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Winners Announced in Massachusetts Student Essay Contest on Mayflower and Native American History

Young Students of Diverse Backgrounds Challenge Traditional Views on Immigration and Identity

[Read the winning essays](#)

September 14, 2020—*Boston, Massachusetts*—Six students from schools in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have been named winners in the 2020 American Ancestors Young Historians Essay Contest. The contest, which commemorates the 400th anniversary of the landing of the *Mayflower*, challenged Massachusetts students to reflect upon the relevance and legacy of the Pilgrims' arrival in Plymouth Colony and the first interactions between the Wampanoag and English colonists.

The contest asked probing questions of school students. Their essays offered thoughtful perspectives on topics as timely as immigration, cultural assimilation, and personal identity.

The contest was organized and sponsored by American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS).

"Ask a budding, young historian a question that has lingered for hundreds of years and the response might be something quite unexpected," said Ginevra Morse, Vice President at American Ancestors for Education and Online Programming, and creator of the contest.

one young scholar at a Georgetown, Massachusetts, school challenges our thinking about making any comparison between today's refugees to the U.S. and the arrival of the Pilgrims in 1620;

a student from the Mashpee, Massachusetts, Middle-High School offered that "The story of immigrants in America is not dissimilar to those of the Separatists in Holland."

"New people immigrate to the United States every day. Each one of them has a unique story to tell. It is our job to make them feel welcome," wrote another student from Georgetown, Mass.

from the Boston Latin School of Boston, Mass., a participating essayist and Cape Verdean American wrote "Although social injustice and inequality exist in our society, my support system is a constant reminder to embrace my tribal history. I wouldn't want to be from any other ethnic group. When I'm older, I want to be able to say, 'my family fought for this', or 'my family suffered through that, but we made it together through solidarity.' We're proud to be Cape Verdean American, and we support each other no matter what."

Open to students enrolled in grades 5–12 in public, private, and parochial schools, and those in home-study programs across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the contest asked participants to address one of three topics:

1. How is the story of the *Mayflower* still relevant today?
2. How does your family's journey to America compare to the journey of the Pilgrims in 1620?
3. As a native student, what does your tribal history mean to you?

Entries were received in all three categories and three winners were selected from among submissions from grades 5 through 8, and from grades 9 through 12. The winners announced by American Ancestors are:

Grades 5—8:

Marion Mosman of Mary Lyon K-8 School, Brighton, Massachusetts

Andres Vida of Provincetown Schools, Provincetown, Massachusetts

Taylor Willman of Mashpee Middle-High School, Mashpee, Massachusetts

Grades 9—12:

Davis Lowe of Georgetown Middle-High School, Georgetown, Massachusetts
Giani Rodrigues of Boston Latin High School, Hyde Park, Massachusetts
Tara Stevens of Georgetown Middle-High School, Georgetown, Massachusetts

Cash prizes of \$500 each were awarded to the three winners from grades 5—8, and prizes of \$750 were presented to winners from grades 9—12. Their essays can be viewed on the website of American Ancestors [here](#).

Morse commented that “The winners’ stories, collectively and individually, embody the triumphs and tragedies of life in early New England and in the country itself. Involving some of the youngest minds in a process of reflection upon this historic event will always lead to new insights and understanding for historians of all ages. The winners of our contest remind us of how relevant the story of 1620 still is today.”

About American Ancestors and New England Historic Genealogical Society

New England Historic Genealogical Society (NEHGS), with its national headquarters located in Boston’s Back Bay, is the oldest and largest genealogical society in America. NEHGS and its American Ancestors brand serve more than 320,000 members and millions of online users engaged in family history nationally and around the world. It is home to a world-class research library and archive, and an expert staff. NEHGS offers an award-winning genealogical research website at AmericanAncestors.org with more than 1.4 billion records and maintains a publishing division which produces original genealogical research, scholarship, and educational materials, including *Mayflower Descendant*, a biannual journal of Pilgrim genealogy and history.

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