

## TOP PICKS

# NEW YOUTH VOICES IN THE STUDYSYNC LIBRARY

At StudySync, we pride ourselves on offering a digital Library which grows larger and richer with new and more diverse texts every year. Longtime StudySync teachers have seen the Library expand with new classic and contemporary titles, Spanish-language texts, graphic novels, and texts available at multiple Lexile®-levels.

For a back-to-school treat, we released our new “Youth Voices” Series—over a dozen new titles that feature stories about or by extraordinary young people across the globe. The “Youth Voices” series showcases this new generation of students through profiles, letters, and even poems. These pieces include digital features such as embedded videos, illustrations, charts and graphs, and hyperlinks.

Keep your students engaged with inspirational tales from Generation Z that are packed with multimedia content. Head to the Text tab within the Library and search “Youth Voices.”



Here is a handful of highlights from the series:



### “Shree Bose: Never Too Young to Change the World”

by *Amanda Sperber*

The story of the 2011 Google Science Fair Winner, Shree Bose, has the potential to inspire from a number of angles. Bose was able to turn tragedy into triumph, discovering her affinity for cancer research after watching her grandfather lose his battle with the disease when she was 15. Much of her immersion into the world of cancer cells was self-taught through the blogs of survivors and YouTube tutorials. On top of that, Bose learned about the contest that would lead her to a \$50,000 scholarship and a meeting with President Barack Obama simply from spotting a banner on the Google homepage. Since her science fair victory over 10,000 other teenagers, Bose has gone on to become a champion for encouraging other girls to enter STEM fields throughout her young academic career, first at Harvard and now studying children’s oncology at Duke.

**Enhanced Text Features:** Map, Charts, Screenshot of the website Bose created in her winning entry to the Google Science Fair

**Notable Write Prompt:** One of the prompt options asks students explicitly about the informational text elements and would be a useful vehicle to have students practice one of the more nuanced reading skills.

**Students May Recognize:** Bose and some of her scientific research were featured in a recent Microsoft commercial.



### “A Letter to NFL GMs”

by *Shaquem Griffin*

This open letter, written by then-college prospect Griffin on the eve of the NFL Draft which would determine his professional fate, details the inspirational story of the young man who would go on to become the first pro football player with only one hand. Griffin celebrates his disability as just one obstacle in a career filled with them, from being separated by his even more highly-touted twin brother in college all the way back to an opposing youth football coach who attempted to block Griffin simply because he was uncomfortable with an 8-year-old who looked unlike any linebacker before him.

**Unique Write Prompt:** Students are asked to write a letter to someone identifying a significant obstacle in their own life that they’ve overcome—and the people who’ve helped them along the way.

**Media Connection:** Griffin’s letter is one of several pieces for StudySync and SyncBlasts that was originally published in Derek Jeter’s *The Players’ Tribune*.



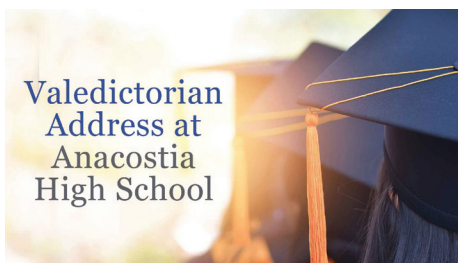
**“Hurricane Season”**  
*by Fareena Arefeen*

People born on New Year’s Day, Christmas, or even Leap Day make for common conversation fodder, but what if your birthday was marked by the annual arrival of extreme weather? Fareena Arefeen reflects on that very idea in “Hurricane Season,” a poem where the speaker’s birthday is marked by storm clouds and an overflowing bayou. Written when she was sixteen, Arefeen was Houston’s Youth Poet Laureate in 2016.

**Eye-Catching Stanza:** “I’ve heard that a child playing on the coast in Africa can cause the start of a hurricane in the Atlantic and maybe a working immigrant in Toronto can be the origin of a poet in Houston.”

**Poetry Prompt:** Students are asked to construct their own poem comparing a personal experience to a connection in nature.

**Blast for Comparative Reading:** Assign “Hurricane Season” alongside the Blast, “Retweet for Rescue,” about unique ways people have used social media to aid those affected by Hurricane Harvey in 2017.



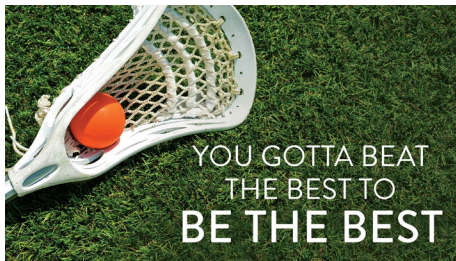
**“Valedictorian Address at Anacostia High School”**  
*by Rashema Meison*

Rashema Meison graduated first in her Washington D.C. high school class while living in a homeless shelter. And while that detail might draw the most attention and curiosity toward the 2014 high school graduate, you will be hard-pressed to hear it emphasized, or even mentioned in her valedictorian speech. Instead, Meison fills her time by expressing gratitude to the teachers, coaches, and administrators who boosted her during the most difficult of times.

**Additional Media:** After reading the speech she delivered to her classmates, students can watch the four-minute address with video of it embedded right within the Read tab.

**Opportunity for SEL Through Writing:** One prompt asks students to reflect on someone who has provided them guidance and support similar to Meison’s mentors and then to write that person a letter that similarly details the impact they had on the student’s life.

**Inspirational Quote:** “Life is endless; turn up, earn it up, but don’t burn it up.”



**“You Gotta Beat the Best to Be the Best”**

*by Ali Swenson*

This profile of Florida teenager Rachel Zietz details how there is no age requirement to earn the title of entrepreneur. The article describes how Zietz went from a tween frustrated by the limitations of her lacrosse practice equipment to business mogul selling her own upgraded athletic gear and bringing in \$1 million in revenue annually before she left for college. At 12-years-old, Zietz was a seventh-grader and one of the youngest students in the Young Entrepreneurs Academy. Zietz purchased a domain name for \$9.99 and started Gladiator Lacrosse. Zietz spent her fifteenth birthday on the set of *Shark Tank*, pitching her lacrosse gear to the business bigshots.

**A Writing Prompt That Could Be Worth Millions:** One of the writing prompt options guides students to construct a business plan for their own unique, problem-solving ideas. (Don't worry, StudySync won't ask for a cut!)

**Proud Parent Moment:** This text was written by another Generation Z member close to StudySync's heart—longtime StudySync Blast Editor and Writer, Ali Swenson. You might catch Ali's byline these days on AP stories she writes.

**Now That's How You Teach Allusion:** The StudySync Blast team never misses an opportunity for a catch connection in their titles, but we really got a chuckle out of Swenson's title and its similarity to **a famous Ric Flair quote**.

**If your students connect with these lessons, assign additional “Youth Voices” texts, including an interview with young soul crooner Leon Bridges and an article written by WNBA Star, Brittney Griner.**