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Ten Kid History Champions Win the First Ever Who Was? History Bee!

More than 25,000 students from 49 states participated in the inaugural bee.

May 19, 2020 - New York, NY – It was announced today that ten young contestants from across the United States have won the inaugural Who Was? History Bee, a national competition for young history enthusiasts in grades 3-5 to test their knowledge of the world's greatest figures and events.

More than 25,000 students from 49 states participated in the free contest, hosted by Penguin Young Readers, and based on the *New York Times* bestselling and much-loved *Who Was?* history and biography children's book series. The ten finalists were initially slated to compete at the history bee championship hosted by Jeff Kinney and Patrick Kinney in New York City on May 4th, however due to CDC guidelines surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic, Penguin Young Readers made the difficult decision to cancel the live championship and name all finalists winners.

"We are incredibly proud of the ten winners who shared their passion for history and poured so much time and work into the first Who Was? History Bee," says Francesco Sedita, President and Publisher, Penguin Workshop. "This honor comes at a time when we are witnessing history in the making. With heroes rising every day, it is more valuable than ever for young people to contemplate the past, and the remarkable individuals who have changed the world for the better."

To become Who Was? History Bee champions, each of the winning contestants won classroom-level and school-level competitions, took a written test to assess their history knowledge, and crafted an essay about their own historical hero (excerpted below)!

The ten champions were informed of their victory in a video call with special guests Jeff Kinney (author of the bestselling *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series) and Patrick Kinney (author of *Who is Jeff Kinney?*). Each kid history champion will receive \$2,000 and a library of 50 Who Was? books. And the schools win too—each champion's school wins a 50-book Who Was? Library! The ten champions have also each won \$500 to be used as a donation to a first responder organization, hospital, nonprofit, or other institution of their choice. In these historic times, each of the ten kid history winners will get the chance to make a difference in their community through this act of support, emphasizing the importance of all kinds of heroism.

The second Who Was? History Bee is around the corner! Teachers, educators and librarians should visit www.WhoWasHistoryBee.com to find more information and register their classes and libraries for the second annual competition launching in September.

About the Who Was? History Bee Winners:

Molly Armstrong (Cincinnati, Ohio)



Grade: 5th Grade

School: Guardian Angels School

Historical Hero: Winston Churchill

“If I made a bad decision it may hurt my friends’ feelings or make someone upset with me. If Winston Churchill made a bad decision thousands of people would have died. That’s a lot of pressure to be under! He made the world a better place because so many more people could have died in concentration camps if it weren’t for him.”

Adie B. (River Vale, New Jersey)



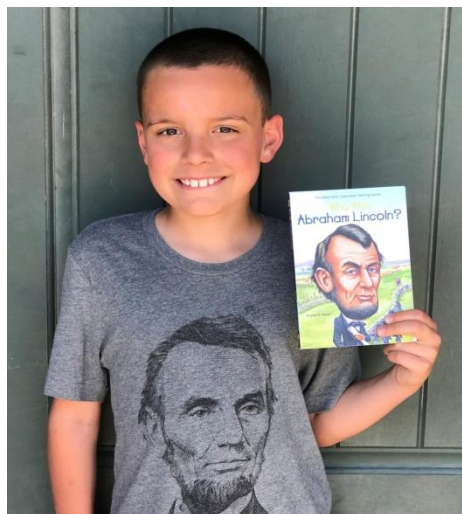
Grade: 4th Grade

School: Roberge School

Historical Hero: Rosa Parks

“Rosa Parks fought for black people having equal rights. America was segregated...white people say “Separate but equal,” but actually black people were treated as second class citizens...Rosa Parks made the world a better place because she ended bus segregation.”

Grayson Ballard (Haviland, Kansas)



Grade: 4th Grade

School: Haviland Grade School

Historical Hero: Abraham Lincoln

“I would say Abraham Lincoln is someone I admire. He changed America by saying slavery is illegal in the United States. He also brought the whole country together for one big country...Abraham Lincoln brought America to a whole new level and that’s why I admire him as a hero.”

Maria Beckett (Dallas, Texas)



Grade:

5th Grade

School:

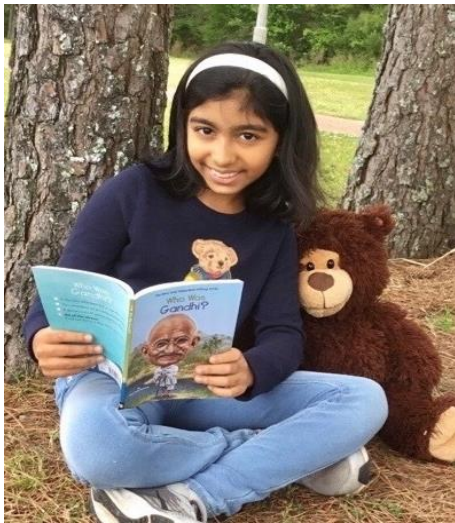
Mount St. Michael Catholic School

Historical Hero:

Malala Yousafzai

“One person I idolize is Malala Yousafzai... One day, she got on a bus and a man came up asking, “Who is Malala?” The man then shot her in the head, and Malala was rushed to the hospital, then transferred to England, where she recovers and lives to this day fighting for women and children’s rights, earning a Nobel Prize along the way.”

Nitya D. (Cordova, Tennessee)



Grade:

3rd Grade

School:

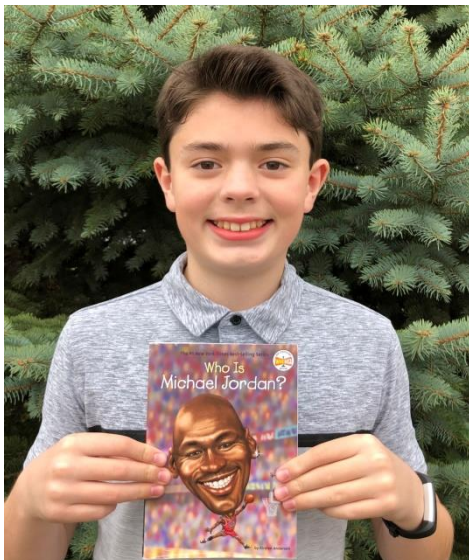
Lamplighter Montessori School

Historical Hero:

Mahatma Gandhi

“The person who influenced me the most is Mahatma Gandhi...He believed in truth, peace, equality, and nonviolence. His nonviolence changed the minds of millions of Indians and united them for the freedom fight. I am proud that my great-great grandfather (was a lawyer from London) joined Gandhi for the freedom fight.”

Michael Kahl (Saginaw, Michigan)



Grade:

5th Grade

School:

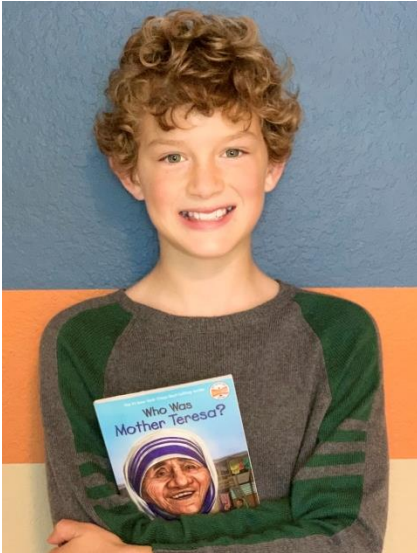
Hemmeter Elementary School

Historical Hero:

Mahatma Gandhi

“A person that I admire that made a difference in the world is Gandhi...he was persistent when things were tough. When he was send to prison, he didn’t stop there because he wanted a fair and peaceful India...he was a global icon of peace and believed that laws should be fair through peaceful acts. That’s what I love about Gandhi.”

Quade K. (Encinitas, California)



Grade:

5th Grade

School:

PCA Inspire Family of Schools Homeschool

Historical Hero:

Mother Theresa

“I admire Mother Theresa because she was an ordinary person who showed great compassion and is an example of how love can change the world and make the world a better place...In 1979 she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her work with the poor and dying.”

Annalisa Schuth (Westfield, Indiana)



Grade:

5th Grade

School:

Sycamore School/Westfield Washington Public Library

Historical Hero:

Justice Sonia Sotomayor

“Sonia Sotomayor and 8 other supreme court justices have a job to make decisions that impact the whole country...Sonia Sotomayor is also a Hispanic woman who inspires many other women...gender and race should not hinder us from reaching our goals.”

Maisa S. (Brooklyn, New York)



Grade:

5th Grade

School:

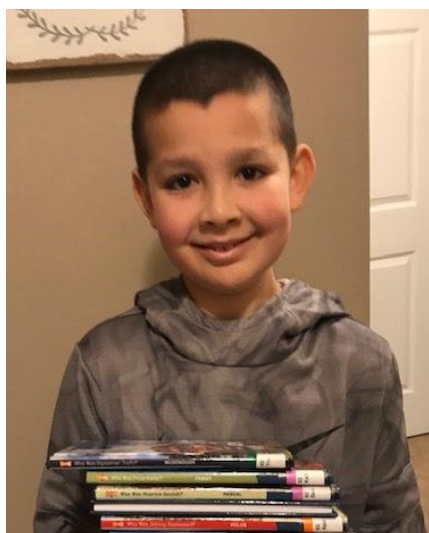
P.S./I.S. 30 Mary White Ovington

Historical Hero:

Rachel Carson

“Rachel Carson has made the world a better place. According to Silent Spring, the book shows how indiscriminate use of pesticides affected our dreams...bird and animal populations, and caused several medical problems for humans. This book is very special because it has touched people’s hearts and changed laws.”

Brady W. (Bellefonte, Pennsylvania)



Grade: 5th Grade

School: Marion Walker Elementary

Historical Hero: Malala Yousafzai

“One person I admire is Malala Yousafzai because she kept fighting for what she believed in...Malala impacted and inspired people greatly...Thanks to Malala, thousands of kids are able to go to school and learn how to read and write so they can do great things for the world just as she did. Without Malala, some kids would never get a chance to do big things for the world.”

Exciting, challenging, and EPICALLY fun!

“The brain is like a muscle, and if you don’t exercise it by reading and doing creative stuff, it’ll get weak and mushy.” — Jeff Kinney

What is? The Who Was? book series:

The Who Was? book series began in 2002 with the publication of just four books. Since then, it has evolved into a brand encompassing over 200 titles across four series lines (including Who Was?, What Was?, Where Is?, and What Is the Story Of?, known collectively as Who HQ). With more than 45 million books in print worldwide, it’s now the #1 nonfiction series for middle grade readers; every 13 seconds, a Who HQ book is sold. For more information about the series, including a list of titles, visit www.whowasbookseries.com/

Who Is? Penguin Young Readers:

Penguin Young Readers is one of the leading children's book publishers in the United States. The company owns a wide range of imprints and trademarks, including Dial Books, Dutton, Kokila, Nancy Paulsen Books, Penguin Workshop, Philomel, Puffin, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, Razorbill, Viking, and Frederick Warne. These imprints are home to such award-winning, *New York Times*- bestselling authors as, Laurie Halse Anderson, Max Brallier, Jan Brett, Eric Carle, Roald Dahl, Anna Dewdney, John Flanagan, John Green, Oliver Jeffers, Mike Lupica, Ransom Riggs, Ruta Sepetys, Sabaa Tahir, Jacqueline Woodson, and dozens of other popular authors. Penguin Young Readers Group is also the proud publisher of perennial brand franchises such as *The Little Engine That Could*, the Nancy Drew and Hardy Boys series, Peter Rabbit, Spot, the Classic Winnie the Pooh, the Very Hungry Caterpillar, Madeline, Mad Libs, the Last Kids on Earth, the Rangers Apprentice, and Who HQ among many others. Penguin Young Readers Group is a division of Penguin Random House LLC.

Who Are? Jeff Kinney and Patrick Kinney:

Jeff and Patrick Kinney are both already an important part of the Who Is? Who Was? family: in fact, in his biography *Who is Jeff Kinney?* Patrick Kinney provides a knowledgeable look at the life of his best-selling author/illustrator brother Jeff Kinney. From childhood pranks and amazing pillow and blanket mazes to Jeff’s job developing online games, *Who is Jeff Kinney?* gives kids a chance to learn more about the creator of the popular Wimpy Kid books.

Jeff Kinney

Jeff Kinney is the author of the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series, and owns a bookstore in Plainville, Massachusetts called An Unlikely Story.

Patrick Kinney

Patrick Kinney lives in Massachusetts, where he owns a fitness studio, hosts local trivia events, and pursues his many interests, including hiking, skiing, and playing with his dog. A published author, Patrick has released such titles as the adventure novel “Lunar Colony” and “Who Is Jeff Kinney?,” a biography about his brother, who is also an author.

- For more information please visit www.WhoWasHistoryBee.com
- Teachers, librarians, and administrators can reach out via email if they have additional questions at WhoWasHistoryBee@penguinrandomhouse.com

*For more information about The Who Was? History Bee or to reach out about interview opportunities, please contact:

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