

iWRITER

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BY KIDS FOR KIDS MAGAZINE



2021

NEW Beginnings

Articles by our Staff as we look away from 2020
and embrace the new beginning of 2021.

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a note from the editor

As years go, 2020 was definitely not been humanity's finest. iWRITE has had to put a lot of things on hold or turn them into virtual events, like the annual luncheon, the Bubbles and Bingo fundraiser, and the Youth Club's meetings at the United Way. We struggled with natural disasters, a health crisis, mounting racial tensions, and so much more. Many lost loved ones, struggled with illnesses, COVID and otherwise, or struggled to find their place in this world. We're living during a time when it's so difficult to begin a new journey and turn a new page, so thank you. Thank you to new readers for exploring something new and turning the page. Thank you to old readers for returning to a magazine that aims to spread positivity, a value that is rare this year.

On another note, congratulations. Congrats to us all! We got through this past year, though it was a struggle. We reveled in the positive elements of 2020 and engaged in pensive discussions and reflection over the negative or uncomfortable parts. This surely wasn't the way that we expected the turn of the decade to take place, but we powered through it.

Just as I've spent the first two paragraphs of this letter in retrospect, looking back on the year we just had, many are finding it difficult to stop dwelling on the unfortunate events that this year has weighed on our hearts. But now is the time for looking ahead.

Crisis is the mother of innovation; from the Neolithic Revolution to the World Wars to the lockdown in 2020, humankind has always been at the forefront of progress during trying times. 2020 has been a year where progress on many fronts has ground to a halt, but in many others, progress is only beginning. To me, 2021 being christened the Year of the Ox in the Chinese Zodiac is more than a coincidence: the perseverance and persistence of the ox, along with the hope and optimism of the farmer, are values that humanity will surely need if we're going to further develop our society and not forget, but be able to leave the dark year of 2020 behind us.

And that's exactly why this edition of the iWRITER Magazine is themed around new beginnings, hope, and looking at things from a positive perspective. We've included short stories, poems, and articles that, we hope, will help those who are having difficulty removing themselves from the sorrow of this past year look forward to the great things that are in store for us.

Happy reading and Happy New Year!

Eshaan Mani

I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel when my pen touches the paper. It is that exhilarating experience and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.

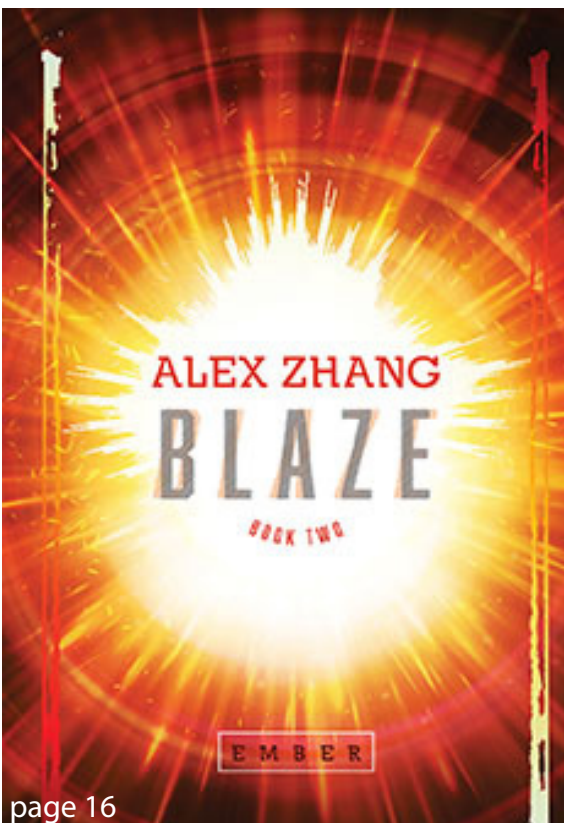
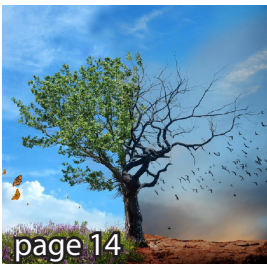
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Source: Fox Business



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THE Threshold

Reflecting on the year behind us as we enter 2021 with hope and optimism.

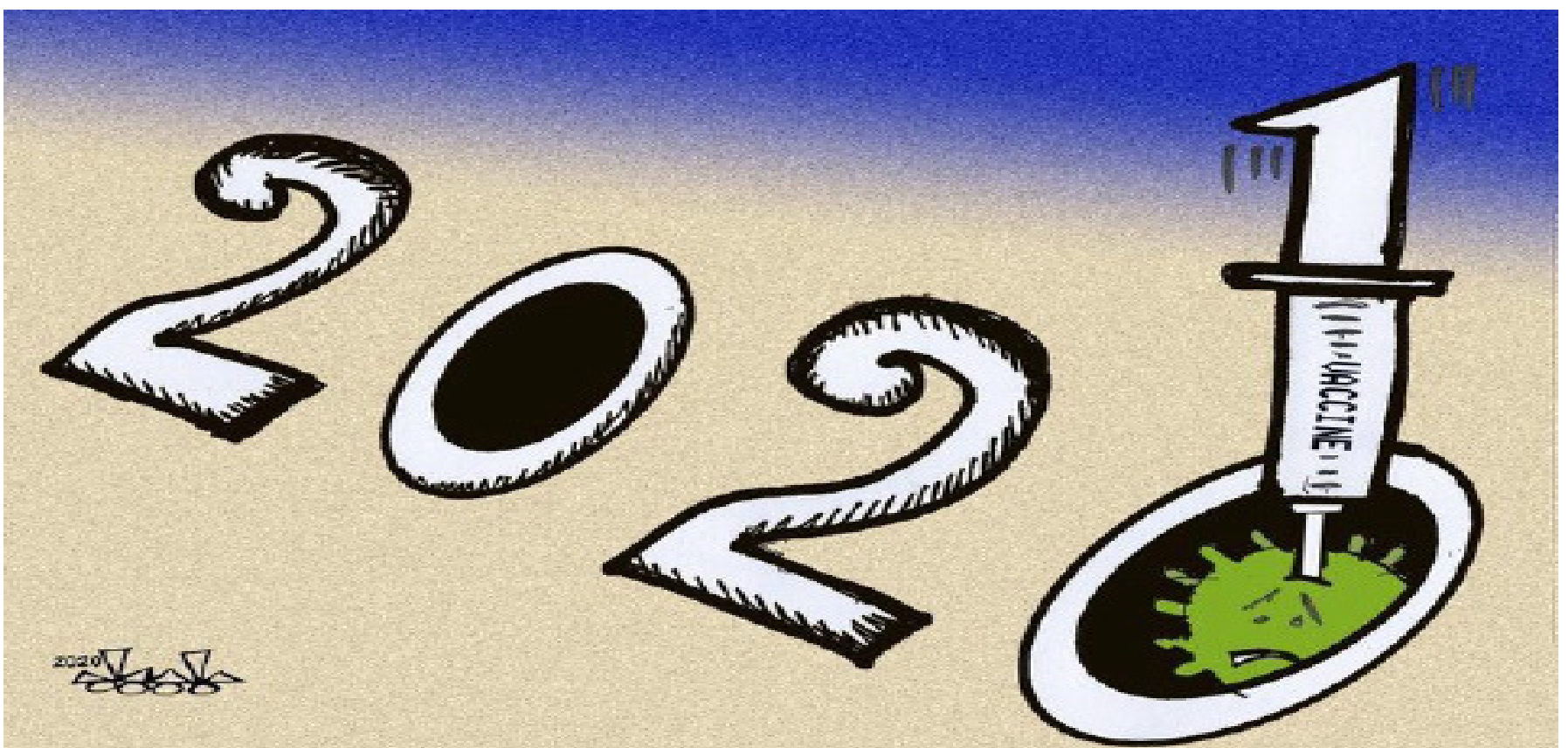
After this absolute decade of a year, it's starting to seem like the only good thing about 2020 was that it ended. But, as we breathe an often forgetful sigh of relief and as we pass across the doorway into a new year, it is worth remembering that the problems that 2020 laid bare before us won't simply disappear. This doesn't mean that you should always be fighting on the frontlines for change or advocating for justice every waking minute of your day; I'd actually caution against that practice, as it often leads to compassion fatigue. But the dangers of complacency and overconfidence threaten to destroy important work that people are still doing when it comes to issues across America and beyond.

Take a moment to breathe easy and pat yourself on the back – 2020 has been an absolute dumpster fire, and you made it through in one piece. However, take care not to forget that the fight is not over, and that it might never be over. 2020 was a defining moment of crisis for all those that lost their jobs, their homes, or even their lives. We should all tread very lightly moving into 2021. Resilience and adaptability in the face of crisis was the hallmark of people across the world this year, and I want to pay tribute to both those who survived and those who tragically didn't.

America has always been a patchwork country – stark divisions in our wealth, our faiths, our race, and our politics separated us from each other. But we always referred to ourselves collectively as “Americans.” Now, a worrying trend within political discourse is to refer to the opposing party as “un-American,” or “anti-American,” or “looking to destroy America.”

The rhetoric is present on both sides of the aisle, and I believe that this demonization perfectly demonstrates how the American melting pot has begun to boil over somewhat. While political polarization has existed previously, I'd argue that it's never been quite as omnipresent as it has this year. Whatever your personal beliefs on the matter are, it should be clear that political unity is something that is desperately needed and yet in startlingly short supply. T

he contentious 2020 election reinforced this reality: calm, ideological debate between the two main political parties within America is totally impossible because there isn't a shared sense of reality that persists across the aisle. While Joe Biden campaigned on a promise that he would look past party lines and treat all Americans as Americans, it remains to be seen whether those promises will hold up as the new administration takes up residence in the White House in January.



Source: Cartoon Movement

Healing the rift between Republicans and Democrats will take time – it will definitely take more than one administration. But I believe that it is possible.

At the heart of almost every issue that people have faced during 2020 lies the coronavirus, still lurking around like a houseguest has worn out their welcome for several months. Although the vaccine is a bright spot on the horizon, it is still in the distant future for many.

Consider that we have survived an event of historical proportions not because, but despite our circumstances: dishearteningly low stimulus checks, staggering economic decline, and governmental inaction are but a few of the many cards that were stacked against the American people.

The uncountable tragedies that have happened during this period are grim reminders of the toll this disease took upon the world, and it is almost guaranteed that still more are to come. This being said, there will come a time when normality is restored.

We shall all emerge from our homes, blinking in the light of a new day, humbled by the knowledge that we once took our peaceful lives for granted and simultaneously blessed by the thought that we will never attend another awkward Zoom meeting in our lives. But until that time comes, let us comfort ourselves with the thought that at least the nightmare of 2020 has finally come to a close.



Source: Pixabay

BY Alex Zhang

I WRITE because it's a way to bring my wildest dreams to life and share them with others. I really love iWRITE because of the family that I've found within the organization.

NEW YEAR, New You!

It's safe to say that the year 2020 was a wild ride! Of all the events that dominated this year's newspaper headlines and news reports, the COVID-19 pandemic was chief among them. It's been quite a year, and understandably, people are ready to move on. Here are the top six things that people of all ages can look forward to in the new year.

#1: A RELIABLE VACCINE

One silver lining of this pandemic is that science, research, and industry came together to develop treatment and a vaccine for COVID-19 at an unprecedented pace. Pfizer and Moderna have led the pack with the exciting mRNA vaccine. On December 11, Pfizer received FDA approval for U.S. distribution. Within the first two months of the new year, we can anticipate that our frontline healthcare workers will have received the vaccine. We can hope that the vaccine will be distributed across the rest of the population, starting with individuals 65 and up, in subsequent months.

#2: ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT

One of the biggest changes will be the inauguration of a new president: President-elect Joseph Biden will take office on January 20th, 2021. With this comes new possibilities for the future of our country. Regardless of political viewpoint and opinions, Americans hope to emerge victorious from COVID-19's setbacks. Ella Brissett, a student-athlete at The Kinkaid School who is finishing her last year of high school, could not agree more. "I am incredibly excited for Biden's approaching presidency. I would also like to address how excited I am about Kamala Harris... being the first female vice president. It is an incredibly historic moment and a moment that motivates me, as a woman of color, to achieve as much as I can. Additionally, I'm hopeful for the Biden presidency to address the COVID-19 pandemic in a manner that is effective and beneficial for the country I am hopeful that under the Biden administration, American unity can be established."

#3: SUMMER OLYMPICS RESCHEDULED!!!

After the Summer Olympics in 2020 were canceled in wake of rising COVID cases around the world, athletes will have a second chance to represent their countries coming in 2021. Athletes of all sports have been training hard while staying safe during the pandemic with their teams and will be competing on a global stage in Tokyo, Japan in just a few months. Kinkaid Girls Cross Country Head and Wellness Director, Ms. Cheryl Mitchell said athletes have been "keeping focused on their goals, continuing to work hard, and focusing on the present day while visualizing standing on the

podium in 2021" in order to be mentally and physically prepared for the Olympics.

#4: 2021 FILMS

There is much hype and anticipation for upcoming films, ranging from comedy to superhero to musicals, as fans eagerly await to sit down with some popcorn and watch them. Whether the majority of the population will watch them in the cinema, stream them, or rent them to watch at home, the movies will provide the same joy and excitement as they have always done. Many sequels like Peter Rabbit 2: The Runaway, Top Gun: Maverick, and Minions: The Rise of Gru, are sure to dominate the silver screen. The same goes for prequels like The King's Man and Black Widow, scheduled to release in the early months of the year. There are also newcomers that will dazzle the hearts of many, like live-action versions of Sesame Street, Tom and Jerry, and even the acclaimed Broadway musical In the Heights, which will be adapted into a movie.

#5: GOING BACK TO THE GYM/SPORTS

One of the most common resolutions for New Year's is to go to the gym, but for 2021 that's being taken in a much more literal sense. Now with life



Source: Pixabay

slowly returning to normal with the vaccine being introduced, for the first time in months, people will be able to return to their normal activities.

Brissett said that she has “fitness, strength, agility, and match-play training” weekly, adding up to “nearly 25 hours per week.” She has always managed to balance academics with athletics. However, when the pandemic and lockdown began, Brissett was not able to train with her private coach. But she still believes in the good habits she’s cultivated as a student-athlete to carry her forward.

“Next year, I am most excited to be competing for the Claremont-Mudd-Scripps tennis team in Claremont, California. I have always enjoyed the team aspect of tennis, although it is a largely individual sport, and I’m so excited to compete for a National Championship.”

#6: CONNECTING WITHOUT SOCIAL DISTANCING AND MASKS

Who doesn’t love hanging out with friends and meeting new people? Connecting with others is an integral aspect of our day-to-day lives, but with the pandemic, and the social distancing and masks that came with it, connecting with friends and family in public while staying six feet apart has been difficult. Social distancing and masks will hopefully soon become a thing of the past with the new COVID-19 vaccine coming out in the coming year allowing us to finally take off that mask or hug that best friend.

Mitchell says, “Connecting with others ... is important for mental health [and] ... helps us develop greater empathy, learn perspective taking, connecting with others lowers anxiety, lowers depression, and even boosts our immune system.” After quarantine is over and life goes back to normal,

Brissett said her plan is to “attend a concert with my close friends. This was something I loved to do before lockdown.”

These things are just the beginning of what there is to look forward to in 2021, and there are plenty more exciting things yet to come! The most important thing is to steer your ship with positivity. If you do that, the new year will already look a little bit brighter! To put it in Mitchell’s words: “I hope as we reflect on the difficult months we have been through together and the valuable lessons learned, we work together to improve our connections to others, recognizing we are all interconnected.”

Co-Authored BY Madison Burba

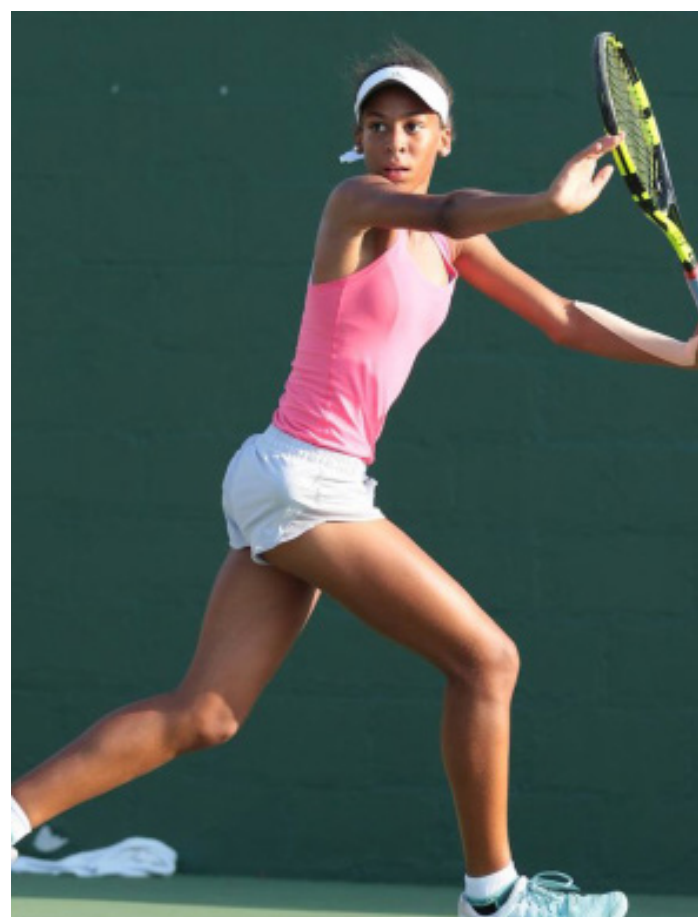
I WRITE because when I put pen to paper, I can create entire worlds. One where anything is possible. I love to inspire people to feel the same when they write too.

Co-Authored BY Sanjna Pandit

I WRITE because writing cultivates my ability to be eloquent and express my feelings and ideas in my special way. Whether writing an extensive article about the latest events in human history or fiction poetry, my mind forces me to break the boundaries and enter a whole new realm of imagination and discoveries that I never knew I could reach.



Source: Pixabay



Source: Ella Brissett

Gen Z Writers Grow

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

Towards the end of the summer, I began a partnership with my cousin Vivek Pandit, a resident of Dallas and Brown University graduate. He recently launched a website that centralizes the work and activism done by Generation Z members around the world. The submissions vary, including articles, poems, videos, images, and cartoons. The website encourages “collaboration amongst contributors and readers.” After hearing my cousin talk about his website with such enthusiasm, I felt inspired to reach out to three members of the iWRITE Youth Club and ask if they would like their works to be posted on the We Are Gen Z website. They warmly accepted the invitation, saying that it was a wonderful opportunity. Through a straightforward process of back-and-forth emails that involved finalizing the format and graphic design accompaniment of their pieces, the Gen Z platform found its way into our very own iWRITE community! I am eager to continue to process and help my cousin add Gen Z’ers’ powerful voices to the website.

When asked why it was important for him to create this website, Pandit responded, “Our generation is a special one. We are independent, innovative, passionate, activists, entrepreneurs, and world-changers. I have been incredibly inspired by all my peers who have been at the forefront of political movements and have been leading initiatives such as BLM protests.” He says his job is to “connect talented Gen Z’ers with one another and watch synergistic partnerships organically grow.” Him and his team have extended Gen Z-led companies to broader audiences and “connected individuals who have gone on to create new projects.”

Pandit says that his primary goals for the future are creating a podcast and “on-campus clubs.” His podcast, a series called the “501 Hustle,” involves interviewing Gen Z’ers who “are either working or in school from 9 am to 5 pm, but at 5:01 pm are running their own side hustle.”

He says he has interviewed remarkable people in New York and will be taking it to a global scale when he goes to Dubai for interviews. He wants this podcast, just like his website, to “show others in our generation what is possible and give Gen Z’ers every opportunity they can to join initiatives they are passionate about.”

As for the “We Are Gen Z” clubs, college students will create them on their campuses. Students will discuss topics in a manner of “Thoughtful Disagreement,” meaning that all perspectives will be shared and truth will be pursued over righteousness. Pandit says that upon the conclusion of a session, “students will submit a document that highlights how the conversation went and how attitudes, if any, changed as new facts were learned.”

A possible goal in the new year is to get to know the world around you and the youth of this generation who have seen and experienced different things. And what better way to do that than be a part of this We Are Gen Z experience? My cousin and I encourage you to visit our site (wearegenz.org), follow us on Instagram (@wearegenz_), and join our network of world changers!

BY Sanjna Pandit

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Source: Shutterstock



Source: Vivek Pandit

Quarantine vs QuaranTEENS: what's the difference?



QUARANTEENS TUTORING

Source: QuaranTEENS Twitter

Quarantine, the word we are all sick of hearing. However, QuaranTEENS is an organization you probably haven't heard of.

QuaranTEENS was founded in April 2020 by a Los Angeles-based teenager named Sophia Scott, a senior at Marymount High School. She's the editor-in-chief of the Anchor, the Marymount school newspaper. Scott is a member of the National Honor Society. According to their website, she established Quaranteens as a way to help kids who were struggling due to virtual learning. With 2021 being all about new beginnings, maybe it's time to think about giving your education a new beginning as well. Quaranteens allows any kid in grades K-12 to not fall behind in school.

According to their website, Scott has gathered a group of "talented and intelligent high school students, college students, and professional teachers who have a passion for education and experience in one-on-one tutoring."

Some of the tutors are students from Princeton, the University of Notre Dame, Brown University, University of Chicago, Loyola High School, and Marymount High School. The tutoring service is available for everyone from grades kindergarten through twelve for free.

In April, Scott created Quaranteens specifically because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the long-distance learning effort that has come from it. While long-distance/virtual learning has been very beneficial for some students, it has been extremely detrimental for others. Quaranteens was created to

help with that jarring transition. While Quaranteens is still a lesser-known non-profit organization, they're a wonderful way to possibly boost your grades this year. The service is completely virtual, and so it is not only a safer option but it may also be helpful to have the ability to choose your workspace.

Not only is Quaranteens completely virtual and free, but it can also be incredibly helpful. So, now that we are fresh into the new year let's use this time to better ourselves and our education; one way we can do this is by using services like Quaranteens.

BY Lexi Bumah

I WRITE because writing for me is a mental massage and an authentic way to express myself. In-person I'm shy. When I have the opportunity to write, I find it exhilarating. I love having the ability to convey my feelings, without feeling uncomfortable. That's why I WRITE.

IT'S THE HARD-KNOCK YEAR For 2021 Seniors

'd like to start out by saying that I'm aware I'm not the demographic that has been hit the hardest by the pandemic, but I would like to raise awareness to a common, important issue: completing high school online isn't helping me cope with the fact that I'll be leaving for college in T-minus six months.

Normally around this time, seniors are in school, realizing their soon-to-be independence and finishing applying to their desired universities.

My class doesn't have that. Instead, we have an even bigger issue of forgetting what in-person school is like, a not-so-great thought for a group of adolescents who are about to face some of the hardest academic years of their lives.

COVID-19 has fundamentally changed the way that kids have to learn this year. It's unfortunate that many students struggle with on-line school, as being in-person helps them pay attention to lessons and does not allow for distractions. Listening to some of my peers, I can tell the main reason they're not performing as well as they did last semester is that learning from their laptops makes room for texting friends during class, watching Youtube videos during lectures, etc. On top of that, we are constantly being told that the work we do this year will matter the most when it comes to getting accepted into universities and future job opportunities.

However, attending school online is actually pretty exciting as well. The teachers at my art school are trying their best to make lessons easier, for their sake and ours, and there are definitely perks to not having to wake up early to commute. We get a lot more *asynchronous* time with remote learning, and there is generally just a lot more empathy and understanding regarding seniors this year. It's already stressful enough being a senior, so on top of all the challenges and anxiety we're feeling about graduating soon, it's reassuring to know we're not just going through our moody teenager



Source: Pixabay

phases and have valid challenges through learning this way.

The next time I go to in-person school, I'll be studying what I will (potentially) be doing for the rest of my life. That's quite the new experience for an incoming freshman! It still blows my mind that soon enough, there will be no more fixed thirty hours a week in class, high school hierarchies, or a student population that's generally the same age as me. It's all very exciting, but 2020 has just made the future a little more apprehensive, to say the least for seniors like me. With all of this said, if you know a senior around you who is struggling, please make them a cup of cocoa or help them with one of their eight essays due that week. They need even more care than you think.



Source: Harvard University

BY Mariah Adeeko

I WRITE to properly express my opinions through a medium outside of the norm. Art enables me to spread messages usually hard to understand in a powerful way; I love writing because it's such a sophisticated art form!

MY PREDICTIONS FOR THE NBA 2021 DRAFT

I will be writing about my predictions for the 2020-2021 NBA season. I believe that with all the major trades, the NBA will look a lot different this year. The NBA just finished preseason and some of the teams are doing worse and better than expected.

First, I would like to talk about some of the best draft picks this season. I would say this draft season has been one of the best ones in a couple of seasons. Some of the big names are LaMelo Ball, Deni Avidja, James Wiseman, Anthony Edwards, Patrick Williams, Isaac Okoro, and many more. All these rookies have some great potential. The best of these in my opinion are Anthony Edwards, James Wiseman, and Deni Avidja. A lot of people are big fans of LaMelo Ball, but he hasn't been consistent; I know it's just the first couple of games, but the other players were consistent and put up great numbers.

Next, I want to talk about some of the big trades that went down. Russel Westbrook to the Washington Wizards for John Wall to the Houston Rockets. As a Rockets fan, I think this was an okay trade. Westbrook is a great player and I would have loved it if he had stayed, but John Wall is great as well. "The Beard" James Harden was traded to the Brooklyn Nets as well. This could weaken the Rockets in the upcoming season. Kelly Oubre from the Phoenix Suns has been traded to the Golden State Warriors for a protected, first-round 2021 draft pick, and a second-round 2021 draft pick. This is great for the warriors because with Klay out for another season, they need another great superstar next to Curry. For the Thunder, this is also good because they now have a ton of draft picks and are able to rebuild their team after everyone got traded. That brings me into the Chris Paul trade. Paul was traded to the Suns with Abdel Nader. Kelly Oubre was originally traded to the Thunder

for a couple of other players as well. Eventually, the Thunder traded off Kelly Oubre. This is good for the Suns because they needed a second great superstar next to Booker. Deandre Ayton is great next to Booker as well, but I think Paul will be better next to Booker. For the Thunder, it's not so good, but they got other draft picks Ty Jerome and Jalen Lecque.

My final topic will be on the big contenders for the Finals. First we have our reigning champions: the Los Angeles Lakers. They had a great season, and LeBron and Davis are arguably the best duo in the league currently. They both put up great stats on both ends of the court. Also, they have great players around them and a great bench. I think they can go back to back. My next big one is the Brooklyn Nets. With Kevin Durant coming off the injury he can put up big stats. He has already shown in preseason, and he is ready to dominate. Kyrie and Durant have shown to be a great duo, but I think Brooklyn will have a big 3. Who is the third player you may ask? Last season, Caris LeVert put up great numbers and was a key player to the Nets. Durant, Kyrie, and LeVert will dominate this season. Brooklyn also has a great center--DeAndre Jordan--who they recently acquired. He will be a big help and do great.

In conclusion, there is tough competition this season. I am looking forward to watching the games and watching my home team the Houston Rockets. I hope you enjoyed reading my predictions. Go Rockets!!!

BY Aarushi Saxena

I WRITE because it inspires me to share my ideas.



Source: ABC7 New York



Source: Pixabay

Keeping Up With THE YOUTH CLUB

DEAR READER,

Saying that 2020 was chaotic is an understatement. Everyone was affected in different ways, but many of us were forced to change how we live and build a new foundation for ourselves in these unprecedented times. Like the rest of the world, the iWRITE Youth Club adapted so that we could continue to promote a love of the literary world and serve our community to the best of our ability. However, as we look ahead in this new year, we see a new opportunity to not just react, but seize control of our future and proactively shape our world.

Founded on the principle that words have power, the Youth Club enters 2021 with the mission to share that power with others. The club is embarking on a variety of projects meant to make our resources more accessible and to connect our members with underprivileged students, empowering them to make their voices heard. The larger goal of global stability in 2021 and beyond necessitates giving the rising generation the power to express themselves and advocate for their beliefs. Through this increased outpouring of self-expression, our societal dialogue is enhanced. Through this more expansive interchange, our world can go confidently into the future, constantly growing stronger as it evolves in response to new voices and ideas.

Though the Youth Club is shaping its own future in 2021 through initiative-taking projects, our ultimate goal is to empower other students to shape the future of both themselves and society. Through their words, they will carve out their own place in the world; through their words, they will guide and challenge society as they build a stronger global foundation.

As we face the uncertainty of a new year, the Youth Club would like to challenge you to go into that uncertainty with the mission of doing good. As we choose to serve and encourage, we positively affect not only our lives but also the lives of others. Through these actions, we can make 2021 the year in which we don't just stand up again but come back stronger.

Sincerely,

Katie Giveon

iWrite Youth Club President

I WRITE because I believe that words can transform lives, share ideas, and let people know that they're not alone. I love that iWRITE gives kids a voice and encourages them to express themselves.



Source: iWRITE



Source: iWRITE

Source: Pixabay



DIG IN AND Keep Going

Isaac's teeth chattered and his body shook from the cold. He looked back over the snowy slope of Everest. The ground was far away, shrouded by the clouds. He breathed through the oxygen mask on his face, trying to get his breath back. He'd already made it to the halfway point, and he was starting to doubt himself.

He moved forward, his boots crunching against the snow. The wind screamed around him, wailing maniacally and pressing threateningly against him. He pushed forward and reached a thin ridge. He embedded his ice axe in the side of the snow testing its strength. It stuck in the snow. He tugged on the axe and it came out with effort.

The ridge would be strong enough for him to walk across, he decided. Isaac stepped out onto the thin ridge and stepped forward tentatively. The snow shifted a little under his feet, but not more than it should have. He kept low, slowly edging across the ridge sideways. One foot after the other, he made his way towards the end of the ridge.

His left foot slipped, and he stumbled regaining his balance. He took a deep breath steadying himself, "Oh, Isaac, you idiot. What are you doing stumbling around the tallest mountain on Earth, freezing to death all alone?"

The wind offered no reply. He began crab-walking again, his ice axe in hand. He kept it ready in case he fell again as he neared the end of the ridge. He stepped out onto a larger plain sighing in relief. His muscles relaxed and he increased the distance between him and the ridge. He sat down on the snow leaning against a rock, "Maybe Laila was right. I'm crazy."

He looked up and noticed the sun was almost gone. If the sub-zero temperatures could get colder and the gusting wind could get stronger, they did, and he shuddered. He got up shakily and scanned the plain, looking for a place to find shelter, nothing. He forced himself up to the foot of a cliff and dug his ice axe into the snow. He tested it and then began to climb. His muscles groaned in pain forcing him to stop. He clung to the side of the snowy cliff shivering.

Once his muscles had stopped throbbing, he continued climbing. The top of the cliff was depressingly far, but it was getting gradually closer. He swung his ice axe into the snow feeling vibrations shoot-

ing through his hand painfully. He swung up to the handhold and let his body hang resting again, "I'm talking to myself, aren't I?"

There was a cracking sound and horrified he saw the snow shift. His ice axe came free sending him spiraling backward. He collided with a shelf and then he was falling again. He spun wildly before he hit the ground again. This time he stayed, and he felt agony flaming angrily in every part of his body. He tried to get up and he cried out in overwhelming pain.

Isaac remembered back to what he'd been taught. He felt his body and decided that there was nothing broken, but he couldn't be sure. He managed to open his pack and pull out his satellite phone. Its screen was shattered, and it blinked, dying. "Well, th-th-that changes things."

He had to find shelter now or he wouldn't make it through the night. He stuffed the phone back inside the pack and tried to sit up. His chest ached from the strain and he gasped for breath raggedly. He remembered his training and slowed his breathing, so he wouldn't hyperventilate and go unconscious.

He stared up at the sky, tears coming to his cheeks, freezing. This was it, the end of his crazy journey if he couldn't get up. He would die on a mountain thousands of miles from home. No, he couldn't do that. He had to get up for the same reason he'd wanted to climb Everest in the first place, because he couldn't ever accept no. He could never just give up. He had to continue.

Isaac steeled himself and threw himself to his feet. Waves of pain washed through him like a tsunami. He dug his feet in and kept going. He walked forward looking around for some kind of shelter. Every step sent another tide of pain through him, but he kept one foot after the other. He felt his body go weak and he stumbled, but he caught himself.

He spotted a small opening and staggered towards it. He unzipped his pack and pulled out his sleeping bag clumsily. He slipped inside the sleeping bag teeth clenched, so he didn't scream, and his teeth wouldn't chatter as the pain dissipated slowly, "Yep, yep, this is definitely crazy, but it's not done yet."

BY Austin Lopez

I WRITE because I have words to say and a passion to say them with. I love the old Star Wars, Percy Jackson, and AJR. I'm also a firm believer that everything isn't always as it seems.

A PLACE FOR poetry

Featured Poems from the iWRITER Staff

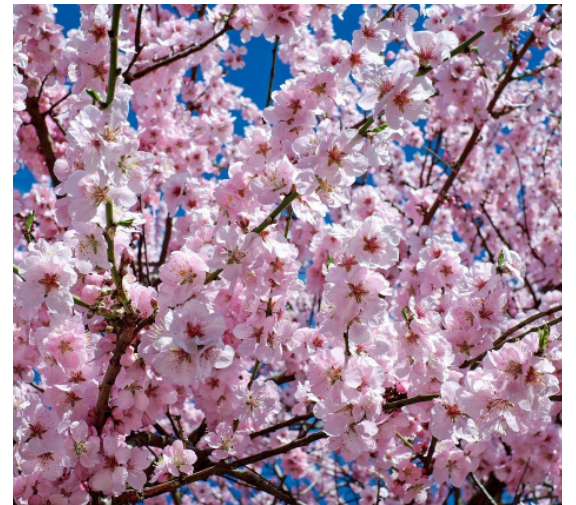
BLOSSOMS

This mighty tree has been shaken,
Its branches now feeble and bare;
Its leaves have now paper thin and falling
With no longer any fruit to share.

I pity this battered oak
As it comes knocking on Death's door,
But as it crumbles to the earth,
I see buds of green born
From the tree that has sunken to the floor.
My eyes follow these blossoming buds

As they bound towards the rich earthy loam
Where their lives will be cherished and seen and
celebrated
As they grow in their newfound home.

The sprouts shoot out of the ground,
Reaching their arms towards the sun
That warms their stems,
Their leaves,
Their roots,
Because new life has now begun.



Source: Pixabay

THE FABLE

My mother once told me a fable.
She sat with me on the floor of our empty
home
And began to speak.

I don't remember the story.
I should have been listening,
But all I could process was
Two moving lips and blurred sentences.

I do remember what she told me at the
end.
I heard that part.

"Darling, when you find yourself over-
whelmed,
I want you to close your eyes
And imagine a world
Where hate is replaced with love."

My mother was beautiful.
Everything about her was beautiful because
everything about her was kind.
She was a woman who didn't know how to
hate.
I wish that I was the same.
I absorb everything I see.
I see death on the news,
And I find myself not knowing how to
breathe.
I see hate,
And I find myself becoming consumed by it.

But when I find myself trembling,
When I see my shaking knees,
When I notice my twitching hands,
I remember the beautiful world of love that
she taught me to imagine,
And then I see it right in front of me.



Source: Pixabay

BY Audrey Piczak

*I WRITE because it's one of the few spaces in which
I can process my thoughts and feelings. It's how I
can bring myself peace by putting my feelings onto
paper. Writing is like art.
You paint people with words.*



Source: Pixabay

RISING FROM THE ASHES

The phoenix soars above the world,
Wings spread wide.
The phoenix rises,
Circling higher and higher, reaching the clouds.

Fearless in the face of death,
The phoenix burns bright, bursting into fiery flames,
Disappearing behind a curtain of smoke,
Only to reveal a pile of smoldering ashes.

The phoenix rises once more,
Brushing off the ashes.
And soars on upwards,
reaching for the stars
Beginning anew,
Living once again.

BY Madison Burba

*I WRITE because when I put pen to paper,
I can create entire worlds. One where any-
thing is possible. I love to inspire people to
feel the same when they write too.*

THE GREY LAKE

BY Kate Yeonjae-Jeong

*I WRITE to inspire, educate, and storytell
through the power of words. I believe it is
a beautiful, moving experience to voice the
minds of our generation into publicity.*

a dry lake stills, devoid of the
blessings of rain. molten red-hot
spittle pierced the empty
mound of a hole this year: vacant.

the cradle of earth is still aching,
bursts of piping heat that resurface
through the fierce temperament of
the ground, wishing for fulfillment.

a single drop hits from the clouds, the first
of many weeks, months, and it causes

a ripple that gradually and gently
spread to the surface, edging, quietly.

twelve months of continuous war
with one that cannot be stopped.
it feels desolate but it does not feel
like the end, but rather the beginning.

a start that could have begun at the
tip of a new decade, but never say
too late; we now awaken to refresh.
the grey looming clouds slowly fill.

THE OTHER SIDE

Leaving the darkness
for the light on the other side
Ruling my thoughts is the nervousness of the
new year
Taking charge is normalcy
with change and kindness not far behind

Imagining life where COVID hides in the
shadows,
warmth and affection fills souls
The wind screams technology and medicine,
forming a grin on my face
But my smile fades, as I begin to think,
What if the darkness swallows me?
What happens if I don't do enough for the
sun to shine?

Confidence spins me around
She reassures me that as long as I'm kind to
others and myself,
the light won't go anywhere
Confidence hugs me gently
Then I continue on my journey to the other
side

I pass Gratitude and Pride dancing,
Laughter quarreling with Satisfaction
At the last stop, Happiness just smiles at me
Love squeezes my arm, but my eyes well up
as I realize that my journey to the other side
is just starting



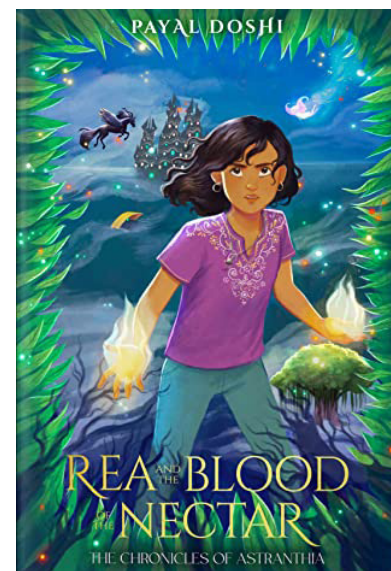
Source: Platon Yurich

BY Nia Shetty

*I WRITE because of the joy I feel, when I put
a new idea down on paper. To be able to bring
feelings and emotions to the reader, through
ideas that I get to express.*

BOOKTalk

REA AND THE BLOOD OF THE NECTAR BY PAYAL DOSHI



Source: Goodreads

A Story of Representation, Regal Worlds, and Rock-Solid Hope

A unique read, *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar* will transport you to the tea plantations and bustling streets of India and the magical realm of Astranthia. It will immerse you in the sights and sounds of night markets and have you flipping pages at lightning speed. This. Book. Is. Superb.

Debut author Payal Doshi, who I had a chance to interview in late 2020, truly poured her heart into this novel. It follows Rea Chhetri, a strong-willed young girl from Darjeeling, a city in eastern India. One day, after a secretive late-night cricket match, her brother Rohan goes missing. Rea's mother and grandmother worry for a bit, but after a few days, to Rea's surprise, they just gloss over his absence. Rea catches her mother sneaking off to see Mishti Daadi, an old woman who apparently has the power to commune with the spiritual realm. Rea normally considers this shaman business hogwash, but she realizes Mishti Daadi might hold the key to finding her brother Rohan. Along with her friend Leela, Rea visits Mishti Daadi and realizes there's a whole new dimension to this dilemma. She's whisked away to Astranthia, a mystical land in crisis, where she finds out that it is her quest to not only save her brother but to save the entire realm.

With elements of Indian mythology (the concept of immortalizing nectar, paries, sacred flowers, and babajis) and even some Western European lore (like the Ceffyl Dwr, a water-horse), *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar* is perfect for fans of *Percy Jackson* or the like. I love the amount of detail that Doshi goes into when setting the scene for each chapter and event; she is especially skilled at using imagery and symbolism to convey messages and tell the reader more about the characters. Also, as a South Asian kid, seeing a book center around someone who looks like me is wonderful. My favorite part about this book is it never drags or falls into the trap of being repetitive; some fantasy books emphasize details too much, some too less, and some tend to stray away from the plot... but *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar* manages to strike a balance with around 350 text-filled pages and eventful chapters. The only thing I would have loved to have seen changed in this novel is a change in perspective; hearing Rohan's perspective earlier would have been great, or, even better (though it's harder), using the first-person

point of view would possibly immerse the reader even more.

A major theme in *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar* is hope, which goes together perfectly with the theme for this issue; Rea faced many disappointments and truly went through each stage of the Hero's Journey, but she persevered through the trials and tribulations. And for Payal Doshi, she shared with me that it's been a rollercoaster ride writing this book. This uplifting message is perfect for a time like 2021 when we are trying to get out of the COVID-induced funk that 2020 has placed us in.

I would give *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar* 5 out of 5 stars and would recommend it for ages 10 and up. *Rea and the Blood of the Nectar* by Payal Doshi will be available in May 2021. Catch my interview with Payal Doshi on the iWRITE Youth Club YouTube channel.



Source: The Story Sanctuary

BY Eshaan Mani

I WRITE for the rush of adrenaline I feel when my pen touches the paper. It is that exhilarating experience and the opportunity to not only get my voice out to the public but also be able to be the voice of inspiring people and organizations that inspires me to write.

BLAZE BY ALEX ZHANG



Source: Alex Zhang

BY Alex Zhang

I WRITE because it's a way to bring my wildest dreams to life and share them with others. I really love iWRITE because of the family that I've found within the organization.

My book *Blaze* is a sequel to my first book, *Spark*. Both books center upon the main character Jackson Smythe, a high school student who was yanked out of his everyday life by a fast-talking, mysterious demon named Subulo. In *Blaze*, Jackson's adventures with Subulo continue on in an alien and fantastic world as Subulo tries to free himself from the weight of his father's legacy and Jackson tries not to die. The writing process for *Blaze* actually started before the word 'coronavirus' meant anything to most people and has stretched all the way up into the present. It's been quite a fun ride since the first book was published. I took what I liked writing about in *Spark* and tried to wholeheartedly embrace these elements in *Blaze*, resulting in both a productive and enjoyable writing experience. The first draft of the book was actually completed quite some time ago, but many rounds of revisions and editing inevitably lay before me. But, if the writing process continues to be as exciting as it is, I anticipate a fairly quick finish, even though I can't promise anything. What I can promise is a fresh, inventive, action-filled adventure for those who dive into the pages of either *Blaze* or *Spark*. You'll come for the concept, but you'll stay for the unique living, breathing world that I've built. Catch my interview with Eshaan about my novels on the iWRITE Youth Club YouTube channel!

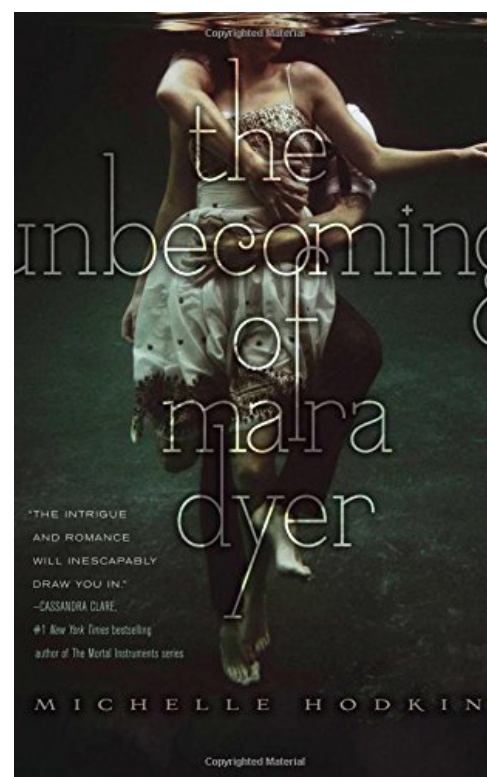
RECOMMENDATIONS

From The iWRITER Staff

The Unbecoming of Mara Dyer

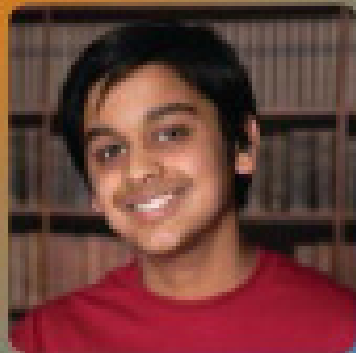
By Michelle Hodkin

Mara Dyer's life has been interesting, to say the least. As if waking up in a hospital with no memory of how she got there was not enough, she believes that there must have been more to the mysterious accident that left all of her friends dead while she remained unharmed. Her parents decided to pick up and move to give her a fresh start in a new state, but then the visions start. Visions? Premonitions? Nightmares? Mara doesn't know, but Noah, the handsome "it" boy at school, seems to want to find out. So Mara and Noah set out to find out what is reality, and what is imaginary, and what is really, really dangerous.

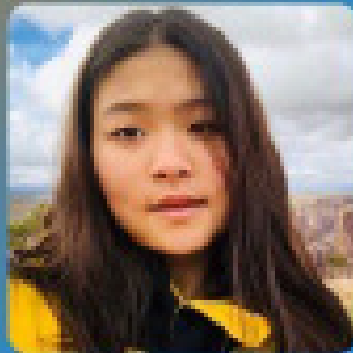


Source: Amazon

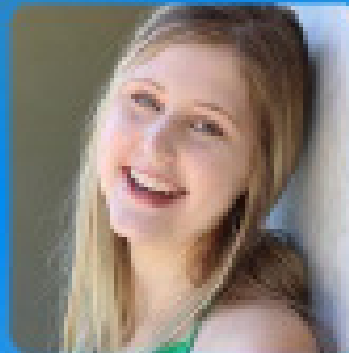
MEET THE iWRITER Staff



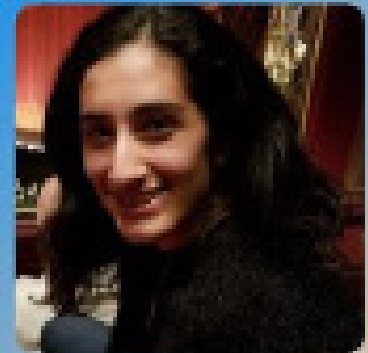
Eshaan Mani



Kate-Yeonjae
Jeong



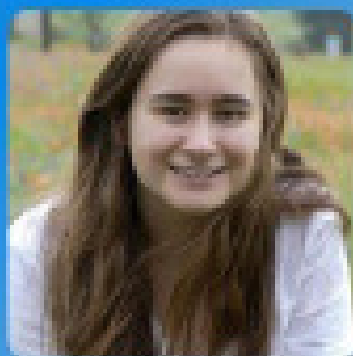
Halliday Mafrige



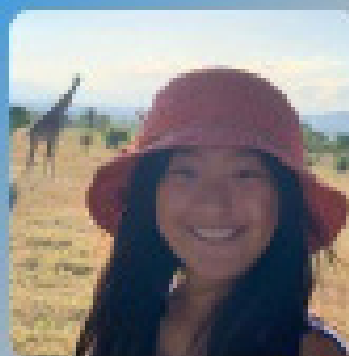
Sanjna Pandit



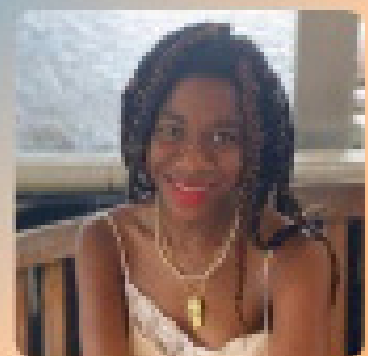
Prisha Shivani



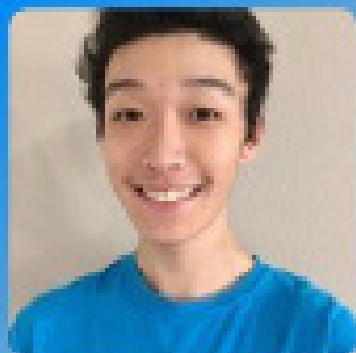
Katie Giveton



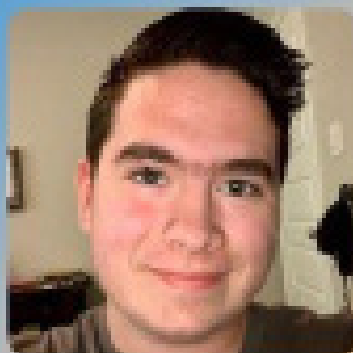
Sophie Yu



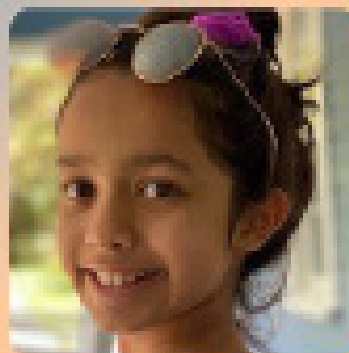
Mariah Adeeko



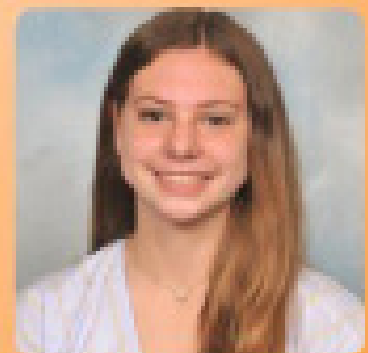
Alex Zhang



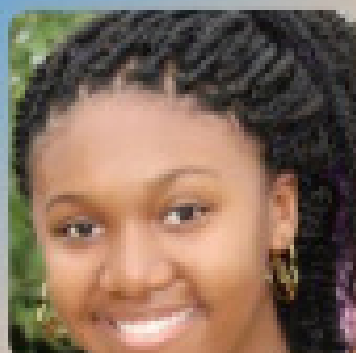
Austin Lopez



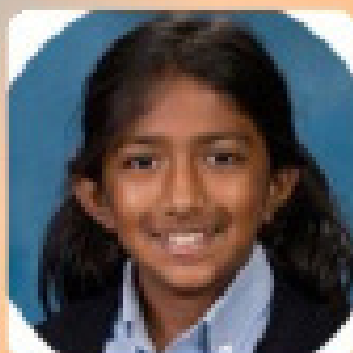
Nia Shetty



Madison Burbo



Lexi Bumah



Aarushi Saxena



Audrey Piczak



Ginny Filippone