50 states.

The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation was established by the late children's book author and illustrator, Ezra Jack Keats, whose 1962 book *The Snowy Day*, broke the color barrier in children's publishing. More recently, *The Snowy Day* was adapted by Amazon as a holiday special (and winner of two Emmy Awards); a set of *The Snowy Day* stamps were issued by the U.S. Postal Service; and the New York Public Library announced that *The Snowy Day* was the most checked out book in their 125 year history, as part of the celebration of that anniversary. For more about all of the Foundation's activities, visit www.ezra-jack-keats.org.

Ezra Jack Keats (1916-1983)

Ezra Jack Keats was born in Brooklyn. His parents were Polish immigrants and the family was very poor. Even when he was very young, he loved to draw. In junior high he won a medal for drawing, which he treasured his whole life because it encouraged him to persevere and become an artist.

The first book Ezra illustrated and authored was *The Snowy Day*. It won the Caldecott Medal in 1963, the highest honor a children's book could win at that time, and it remains a beloved classic.

Ezra went on to write and illustrate over 20 children's books, including *Goggles!*, *A Letter to Amy*, and *Peter's Chair*. He is considered a pioneer in the field for his realistic, urban, multicultural portrayal of childhood. He believed no child should be an outsider and wanted to cultivate a love of reading and learning that would last a lifetime.



From Deborah Pope, Executive Director, Ezra Jack Keats Foundation

Dear Students, Educators and Families,

Students, you have conquered an extraordinary challenge. This has been a difficult year for everyone and we see a level of understanding and compassion in these essays that are well beyond your years. It's a big accomplishment to get through hard times as you all have done. It's another major accomplishment to think deeply about the problems you, your family and friends have faced, and to express your feelings as clearly as these essays demonstrate.

Under normal circumstances your essays would inspire pride, pleasure and great expectations. But now, having come through the COVID-19 pandemic your work is even more important. We have a greater need for events and accomplishments that bring us joy and spark hope, as do your essays. This is why we thank you and it is how you've made the world a better place.

Educators and families, thank you for supporting the creativity and determination of these young people. This is a perilous time but the work you do with your children and students builds a bridge to a future for all of us. You cultivate our greatest natural resource.

Great thanks go to Kimberly Grad, who designed and implemented this program, assembling the outstanding professional development support for teachers and librarians, and facilitating their participation in this program. Kim organized outreach, managed the collation of essays, assembled the jury, guided the deliberations and served as the conduit for communication between students, families, educators and administrators. This could not have happened without her.

We also thank Linda E. Johnson, President and C.E.O. of Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), who gives us such a warm home in the Central Branch, and to Judy Zuckerman, BPL Director of Youth & Family Services, as well as to the illustrious members of the jury, who have all contributed to making this essay competition a success. Deepest thanks to all of you!

Keep each other safe!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Pope".

First Place

Serena Prince

Grade: 5
School: P.S. 119 Amersfort
Teacher: Yolanda Fields
Principal: Denise Nopper



Dear me,

You will start the year with high expectations. You will find yourself in a new country, about to start a new school. You will be excited to make new friends but nothing will prepare you for the chaos that is 2020.

Many disastrous events will change the world you know and change your perspective on many things.

I remember how you celebrated New Year's Day, you were especially happy because you had gotten exactly what you wanted for your Christmas present; mommy had started a new job, daddy had gotten a new car and your little sister was giving you a break. Sigh, life was good, had you only known what was around the corner later that very month.

You remember mommy and daddy talking about the fire in Australia, but it was far away, and you couldn't fully comprehend the damage it was doing, you were fine, it didn't affect you and you were too happy to think how selfish that thought was.

By mid-January mommy explained to you that you wouldn't be going to school every day of the week. You were confused, you will try to keep your friends by texting, but I won't be the same and you and your friends will grow apart. Virtual learning will be confusing and prove difficult at first, but you will get hang of it. By April of 2020 you would have fully comprehend the effects of Covid-19 and it would start to affect your everyday life. By then the virus would have killed hundreds of people. You will be scared to go to the park or to the mall; the very thought of going outside will be frightening. You will be scared to communicate face to face with the very friends you so missed, even from behind a mask.

It was May 19, 2020, you had just put your little sister to bed and were about to snuggle under the sheets of your own bed when daddy came to tell you that mommy wouldn't be coming home for a while. You cried that night, you didn't sleep. To learn that your very own mother had Covid-19 was devastating. For many nights you cried silently, not wanting to let you baby

sister see you cry. You made a vow to mommy to take care of your little sister as she would. It was so hard to remain strong for both of you. It was worse still because you couldn't leave the house. You couldn't go where anyone else was in the house. All you could do was watch movies and you always seem to end up watching the news. As the death toll rose, so will your worries, scared that you wouldn't see mommy again. But every evening when she calls, your heart will leap with joy. Her voice soothes your worries and for a few minutes everything was ok.

When mommy finally came home you were ecstatic. I remembered you cried, tears of happiness -- glad that the burden you carried for three weeks was finally over. But that happiness was short lived as soon after daddy lost his job and mommy would have to work even more hours.

In July mommy said that would be visiting Aunty Tish and Grandma in

Jamaica for a while and you won't be able to explain the feeling because you didn't want to leave mommy, but you wanted to go to Grandma.

But a warm hug from grandma changed everything and for the first time in a long time you will feel like everything will be just fine. The weather was warm, and you could play outside, finally. You still had to practice the same precautionary measures, but it was so much better. Aunty Tish will take you to the beach and cook delicious Jamaican foods.

You will be fully aware of the problems taking place in the world; you will worry about mommy. You will feel guilt because you had left her all alone, there in America. What if she got sick again? Who would take care of her? The guilt and the fear will follow you into 2021. You will only be a year older in age, but you would have grown so much in heart, fully understanding that life is a precious but fragile thing.

"This pandemic is helping me to understand life. Things could be worse. I laugh and smile to stay positive, because I know one day this rollercoaster will stop and life will become normal again."

Jard Wilson

Grade: 5
School: P.S. 194 The Raoul Wallenberg School

Teacher: Ms. Chambers
Principal: Jay Mendelsohn

Second Place

Saphira Li

Grade: 3
School: P.S. 11
Teacher: Ms. Banyan-Shepherd
Principal: Abidemi Hope



Have you ever felt that you were judged by the color of your skin and ethnicity? Well I didn't know how it felt until the year 2019 when Coronavirus started happening. When I heard President Donald Trump and political leaders called the virus the Wuhan Flu, Kung Flu, and China virus the world changed for me as an Asian American. It made me realize that I stood out just because I am Asian and face the chance of discrimination.

Since the pandemic, I have been doing remote school. I find remote school hard as I find it difficult to concentrate in front of a screen for a long period of time and the interaction with the teacher is not the same. I miss playing with my friends during lunchtime and saying hi and bye to friends. However, I am glad to be at home during the pandemic

due to an experience at school. When the pandemic started, I didn't think anything of it until I was in the school bathroom when a girl walked up to me and said, "China started the virus." I didn't understand why she said that to me until my mom explained that people believed China has caused the virus. This made me feel hurt because it was my first-time experiencing discrimination. I was also angry that this girl blamed me for causing the virus when I didn't cause it. I am born in America, but my culture is different. I am proud of my Chinese culture and proud to be an American.

Another reason I am glad to be home is the attacks against Asians. When I heard my parents talking about the rise of Asian attacks it made me scared to go out. I am afraid my family

will be targeted for something we are not guilty of. I am afraid my grandparent will be pushed or punched in the back of the head for no other reason than being Asian. Currently in school my class is reading *A Jar of Dreams* by Yoshika Uchida. I can connect to the Japanese family in the novel as they faced discrimination in California during the 1930s. This Japanese family faced harassments and attacks from their communities for being Japanese just as many Asians are currently facing. I wish that people would stop blaming Asians for starting a virus when we should be working together to end this pandemic.

My parents tell me to learn from my past mistakes to make a better future. Racism against people has been happening for a long time. The past should not be the present as we should be learning the lessons of past mistakes. I am hopeful that as my class discusses the topic of racism and seeing the movement of Black Lives Matter, we will cancel out prejudice and racism for understanding and compassion.

"As a Black girl, I understand the need for Black Lives Matter. Although I am afraid, I wish I could participate. I love the different murals and paintings on the streets. When I saw the protests for BLM in London as well in the United States, it made me proud."

Judera Burnham

Grade: 5
School: P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks

Teacher: Lizette Williams
Principal: Leslie Frazier

Third Place

Lucia Weissman

Grade: 5

School: P.S. 39 The Henry Bristow School

Teacher: Matthew Strong

Principal: Sara Panag



My sister's name is Cosima. It means order and responsibility. We laugh now because she zips through the house, making messes and causing chaos everywhere she goes. But in small ways, she has lived up to her name. Without her, I wouldn't have survived the worst months of the pandemic. Without her, my mind would've been in complete disorder. She was there to hold my hand as we rushed out of Brooklyn. She was my tiny spark of light during cold, gloomy days in Cape Cod. And she was my best friend as I adapted to life during the pandemic.

A year ago, we had talked about school possibly closing due to this new virus, which seemed thrilling at the time. I wasn't worried. But as the days went by, it got scarier. On Thursday, I stayed home from school. By nightfall I was packing. The next night, we were on our way to my nana's house in Cape Cod. As we drove, my parents turned on the news. I forget exactly what it said,

but I knew it confirmed our belief that we should leave. And then, all the thrill was gone. I was scared. Cosi was barely 5 months, but something in her brain understood, and she wrapped her tiny hand around my finger. She was a small bit of order during a chaotic time.

Spring in Cape Cod is miserable, and I barely got to go outside. But in the morning, I would take Cosi from her crib and into my bed. We would climb under the covers and play games. Even though she could barely understand me, she smiled and laughed. It was probably the only good part of my day. Those months in Cape Cod hurt so much. Without those special moments with Cosi, I don't know what I would've done.

A couple of months later, we were on our way back to Brooklyn. I had daydreamed about coming home and subconsciously connected it to a return to normal. So, when I did get home and realized I still

needed to social distance with my friends and would only go to school twice a week, it came as a blow. But it wasn't like Cape Cod. The room I shared with Cosi was brighter. In school, the teachers were more attentive. I joined pods with friends and played outside. But really, the reason that life was better again was Cosima. She could crawl on her own now and little noises that were beginning to sound like words. Every morning, I was woken up by her soft cooing. And as I would sit at my desk on zoom meetings, Cosi would be beneath me, playing with my toes and grinning. I did get to see my friends, but not

nearly enough. Even that was okay, because my best friend lived in the same room as me.

The pandemic has been a terrible, upsetting time. But Cosi is with me, helping me, and bringing stability and love.



"A lot of my friends got to go upstate and quarantine, where there was open space where they could run around without masks. But that was their family, MY family was stuck in our apartment in a busy city where you couldn't go out at all without fear of getting infected. I felt so left out of everything. But as I got used to being inside, sometimes I didn't even want to go outside. Over time, I started to realize that maybe this was the right setting for me, so I accepted knowing that I was in the right environment."

Clara Cabnet-Galarza

Grade: 5

School: Brooklyn Friends School

Teacher: Sophia Phillip

Principal: Crissy Cáceres, Head of School

Honor

Linh Kirk Soffer

Grade: 4

School: P.S. 139 Alexine A Fenty School

Teacher: Roshini Samlal

Principal: Mary McDonald



During COVID-19 I've been inside too much. I looked at the same walls. I slept in the same beds all the time. I sat on the same couch. I saw the same chairs and I sat in them every day.

My parents might have had a plan to limit my screen time, but COVID-19 changed their plans. Before COVID-19 I had lots of friends to play with, I could also go to their houses and I could go to the playground or park with them! It was fun. I also liked going into the building for school. During the pandemic, I do everything online. I was stuck inside, and it was hard, and I was a little lonely. Still, I knew I had it better than a lot of people, and that made me even sadder.

The worst thing I heard about during COVID-19 was the death of George Floyd and the racism that caused it. My mother is Vietnamese, so racism scares me. The Capitol riot also happened, and a few people died. Donald Trump wanted them to riot because he said that the election was "stolen" from him! During the riot people were attacking places like the Capitol building. In the paper they threatened they would attack the Capitol of every state in U.S.A. I kept thinking about hiding under the bed if they chose to attack near my house!

One way I got through COVID-19 was by practicing my violin every day. It's really fun because there are so many pieces to play and you usually don't get bored.

The music made me feel happy, but I worried that COVID-19 might not end.

When COVID-19 got a little bit better, a playground opened. My friends and I played there. We had to wear masks and we also had to stay 6 feet apart. We played football, catch and hide and seek.

Now at least I get to go upstate to my grandmother's house because people are getting vaccinated. I get to see my baby cousin. He's SO CUTE. I also have a dog up there. He's 63 in dog years. My aunt and Uncle went to live there with their baby and dog because of COVID-19. I smile when I see my cousin and my Uncle's dog

more now because of the time we were apart.

Upstate we went fishing. I caught some. My little brother fished too, and he caught more fish than I did, and he won five dollars because he caught more than my uncle! I can't believe that, because my brother was only 4 and I was 9 and also my uncle was really good at fishing and he knew all the good spots. What was my 4-year-old brother going to do with five dollars in a pandemic?

COVID-19 has been one of my teachers. It taught me to be careful. It taught me my time with my friends and family is worth a million diamonds to me.

"A huge tip is to make the place you stay most often clean and tidy. Trust me this will be a life changing tip."

Zara Habib Baig

Grade: 5

School: P.S. 119 Amersfort

Teacher: Yolanda Fields

Principal: Denise Nopper

Honor

Lorelei Schaary

Grade: 4

School: German School Brooklyn

Teacher: Jane Marie Hutcheson

Principal: Kathryn Nagle, Executive Director



Hybrid or Remote

Since the pandemic started, I have had an extremely hard time knowing which school schedule I have to use.

One day, I was all ready and up for school. I walked up to my dad and said, “Why are you still in pajamas?”

“Whoa kiddo you don’t think you are going to school, do you?” he said.

But I did. So, I went back to my room and unpacked my backpack.

Another time I was taking out my computer getting ready for homeschooling but then my dad came in.

“What do you think you are doing? We have to get to school! In-person school that is.” So, I really quickly got ready for school.

And those are only SOME of the times that happened. There were a lot of other times too.

I can’t even remember the time before we had two schedules to go between. We must have been so happy because we didn’t have to read all our emails and ask the teachers what schedule to use. I didn’t even know computers existed back then. What I remember most was hugging everyone.

But now I know almost everything I can know about the computer. Whoops! looks like I have class soon! (Who knows which type: in-person or zoom.)

But there is one thing I know about the computer that makes almost everything better: I know how to call my friends and family when I need support. My best friend Caie always has my back when I am down... on Zoom that is!

Looks like I gotta go! Bye!



“If I could describe 2020 in two words, it would be complex and teachable. 2020 can be complex because everyday life changed for everyone. 2020 was teachable because it taught you to be grateful, and taught everyone to get out of their comfort zone and adapt to the “new normal”. Be prepared for the new “normal” in the year 2020. Best of luck, stay calm, and everything will be okay.”

Zoe Giammanco

Grade: 3

School: P.S. 154 Windsor Terrace School

Teacher: Christine Luo

Principal: Jason Foreman

Honor

Esther Motia

Grade: 5
School: P.S. 321 William Penn
Teacher: Kyla MacDonald
Principal: Liz Philipps



In COVID times I have started to learn a lot more about the government and how our country is run. It has changed my view of things and it has made me try to be as open minded as possible and not look at things as a one-sided story. I thought everything was fair and no one could ever be racist or sexist. I used to think the world was one way and that way was right but when I started to see protests on TV it made me realize how imperfect our country is.

Before COVID hit I would never include myself in conversations with my parents about these topics. But now I am realizing that there are things in our country that need to be fixed, so I have tried to find my voice and speak my concerns and thoughts. I now know that having a different opinion might not be bad and that you should never hold back from stating what you feel. I have started to pay more attention to the news, asking more questions, wanting to know why

people were being killed because of their differences. I have started to be more aware in conversations about government and I realize how important it is to know how our country is run.

It made me angry when I found out that when our nation's capitol was stormed on January 6th, some people in the crowd who claimed they were fighting for their country chose to wear Nazi shirts reminding us of one of the most horrendous and consequential times in history! It made me frustrated knowing that there was MILITARY weaponry at Black Lives Matter protests, but there were just some police officers and guards when the capitol was stormed. Why would there be more concern about people standing up for their rights and less focus on the terrorists that broke the law and raided a SACRED BUILDING? It's puzzling to me that people still want to change the election and are "attacking" the new President.

Even though there has been a lot of frustration but when Joe Biden won the election, I remember feeling that all the concerns on the topic of climate change or global warming or racism had a shot at being fixed. The Saturday that the results of the election were announced was a day I will never forget. Throughout Prospect Park, cheering could be heard. Music could be heard everywhere. I could say the music could be heard for miles but that would be exaggerating.

It felt like the worries that had hung over our heads like a toxic cloud had been lifted giving everyone a sense of overall joy! I know the world isn't perfect, but I would like

to see change and I would like to progress in helping change. My view has changed, and I want to use my knowledge to help problems I see.



"I have learned to be grateful for things that I thought were normal. Things that I thought everybody had. For example, I thought everybody had computers, iPads, phones and internet but I learned that a lot of people don't. I thought that everybody had access to space, but I learned that a lot of people are in tiny apartments with no access to any place to do work or school or exercise outdoors."

Rayyan Ali Jivraj

Grade: 4
School: The Ella Baker School

Teacher: Kerri Manson
Principal: Joshua Satin

Honor

Chase Aberle

Grade: 4

School: German School Brooklyn

Teacher: Jane Marie Hutcheson

Principal: Kathryn Nagle, Executive Director



GAME ON!!!!

January 2020 was filled with possibilities! My family and I made maps of where we were and where we wanted to go by the end of the year. We were having fun together thinking about all of the possibilities. Our maps had lists of each of our hopes and dreams that we wanted to try to fulfill. We even noticed some of our dreams were the same.

In February, some of these things from our maps started to come true. We even stayed in a nice hotel and went to see The Lion King on Broadway with friends and family. The city looked less crowded than usual but that made it even more fun! My mom was also really excited because we got a big upgrade at the hotel for free. Everything was great, and I was excited for what more would come true in this year of 2020.

All of the sudden, more great

things started to happen, things I did not even wish for or think would ever happen! I found out that I was not going to go to school for two whole weeks and that we would do school virtually. Virtual school? Unexpectedly, my dad even showed up after traveling for work, and that was the best news yet. This year was getting better and better as each day passed. I could not imagine what was coming next!

Guess what? Really, guess what? This great year, with perfect 20/20 vision and 100% excitement, started tumbling down on me and hard. Little by little, I felt all my hopes and dreams fade away. I tried to hold on to them, but they slipped away like a slithering snake.

I tried to remind everybody about our maps but there was no more direction. I didn't know what to do so I kept quiet and continued

on with my real-life virtual reality except I never wanted to play this game this way.

Some would say it's GAME OVER because we had a very hard 2020. So many things happened to not just my family and friends but to the whole world. Everyone and everything have been affected in some way because of COVID. For example: I can't interact with friends, I can't do sleepovers, I can't do playdates. All these "can't's" started to make me feel lonely.

But I am saying now that it's "GAME ON!!!!!!!" My map is back and so am I!!!!



“Despite all the pros and cons, the pandemic was a very unexpected learning experience. I believe that this pandemic took a lot of opportunities from people that were active and wanted to be spontaneous. This pandemic also taught us things like we should always be grateful for our things.”

Scarlet Palmgren

Grade: 5

School: P.S. 321 William Penn

Teacher: Kat Miner

Principal: Elizabeth Phillips

Honor *Billie Jordan*

Grade: 3
School: P.S.130 The Parkside School
Teacher: Mauren Campbell
Principal: Stephanie Parsons



Dear Billie from 2020,

Hey, I'm Billie from 2021. It's March and Coronavirus is still happening. When you figured out it was going to be all remote school you were so happy, but you feel different now. When you first heard about the Coronavirus you were still in school, I think you remember. At that point, you weren't really thinking about how it could affect the whole entire world, you were just thinking about the fact that you were safe, and the Coronavirus couldn't get to you. But unfortunately, you were wrong.

Since I'm from the future, you might be wondering, "does it look different?" The outside world does look different, no floating cars or trains on buildings, but a bunch of restaurants and places people went to are closed. You can barely recognize who anyone is because masks cover half of their face. When writing this, I'm sitting on a new bed with a room with new sprinkle wallpaper, a new desk, and a beanbag. I'm wearing new unicorn pajamas. It's late at night and Mommy thinks I'm asleep. The sounds are still the same, like the wind tapping against

the window and hearing the pipes in the wall because of the quietness. The sights are the same, like when you could only see darkness when you close your eyes. And the things you felt are the same, like the faux fur on your pajamas and the pencil in your hand.

Here's some advice so you can pass the time in the house because Coronavirus for you mostly means at least five times a week you'll get bored. Play more chess with Daddy so you can learn more about it and get better. Try focusing more on your work with remote school and don't play music too often while you're working. Whenever you're scared to do something, just do it, because later you'll regret not doing it. I was scared to go to the Prospect Park forest because I am not really a nature person. I mean, the only kind of bug I like is the rose-haired spider when it's in a cage. I didn't really want to be in the forest because after 30 minutes of walking my feet were killing me. I was really happy that I held all the pain in and just did it because when we got there, there was a beautiful waterfall. The waterfall had giant boulders on the edges so no one could

fall in and the way the light was shining off the water was so majestic.

If I could describe this year in one word, it would be different. You'll learn a bunch of new things, including how to macramé, about the forest in Prospect Park, and how to play Roblox and

Minecraft. You will try new stuff that you wouldn't usually do if it wasn't for Coronavirus. Coronavirus is scary, sad, and challenging but someday we will overcome this tragedy.

Yours truly, Billie from 2021



How to Cure Boredom:

(especially if you don't want to sit around staring at a screen all day)

- Spend time with a pet...or take your neighbor's dog for a quick walk
- Take on a hobby or learn a new language
- Create a magazine
- Build a village out of dried beans, sticks and tissue paper
- Take on baking or cooking
- Have a family game night to play board games or charades

Aniela Coughlin

Grade: 4
School: The Ecole

Teacher: Isabelle Belneau
Principal: Jean-Yves Vesseau, Head of School

Honorable Mention

Ariana Abreu

Grade: 3
School: P.S. 312 Bergen Beach Brooklyn
Teacher: Mrs. Collins
Principal: Jamie Yoo



2020 had lots of ups and downs. It started when Covid-19 came. Covid-19 made people sick and I worried that my grandma and grandpa could get it. It also meant me, my sister and mom could get it. A few days later school was closed. I was happy to be home and get to spend all this extra time with my family! Soon after I began to miss my friends and I was sad. Everybody was stuck inside and I was very bored.

One thing I did was to watch the news with my grandpa. The biggest news story besides Covid-19 was the murder of George Floyd. He was a black man killed by a white police officer. It made me feel very sad because of how he was treated. There were riots and protests. My family didn't want me to be sad. They reminded me that we don't treat people like that. You never judge a book by its cover and our

differences are what make us special.

Due to all of that we were forced to stay home. My family spent time in front of the house making chalk art. We made rainbows and hearts. We thanked the frontline workers and wrote messages of peace and love for everyone to see. It mattered to me because I wanted to show my appreciation and help bring people together.

The other big change in my life was school. Since school was closed, we went to school online. It was hard to make new friends. I had a lot of homework and Google meets. It was frustrating because learning online was so different. I was lucky to have great teachers. My teachers worked hard to help us learn and encourage us to stay positive. I did a lot of reading, I researched about the Dominican Republic and about Katherine Johnson. That was my

favorite project! She is a famous mathematician who worked for NASA. I love math and she is my hero. Did you know she lived to be 101 years old? I want to follow my dreams just like she did.

Another thing my family did was cooking and baking. My grandma and grandpa cook the most amazing food. We had dinner together every night. My grandma let me cook with her. One of my favorite dishes was my grandma's chicken parmesan and salad and my grandpa's burgers. I learned a lot of new recipes and lots of fancy ways to set the table! That was the

best part of Covid-19 because I had so much time with my family.

The other thing that my grandpa got me into over Covid-19 was politics. He taught me about elections, voting and the President. We watched all the news about the election. It came between Joe Biden and President Donald Trump. Biden won and that made me happy because I think he is a good leader and a fair President.

I have hope that 2021 is a better year!

“My Great-Grandpa is an excellent chess player. He beat me more times than I can count. But somehow, that day, I beat him in this exquisite sport. I knew me winning was probably just luck. Even though he lost to me that day, I knew that he would not lose the battle against Covid-19. He would fight and beat it as he beat me so many times on the checkered board.”

Michael Kotsar

Grade: 4
School: P.S. 206 Joseph F. Lamb

Teacher: Marilyn Jackle
Principal: Ellen Quigley

Honorable Mention

Jamie McNair

Grade: 4
School: P.S. 312 Bergen Beach
Teacher: Ms. Canrella
Principal: Jamie Yoo



The letter from the future

Hello I am Kasey, and I am in the year 2121. A lot of crazy things happened, but trust me, I know everything is going to be okay. In my time, Covid-19 is all gone, and a lot of other bad things are gone, too. Now we can Live with Family and go to our friends' houses and not worry about Covid-19.

Let's go back a bit to when Covid-19 started. So after the vaccines came out, things started to get way better in the whole world, it seems like Covid-19 became a whisper. But I only read this in my textbooks so I don't know much more about it. That was just what happened in the world, now I will tell you

about what happened with my family. My 109-year-old great grandmother, and my 129-year-old great, great Grandfather made a Medical Rise like never before. Before The average lifespan was about 75 but now It's around 200! The cool thing is that there are about 0 deadly sicknesses.

This is the best part, the LOVE OF ALL MOVEMENT, we get a whole small town to live with family, and friends that want to live in the town. The cool thing is that we get to explore the world for free with your friend and of course with your family, you even have food and stays for FREE! SCHOOL IS AWESOME! If we were visiting Egypt, we can go to a school there or have a hologram of

your class back home. How awesome is that. Now animals roam free. Sometimes we see lions with their cubs. You can Play with the adorable little cubs, but you might get sad because the cubs must go home at night. This is the best part right!

The future is amazing, so now you see that the future is okay. Trust me, I know that since the

lifespan is about 200, you will have to deal with your parents barging in your room for a long time. You will really like the school in the future, you will get to see your teacher as a hologram, and your friends too. Now we are free, if you ask me, free is the best life ever.

Written by Jamie Ann McNair

“Whenever I can get the vaccine, I’ll be jumping at the chance. I’m sure that the more people that get vaccinated, the sooner this will be over. Even if Coronavirus is not fully defeated and becomes like the flu, I don’t mind wearing a mask for another year or two. No matter what happens, nobody knows. But I know that Covid has to end sometime, right?”

Eliza Cohen

Grade: 3
School: P.S. 130 The Parkside School

Teacher: Mauren Campbell
Principal: Stephanie Parsons

Honorable Mention
**Halcyanna
Pasternak**

Grade: 3
School: P.S. 130 Parkside School
Teacher: Mauren Campbell
Principal: Stephanie Parsons



Camp School

Shhh... be quiet or you might spook it! Do you see what I see? Over there, poking its head out of the ground. Head cocked, interested in what I am doing. It won't dare to come close. I creep towards it ever so slowly and quietly. And then, CRACK! I step on a stick and the animal scurries back down its hole.

Does this sound like school to you? It doesn't sound like school to me, at least before COVID. But now that COVID is here, we have different opportunities, like camp school! Before COVID, I was in normal second grade. We ate lunch with our friends. We sat together to do math, writing, and reading. We went to the blue rug in the front of the room for show and tell. We didn't wear masks and we didn't stay six feet away from each other.

During COVID, there have been a lot of changes. I am at home most of the time, and my parents are here too – checking my work and setting timers, saying “Your meeting is in 9 minutes!” My teachers are at school, but they teach differently. They share screens, show videos, have small groups, and turn off the chat when kids aren't cooperating.

I do see my friends and classmates every day, but not in person. Instead, I'm on Zoom. I can't just get a hall pass, bump into friends and chitchat. Now I have to schedule everything so we can all stay safe.

There's one thing about COVID, though, that made school really special this year: Camp school!

In October, me, my parents and my dog, LuluBelle, set up camp by a stream in Stokes State Forest. For one week, we slept, played,

worked and schooled out of our little, pop-up camper.

“What did I do there?” you might ask. Well, of course, I did Zoom school, but I didn't just do school. Join me for a moment. Step into my boots if you please. Wade into the water and look at this beautiful dam.

Woosh-bam-slam-crash. The water is rushing through the rocks. One, two, three, four... I am building on the river's floor. Five, six, seven, eight... I put the rocks in their place. Brrrr, the stream is cold and my hands are turning red. I am building a dam that hopscotches across the stream so I can make a pool for frogs and fish.

There were a lot of frogs on the campsite. They had bumps on their backs and came out at night. Using a flashlight, I sneaked towards them, cupped my hands, caught them and let them go.

Catching frogs was easy, but how would I catch the mysterious, furry animal lurking around our campsite? I picked some mushrooms and placed them by its den. Then I sat and watched. After a while, it waddled out. It came to me... It was a woodchuck!

And that was the end of COVID camp school, an awesome and unforgettable week.

“My mom is on the phone with my grandma arranging plans for her to come. Why aren't we going there? The doorbell rings but it's groceries not my friend. Again, it rings. It's a package but it's not my birthday present; it's masks.”

Catalina Skinner

Grade: 5
School: Brooklyn Friends School

Teacher: Gabe Gordon
Principal: Crissy Cáceres, Head of School

Honorable Mention

Anaya Wilson

Grade: 5
School: The New American Academy
Charter School
Teacher: Bionca Olimpio
Principal: Lisa Parquette Silva



The first time I heard about COVID-19 or coronavirus was around January 2020. I heard on the news about a disease in China. Everyone questioned how it started and many believed it was from eating bats. Suddenly, people started to blame all Asians. I remember when my teachers and family told me about the coronavirus, mainly about the symptoms and how to protect ourselves from it. I did not take it seriously. I did not think that COVID-19 was going to be as bad as it has been. When the schools shut down, I felt disappointed about staying away from the school and having classes at home. I am still disappointed about possibly having my prom and graduation at home.

There are more than 111 million COVID-19 cases around the world with over 2.5

million deaths. I cannot even understand what the numbers means. But I know that it is a lot and I feel sad. In the U.S., there are more than 28 million cases, over 500,000 deaths and over 18 million people who recovered. My family has been very careful. We wore our masks outside. We stayed six feet away from others. We washed our hands immediately after coming home. We did not visit others. But in August 2020, my grandmother and my uncle became sick. My baby brother did not understand COVID-19. He always wanted to go see grandma, but we kept telling him it was impossible. At the end of January 2021, my father and mother also tested positive for COVID-19. I was worried about their health and even had nightmares. Luckily, my siblings and I tested negative.

I learned how dangerous the coronavirus is and how fast it can spread from person to person. It reached so many countries around the world, even countries I did not know about. It is important to learn the symptoms like fever, chills, cough, sore throat, and trouble breathing. It is also important to continue wearing a mask and get tested to make sure. Also, many Asians have been attacked and have lived in fear since 2020. A 75-year-old Asian man was beaten in California. This makes me angry. We should support each other to beat the coronavirus. With police brutality against Black people, I hope that

we can all learn to accept each other and live in peace. Just because the coronavirus started in China, it does not mean every Asian person should be blamed for it.

I am only 10 years old, I want to live until I am old. With the COVID-19 vaccines, I hope that the situation will get better. I hope that everyone can get the vaccine. The vaccine will keep us safe and make the whole world happy again. I believe it is possible to be in the world without COVID-19 again. My dream is to attend 6th grade in person in September 2021.

“In my mind I was dreaming that I saw Corona in real life. He was all green and sloppy. He was trying to touch my arm and a hand sanitizer bottle appeared next to me. I took it and squirted on him and he disappeared.”

Eva Mendes de Leon

Grade: 4
School: The Ecole

Teacher: Isabelle Belneau and Mr. Fontenaud
Principal: Jean-Yves Vesseau, Head of School

All Entries

<i>Author</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
Ariana Abreu	3rd	PS 312 Bergen Beach Brooklyn	Mrs. Collins
Sarah Burnett	3rd	P.S. 130 Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Emma Carr	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Danielle & Mrs. Stewart
Jayleen Chang	3rd	P.S. 197 Kings Highway Academy	Ms. Kaplan
India Chilov	3rd	Quad Preparatory School	Erika Flory
Anabia Choudhry	3rd	P.S. 197 Kings Highway Academy	Ms. Kaplan
Eliza Cohen	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Amber-Amora Edwards	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Juliet Gabel	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Zoe Giammanco	3rd	PS 154 Windsor Terrace School	Christine Luo
Annaliese Ginsberg	3rd	P.S. 154	Ms. Chiu
Talha Hossain	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Tayyaba Hossain	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Billie Jordan	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Madyson Kao	3rd	P.S. 154	Ms. Luo
Alexander Kogan	3rd	P.S. 197	Dawn Torres
Saphira Li	3rd	P.S. 11	Ms. Banyan
Emma Lin	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Muhammadali Mirmuhamedov	3rd	P.S. 197 Kings Highway Academy	Ms. Tejiram
Zahra Nuwere	3rd	P.S. 312	Mrs. Collins
Jackson O'Connor	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Danielle & Ms. Stewart
Halcyanna Pasternak	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Saheim Rahim	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Ted Saint Paul	3rd	P.S. 115 Daniel Mucatel school	Ms. Ruiz
Faiyaz Samin	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Ms. Mauren Campbell
Penelope Siegel	3rd	P.S. 154 The Windsor School	Ms. Luo
Joe Stewart	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Danielle Loccisano
Lillian Tuzo	3rd	P.S. 130 The Parkside School	Danielle Loccisano & Christina Stewart
Zaina Walters	3rd	P.S. 361	Mrs. Cheung
Chase Aberle	4th	German School Brooklyn	Jane Marie Hutcheson
Joshua Alleyne	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Mrs. Armstead & Mrs. Marshall

<i>Author</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
Frances Bause Mason	4th	German School Brooklyn	Ms. Jane Marie Hutcheson
Andrew Chilstrom	4th	St. Bernards School	Katie Cunningham
Jayda Conyers	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall
Aniela Coughlin	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall
Sanaa Crawford	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall
Sophia DeNyse	4th	The École	Isabelle Belneau
Amgelo Fuentes	4th	P.S. 361	Mr. Trimboli
ZaVera Greenidge - Evelyn	4th	Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall
Kiersten Haggins	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall
Marlo Holderbaum	4th	German School Brooklyn	Jane Marie Hutcheson
Aliana Jetha	4th	German School Brooklyn	Jane Marie Hutcheson
Rayyan Ali Jivraj	4th	The Ella Baker School	Kerri Manson
Louise Jouvin	4th	The Ecole	Miss Belneau & Mr Fontenaud
Aveleen Kaur	4th	P.S. 139	Ms. Samlal
Michael Kotsar	4th	P.S. 206 Joseph F. Lamb	Ms. Marilyn Jackle
Soleil Landau	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall & Ms. Armstead
Elijah Lewis	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall & Ms. Armstead
Olivia Marecheau	4th	P.S. 312	April Carnella
Jamie McNair	4th	P.S. 312	April Carnella
Eva Mendes de Leon	4th	The École	Ms. Belnau & Mr. Fontenaud
Ella Noseworthy	4th	The École	Ms. Belnau & Mr. Fontenaud
Tobias Peck	4th	P.S. 38	Mrs. Segers
Lorelei Schaary	4th	German School Brooklyn	Jane Marie Hutcheson
Lucy Segelin	4th	German School Brooklyn	Jane Marie Hutcheson
Linh Kirk Soffer	4th	P.S. 139 Alexine A. Fenty	Roshini Samlal
Julian Weston	4th	German School Brooklyn	Jane Marie Hutcheson
Ayanna Willoughby	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall
Makayah Workman	4th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Marshall & Ms. Armstead
Linura Abdunazarova	5th	P.S. 128 Bensonhurst School	Ms. Vallen & Mrs. Lewis
Dennis Andelman	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach School	Cara Bianchi
Anna Andreyko	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach School	Cara Bianchi
Calogero B.	5th	PS 321 William Penn	Ronda Matthews

All Entries continued

<i>Author</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
Jazminn Babb	5th	Ocean Hill Collegiate Charter	Ms. Palermo
Zara Habib Baig	5th	P.S. 119 Amersfort	Mrs. Yolanda Fields
Eloise Baker-Robbins	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Thomas Henson
Maya Banner	5th	P.S. 321	Kyla Macdonald
Deborah Bashiru	5th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Ms. Williams
Daniel Belenky	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Masiela (Mazzy) Belt	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Alison Mirylees
Judera Burnham	5th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Lizette Williams
Jennifer Buslovich	5th	P.S. 277	Marguerite Burke
Clara Cabnet-Galarza	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Ms. Sophia Phillip
Taqbir Chowdhury	5th	P.S. 171 Patrick Henry	Ms. Samuel
Ford Cook	5th	Ford Cook	Felix Alberto
Christopher Cruz	5th	P.S. 277	Mrs. Russo & Mrs. Kid
Sidney Dunn	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Gabe Gordon
Yaretzi Flores Macedo	5th	P.S. 90	Mr. Fries & Mr. Morton
Veloria Gittrich	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Sophia Phillip
Shaan Glazer	5th	Birch Wathen Lenox School	Melissa Freeman
Sophie Herard	5th	P.S. 119 Amersfort	Mrs. Field
Aliza Hykin	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Victor Irizarry	5th	P.S. 90	Ms Solomon
Lindsay John	5th	The New American Academy Charter School	Ms.Olimpio
CJ Johnston	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Sophia Philip
Avian Knight	5th	The New American Academy Charter School	Ms. Olimpio
Alan Kofman	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Abbi Kotikovski	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Kristina Lantushko	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Danielle Levitt	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Gabe Gordon
Lev Markel	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Insaf Mohamed Irfan	5th	P.S 119 Amersfort	Mrs. Fields
Esther Motia	5th	P.S. 321 Brooklyn	Kyla MacDonald
Avigail Muravchik	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Elmira Nebijovski	5th	P.S. 128 Bensonhurst	Mrs. Lewis

<i>Author</i>	<i>Grade</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Teacher</i>
Scarlet Palmgren	5th	P.S. 321	Kat Miner
Maiya Pandya	5th	P.S. 10	Mr. Feldman
Subayah Parvez	5th	P.S./I.S. 104	Mrs.Metry
Hannah Powell	5th	NEST+m	Tracy Jacobs
Serena Prince	5th	P.S. 119 Amersfort	Yolanda Fields
Sahir Rao	5th	P.S. 90 Edna Cohen School	Mrs. Sigler
Dekuri Reid	5th	The New American Academy	Ms. Olimpio
Alice Rondeau	5th	P.S. 58 The Carroll School	Katie Wheeler
Isaac Rothstein	5th	Luria Academy	Dru D'Amico
Edvin Saint Paul	5th	P.S. 115 Daniel Mucatel	Ms. Murray-Johnson
Lizaveta Samsonava	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Marium Sardar	5th	P.S. 119 Magnet School of Global and Ethical Studies	Yolanda Fields
Lily Seibert	5th	P.S. 39	Ms. Ulanowsky
Hifsa Shafi	5th	P.S. 119 Magnet School of Global and Ethical Studies	Yolanda Fields
Veronica Simon	5th	P.S. 321	Laurie Basloe
Matthew Singer	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Catalina Skinner	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Gabe Gordon
Michelle St. Germain	5th	The New American Academy Charter School	Mrs. Cox
Abdul Syed	5th	P.S. 119 Magnet School of Global and Ethical Studies	Yolanda Fields
Brendon Vilar	5th	P.S. 277 Gerritsen Beach	Dr. Burke
Fabiola Vulcano	5th	Brooklyn Friends School	Gabe Gordon
SummerLove Webb	5th	P.S. 21 Crispus Attucks	Lizette Williams
Lucia Weissman	5th	PS. 39 - The Henry Bristow School	Matthew Strong
Sarah Williams	5th	P.S. 134 Langston Hughes School	Ms. Gillingham
Anaya Wilson	5th	The New American Academy Charter School	Mrs. Bionca Olimpio
Jard Wilson	5th	P.S. 194	Mrs. Chambers
Kayla Yadgarov	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi
Xiya Zhuo	5th	P.S. 277	Dr. Burke
Julia Zorin	5th	P.S. 195 Manhattan Beach	Cara Bianchi

“Into the first month of the pandemic, my father brought home Covid. He had to quarantine himself for a week. Within that week, my mom got Covid, then I started feeling a little sick. I had a Zoom with the doctor (that’s right -- a Zoom), and she reassured us that I had a “mild cold.” Turns out, I also had Covid. It took a painful month and a half for me and my family to recover. After a month and half of quarantine, I recovered, but I still had some problems. People were afraid to play with me while they still played with other kids. They were probably afraid that I had “Coronas,” as they called Covid. That left me with no one to play with and only Zoom. My family needed fresh air and an easy, accessible place to swim because the pool was closed, and the salt air at the beach helped me and my mom recover from Covid. Now I am at a new school with new friends.”

Isaac Rothstein

Grade: 5
School: Luria Academy

Teacher: Dru D'Amico

Project Teams

Brooklyn Public Library

Librarian partner team for workshops

Sheneatha Frison, *Senior School Outreach Librarian, Youth and Family Services*
Olivia Kim, *Senior Children's Librarian, Windsor Terrace Library*
Josh Goldstein, *Senior Children's Librarian, Coney Island Library*
Lisa Goldstein, *Division Chief, Central Youth Wing*
Ann Lautner, *Senior Children's Librarian, Mill Basin Library*
Maria McGrath, *Senior Children's Librarian, Macon Library*

Selection Panel

Chair

Kimberly Grad, *Coordinator, School Age Services*

Selection Committee Members

Meghan DiTommaso, *Senior Children's Librarian, Cypress Hills Library*
Lisa Goldstein, *Division Chief, Central Library Youth Wing*
Ann Lautner, *Senior Children's Librarian, Mill Basin Library*
Maria McGrath, *Senior Children's Librarian, Macon Library*
Yesha Naik, *Senior Children's Librarian, Youth Wing Central Library*
Donette David Riker, *Senior Children's Librarian, East Flatbush Library*
Jess Harwick, *Senior Children's Librarian, McKinley Park Library*

Community Word Project Workshops

Autumn Tilson, *Senior Program Manager*
Teaching artists Jashua Sa-Ra, Molly Goldman and Phyllis Capello

Ezra Jack Keats Foundation

Deborah Pope, *Executive Director*
Diana Vozza, *Associate Director*

Project Management

Kimberly Grad, *Coordinator, School Age Services, Brooklyn Public Library*
Jennifer Macaluso, *Freelance services*
Jay Boucher, *Designer*

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