

BREAKOUT

Also by Kate Messner

The Brilliant Fall of Gianna Z.

Sugar and Ice

Eye of the Storm

Wake Up Missing

All the Answers

The Seventh Wish

The Exact Location of Home

BREAKOUT

KATE MESSNER

BLOOMSBURY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS

NEW YORK LONDON OXFORD NEW DELHI SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS
Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., part of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018

BLOOMSBURY, BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS, and the Diana logo
are trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published in the United States of America in June 2018
by Bloomsbury Children's Books

Text copyright © 2018 by Kate Messner
Illustrations copyright © 2018 by Ellen Lindner

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or
transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including
photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system,
without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

Bloomsbury books may be purchased for business or promotional use. For
information on bulk purchases please contact Macmillan Corporate and
Premium Sales Department at specialmarkets@macmillan.com

"We Real Cool" is from *The Bean Eaters*, published by Harpers, © 1960 by
Gwendolyn Brooks.

Reprinted by Consent of Brooks Permissions.

"We Wear the Mask" is from *Lyrics of Lowly Life*, 1896, by Paul Laurence Dunbar.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Messner, Kate, author.

Title: Breakout / by Kate Messner.

Description: New York : Bloomsbury, 2018.

Summary: From multiple perspectives, tells of a time capsule project and the
middle schoolers who contribute, including future journalist Nora Tucker and
newcomer Elidee Jones, whose brother is in the local prison.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017034344 (print) • LCCN 2017045606 (e-book)
ISBN 978-1-68119-536-0 (hardcover) • ISBN 978-1-68119-537-7 (e-book)

Subjects: | CYAC: Time capsules—Fiction. | Community life—Fiction. |
Journalism—Fiction. | Prisons—Fiction. | Schools—Fiction.

Classification: LCC PZ7.M5615 Bp 2018 (print) | LCC PZ7.M5615 (e-book) |
DDC [Fic]—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017034344>

Interior design by Kay Petronio

Printed and bound in the U.S.A. by Berryville Graphics Inc., Berryville, Virginia
2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

All papers used by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc are natural, recyclable products
made from wood grown in well-managed forests. The manufacturing
processes conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

To find out more about our authors and books visit
www.bloomsbury.com and sign up for our newsletters.





July 30

Dear Library Board,

Enclosed is my contribution to the Wolf Creek Community Time Capsule Project. This folder includes my letters as well as public documents and things I've collected from friends and family members, shared with permission. I labeled everything with Post-its and added notes so you don't get confused. When I collected this stuff, I didn't know if I'd submit it all, but sometimes you need to hear a lot of points of view to get the whole story. Journalists have to pay attention to things like that.

Altogether, I think these documents tell a true and honest story of this June, which is what you said you wanted. You have my permission to include all these things in the time capsule, but you don't have my permission to pick and choose only some of them. That's the deal.

When you started this project, you probably thought you'd end up with a lot of stories about everybody eating Popsicles and swimming in the creek. But that's not what you're getting. Because this summer was different.

Sincerely,

Nora Tucker

* | *



Friday, June 7-
Morning announcements
from Mr. Simmons
(He's our middle
school principal.)

Just FYI . . . I don't know if you
future Wolf Creek people still do this,
but our school puts a transcript of
the morning announcements online for
students who are hearing-impaired. I think
that's cool, and also (bonus!!) it means I
can print announcements for the time
capsule without typing them up myself.

Friday, June 7

Good morning, Wolf Pack! Please stand for the pledge to the flag.

(Pledge)

As the school year winds down, Mr. Russell would like to remind everyone that library books are due by the end of the day unless you've made prior arrangements.

Language arts teachers will share a special project with you today—a request from the public library for students to contribute to the community time capsule project. We'd love to have all our middle school voices represented.

The drama club end-of-year party is after school today in the auditorium until 3:30.

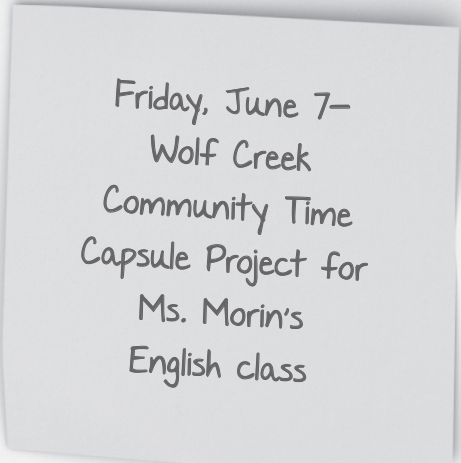
The final chess club tournament begins Monday. See Ms. Baker in room F-4 to sign up.

Wolf Creek Middle School field day will be a week from today, on June 14. Like always, we'll have the Wolf Pack cookout, the giant soccer field Slip 'N Slide, and the Mad Mile Race. Despite my lobbying to have a different prize for this year's winners, our water-balloon-the-principal tradition remains in place. To register for the race, see Mrs. Roy in the gym.

Happy birthday to Rory Burke, Patrick Fountain, Jessica Maynard, and Mrs. Howard (in the cafeteria). And let's have a warm Wolf Creek welcome for a new seventh-grade student joining us today, Elidee Jones.

Our quote of the day is from Thomas Edison. "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

That concludes our announcements.



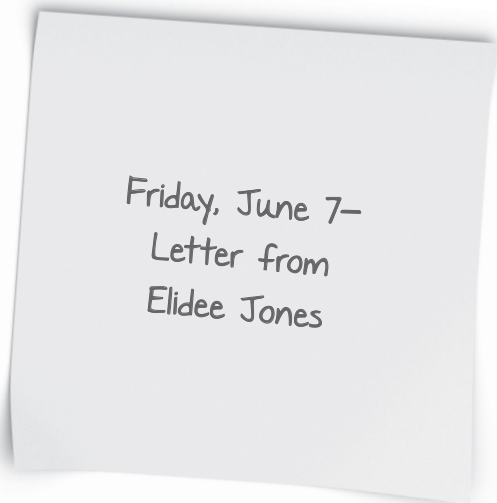
Friday, June 7-
Wolf Creek
Community Time
Capsule Project for
Ms. Morin's
English class

SUMMER HOMEWORK: Submit at least five items for the Wolf Creek Community Time Capsule, which will be opened in fifty years. These may be letters you've written to future residents or other pieces you've written that you wish to include. Anything you'd put in your writer's notebook will work, too. Ideas might include:

- Letters
- Personal narratives
- Descriptions
- Conversations
- Poems
- Jokes (must be appropriate)
- Student-written news articles, editorials, comics
- Lists
- Notes to yourself
- Hopes, dreams, wishes, and fears
- Master plans and evil plots
- Other ideas of your own!

SUBMISSION #1: A letter to future Wolf Creek residents about how you see your community and what's on your mind as we finish the school year. This is a quick note typed on the classroom computers, due at the end of class. I'll provide feedback on this one to make sure you're on the right track.

SUBMISSIONS #2-5, due July 30: More letters, or whatever you'd like from the list above, either handwritten or typed. Turn these in to Mrs. Raymond at the public library no later than July 30. She'll keep a list of students who turn in all five entries, and those students will start eighth grade with extra credit.



Friday, June 7-
Letter from
Elidee Jones

Dear future Wolf Creek residents,

I'm supposed to write you this letter for an assignment, but I just got here, so I don't have much to say about your town yet. The mountains are pretty.

It seems strange to be starting a new school and finishing the year at the same time, but I guess that's what happens when your mom gets a new job at the beginning of June. It took us six hours to drive here with the U-Haul trailer.

My old school was a lot different. It was in New York City, so it was a lot more diverse than this one. There was more to do there, too. The last day I went to school back home, my after-school drama group got to take a field trip to a Broadway play about Alexander Hamilton, America's first Secretary of the Treasury. That sounds boring, but it wasn't. None of us had been to a Broadway show before because it's super expensive. But I guess some old rich lady liked this show a lot and donated a bunch of money so middle and high school kids could see it, too. So we could appreciate the poetry. And we did. We all loved

it. Especially the rap battles the Founding Fathers had in their cabinet meetings. They were dressed in old-fashioned clothes, all up in each other's faces, spitting rhymes like Drake and Jay Z. The truth is, I don't even like rap music much, but the songs in this play were amazing. After the show, my friends Alaya and Rachel started planning a freestyle contest for lunch next week. I was all over that, already making up lyrics in my head on the subway back to school. Only then I remembered I wouldn't be there.

It's nice here, though. It sounds like the end of the school year will be pretty good. Field day seems fun. I'm looking forward to making new friends and being an 8th grader at Wolf Creek Middle School next year. It's not where I was hoping to go to school, but it seems like it will be okay.

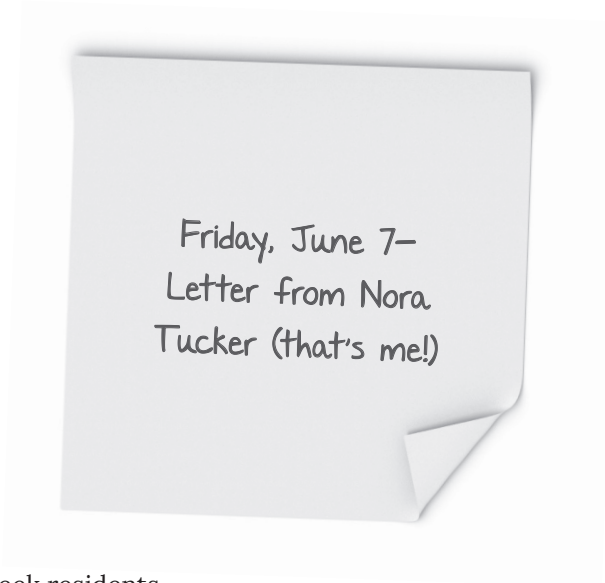
I hope things are going well for you, whatever you're doing in the future.

Sincerely,
Elidee Jones

Welcome, Elidee! I'm glad you're in my class. I understand what it feels like to be missing friends. I love Wolf Creek, but I still miss my college friends. It sounds like we have a love of poetry in common, too! One of my favorite poems is "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams. You should look it up. Sometimes, students like to make up their own versions, and I bet you'd be good at that.

My students all got poetry notebooks when we were celebrating National Poetry Month in April. I know you weren't here then, but there are some extras on the shelf by the door if you'd like to take one to write in over the summer.

-Ms. M.



Dear future Wolf Creek residents,

Ms. Morin said we should tell you how we see our community and what's on our minds as we wrap up the school year. I'll start with the first part.

HOW I SEE MY COMMUNITY:

I see my community as a pretty cool place because it's safe and friendly, and everybody knows everybody. That's my opinion. If you get a letter from my older brother, Sean, he'll tell you it's boring and that he can't wait to get to college. But you can make up your own mind about that, I guess. Sean's biased because his girlfriend Emily moved to Syracuse to go to SU, where Sean wants to go the year after next, even though my parents think he ought to stay put and go to Wolf Creek Community College. Sean says that is the absolute last school on his list. He liked it better in Wolf Creek before Emily left. All he does now is work to save money for Syracuse.

* 9 *

Even though fifty years is a long time, I doubt Wolf Creek will have changed much by the time you open this time capsule. Probably everybody still works at the prison and goes deer hunting in November and lines up on Main Street for the Fourth of July Parade, right?

WHAT'S ON MY MIND:

Field day! I've been waiting forever to be in 7th grade so I can run the Mad Mile. I'm under seven minutes now—I've been practicing so I can throw water balloons at Mr. Simmons. That's the prize. The fastest girl and fastest boy each get to throw three water balloons, and Mr. Simmons isn't allowed to run or duck or anything. He just has to stand there and get water-ballooned. That's been the seventh-grade field day prize forever. My mom got to water-balloon her principal, Mr. Snyder, when she was in seventh grade, and my brother Sean got to water-balloon him, too, right before Mr. Snyder retired. I'm going to be the first Tucker to water-balloon Mr. Simmons.

Sleepover! My friend Lizzie is coming over for a sleepover tonight. We're going to watch movies and eat her grandma's minty chocolate brownies, which are the best. They taste like a York Peppermint Pattie. I'll try to get the recipe to put in the time capsule. You'll love them!

Voldemort! (You know who that is, right? From the Harry Potter books? You must.) He's on my mind because he's on my little brother Owen's mind ALL THE TIME. Dad made the mistake of reading Harry Potter aloud to him, and now Owen won't go to bed until somebody checks the bathroom, the linen cupboard, the hall closet, Owen's bedroom closet, behind his

desk, and under his bed. Mom used to do it, but Owen thought she did a crummy job and didn't look carefully enough, so I am the designated Voldemort-checker now. I haven't found He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named yet, but I'll keep you posted. Owen's birthday is next Saturday, and I got him a wand, which I hope will make him feel braver.

My Alcatraz book that I'm writing! It's like this book we read in English class last year, only different. I loved that book, and not just because it has a prison superintendent's daughter as a character, which you don't see very often. I could relate to her because my dad's always busy with inmates at Wolf Creek Correctional Facility, just like her dad is always busy at Alcatraz with Al Capone and everybody. I've read that book four times. (In fact, I just remembered I still have it signed out and I'm not sure where it is, but I need to look because they just said on the announcements that Mr. Russell wants his books back.)

Anyway . . . back to my own Alcatraz book. The truth is, I haven't worked on it in a while because it got hard right after I started the first chapter. I had all this great research, but when you're trying to figure out something that happened in history, it's like a big, messed-up puzzle. You have to look at all kinds of different documents and reports and interviews, and half the time, people say totally different things about what happened. So you have to piece everything together to figure out the real deal. That's why my book has been so tricky. I might work on it more this summer, but maybe not, because I need time for . . .

THE WOLF CREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL GAZETTE!: I want to be editor next year, when I'm in eighth grade. I'm trying to get

* || *

Lizzie to do it with me, but she doesn't like news all that much. She likes math, though, so I'm going to see if she'll make some of those infographics like they have in the big-city newspapers. Maybe she can do some kind of newspaper comedy, too. Lizzie wants to be a comedian someday, if she doesn't end up being a mathematician. I want to be a journalist who covers all the exciting breaking news stories. We don't get many of those in Wolf Creek, unfortunately. Usually, our local paper runs stories about missing cats. But a journalist has to be ready, just in case. I'm planning to write news articles for most of my entries for this project. That way, opening your time capsule will be like reading a newspaper from the past!

The last thing on my mind is lunch. Because English is almost over and I'm so hungry that even school grilled cheese sounds good. Maybe by the time you read this, there will be better school lunches here, but I wouldn't count on it.

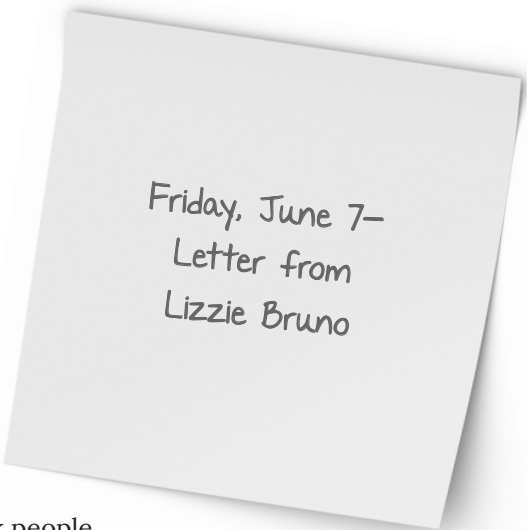
Your friend from the past,

Nora Tucker

*This is a great letter, Nora! I think future Wolf Creek residents will appreciate your reflections, and I *LOVE* that you're going to include newspaper articles. Have fun reporting!*

-Ms. M.

PS I found a copy of that Alcatraz book left outside on a bench by the track this week and took it to the office Lost and Found. Check there!



Friday, June 7—
Letter from
Lizzie Bruno

Dear future Wolf Creek people,

I don't know what this town will be like when you're reading this, but right now, it's kind of boring and could stand to lighten up a little, so I present to you . . .

LIZZIE BRUNO'S TOP TEN THINGS TO DO IN WOLF CREEK

(If you think I'm being sarcastic about
some of these, you're right.)

10. Attending Wolf Creek Middle School—This is not to say that everything about our school is great. I'm pretty sure they serve better lunches at the prison, and our annual fitness test in gym is a special kind of punishment. (We have to try a pull-up every single year, even when there's no hope whatsoever.) But school still makes the Top Ten List because most of our teachers are okay. Also, once a month, they have a staff workday, so I get to stay home eating chocolate

- pretzels, watching Elizabeth Chin comedy videos, and making bar graphs and Venn diagrams.
9. **Shopping at Joe's Mountain Market!**—They really do have an exclamation point on the sign. I don't think they mean for it to be ironic. I guess when you're the only place to pick up milk and bread, you get to use whatever over-the-top punctuation you want. Also, the market is on our walk home from school and they have Swedish Fish, so . . .
 8. **Field day**—Field day would rank higher without the Mad Mile, which *should* be called the Miserable Mile. I'll never understand why people run when they're not being chased. But the cookout and soccer field Slip 'N Slide are cool, so field day still makes the list.
 7. **Sleepovers at Nora's house**—This would also be ranked higher if it weren't for Nora's mom, who won't let us watch PG-13 movies because Nora's birthday isn't until August and her mom says no, that's not actually close enough.
 6. **Walking down our beautiful Main Street**—perfect for those who like a view of the prison while they're out shopping at the exclamation-point market or Bob's Hardware.
 5. **The public library**—For real, because Mrs. Raymond lets us do whatever we want with the teen room, so there are beanbag chairs and video games in there.
 4. **The Wolf Creek Firefighters' Carnival and Cookout**—This is pretty much my favorite day of the summer. We hang out watching water ball fights and eating fried dough. Fun fact: this used to be called the Firemen's Carnival, but when the old chief retired and Mrs. Labray got the job, she said it was time for that sexist carnival name to retire, too.

3. The Fourth of July Cookout

2. The Founders Day Cookout

(We are really into cookouts here)

1. Recording conversations on my new WhisperFlash

Z190 digital audio recorder—Grandma got it for me for my birthday because she heard an NPR interview with a comedian who said she learned all about how people talk and comedic timing by recording regular conversations and listening to them, sometimes even writing them down. I'm bringing the recorder to Nora's this weekend. It can store up to fifty hours of audio, and it's so small that you can have it turned on, recording in your pocket. Maybe I'll include a flash drive of audio recordings for this time capsule project so you can hear our important conversations about what brand of hot dog they should get for the Fourth of July Cookout.

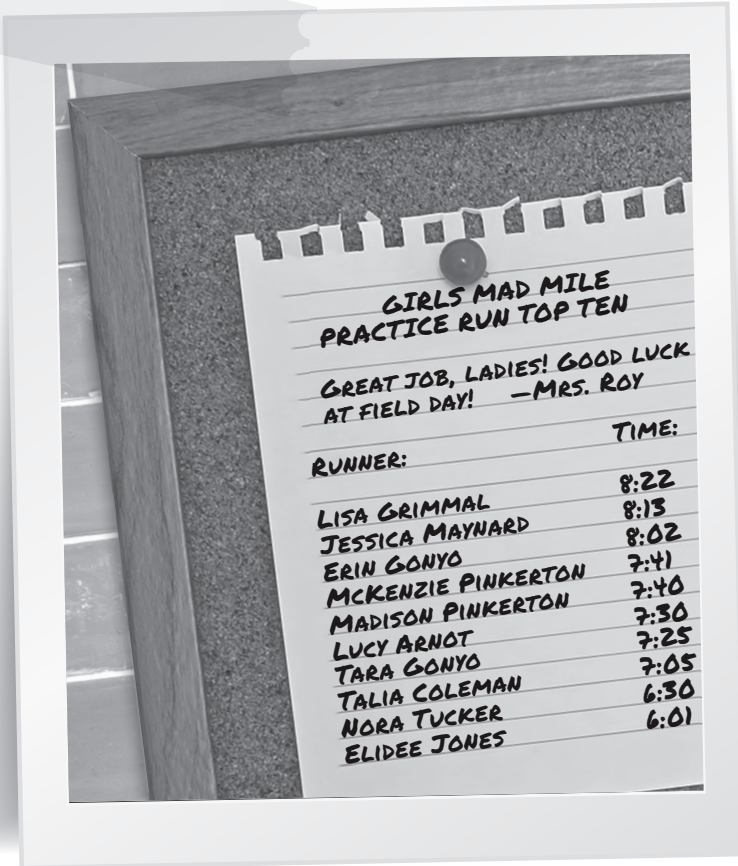
For the record, I'm not joking about this. Hot dogs are on the town council agenda next week. They're meeting to vote, and I know . . . the suspense must be killing you. But it's time for lunch, so I have to go now.

—Lizzie Bruno

What a fun list, Lizzie! I think future Wolf Creek residents will appreciate your sense of humor. I'm afraid that if you want to include recorded conversations in the time capsule, you'll need to type them up. We have no way of knowing if your flash drive will still be readable fifty years from now. Also, when you share recordings, please be sure to add a paragraph with your own reflections, so you're not just writing other people's words. The future wants to hear from you!

—Ms. M.

Friday, June 7—
Note posted outside the gym (I took this photo on the day of our practice run, when I still thought this whole time capsule was going to be about field day and Popsicles.)



Friday, June 7—
Text messages between
Lizzie & Nora

Just FYI . . . I used our computer's messaging app to print out these text messages. In the olden days, people sent handwritten letters, and reading those now tells us a lot about what life was like back then. Texts are kind of our version of letters, so I decided to include them, even though they'll probably seem old-fashioned by the time you read this. You probably communicate telepathically or something. Good luck saving that for your extra-credit time capsule project.

NORA: Omg who moves to a new school 2 weeks before classes end?

LIZZIE: I saw the list outside the gym and knew you'd freak out

NORA: I beat my best time by like 30 seconds and she was soooooo far ahead

LIZZIE: Tomorrow's newspaper headline.

NEW KID SPEEDS INTO TOWN,
DESTROYS TUCKER MAD MILE LEGACY

NORA: I need to train harder

LIZZIE: Hard enough to make up 30 seconds in a week?

NORA: Yup

LIZZIE: WOLF CREEK SEVENTH GRADER DROPS DEAD OF EXHAUSTION, LAST WORDS: "JUST 20 MORE SECONDS TO GO . . ."

NORA: 😊 Seriously
where did she even come from?

LIZZIE: I heard she came bc somebody in her family's in the prison

NORA: Really???

LIZZIE: Yup

NORA: Whoa

LIZZIE: She seems really nice though. Her locker's near mine and she had strawberry Pop-Tarts this morning so we got talking about how the frosting kind is way better. I like her

NORA: So does Mrs Roy. Did you hear her after our run? She was all, "Whoa! Our new student is quite the athlete!" and trying to get Elidee to sign up for cross-country next fall

LIZZIE: That's good isn't it?
So your team can win

NORA: I guess

LIZZIE: Gotta go finish my math

NORA: Bring your notebook tonight ok? I have an idea for the time capsule

LIZZIE: ?

NORA: We should write news articles about what's happening in town so it's like reading a newspaper from our time when they open it

LIZZIE: Can't we save ourselves some time and just stick in a copy of the actual newspaper?

NORA: No! This way it's our perspective and also good practice for the school paper

LIZZIE: I don't remember signing up for that

NORA: It'll be fun! I'll be editor and you can just do the parts you like and we can have math stuff like those graphs you like in USA TODAY! And a comedy page!

LIZZIE: I'll do parody articles like they do in The Rutabaga

NORA: What's that?

LIZZIE: An online newspaper that publishes articles making fun of real news

NORA: It'll have to be a separate section so people don't think we're publishing fake news

LIZZIE: You are such a nerd

NORA: We have journalistic standards!

LIZZIE: I'll bring my notebook tonight

NORA: Can you also bring your grandma's brownie recipe?

LIZZIE: Doubt it because whenever people ask she says it's a secret

NORA: Tell her it's for the time capsule so nobody will know for 50 years

LIZZIE: Idk she'll only be 117 years old then so she might still be baking them

NORA: Ask anyway

LIZZIE: Okie dokie

Friday, June 7—
Letter from
Nora Tucker

Dear future Wolf Creek residents,

Sorry this letter is a little messy. I'm writing on the school bus. Do you still have buses or do you hover-craft home from school?

There was actually some news today—we got a new student at school! I don't see why she didn't finish the year at her old school. Her name is Elidee, and she's in seventh grade like us. Her brother is in Dad's prison. (Technically, the prison doesn't belong to my dad. I call it that because he's the superintendent and in charge of everything.) We also call the college where my mom works "Mom's college" even though she's only in charge of the admissions office. But by the time you're reading this, the prison will be somebody else's prison anyway because Dad's going to retire in a few years.

It took us a while to figure out Elidee's deal because Lizzie heard this morning that her dad was in prison. Then Tommy Dunbar said it was Elidee's mom, but Lisa Grimmel said that couldn't be true because Elidee's mom was in the office with her before homeroom.

Tommy asked Lisa how she knew, and Lisa said, "Duh, because it definitely wasn't Paul Washington's mom." (I don't know what Wolf Creek is like in the future, but in order for you to understand what Lisa said, you probably need to know that not too many African American people live here now. Paul Washington is the only one in our school. He was until today, anyway. So that's what Lisa was getting at.) Anyway, Tommy kept arguing that maybe the lady in the office was Elidee's aunt or something, but Lisa was right. (Also, there are no women in the prison here—just men. Tommy should have known that because his dad works there. But I guess that tells you something about Tommy Dunbar, and if you get a letter from him, you should probably keep all this in mind when you read it.)

Anyway, Elidee's brother is the one in prison. I found out after gym because Ava Porter's aunt is Elidee's mom's landlord and says the reason they moved is so they can visit without taking the bus from New York City. Her brother's only nineteen, which seems too young to have done something that bad. Dad's prison is maximum security, so you don't get thrown in there for stuff like stealing candy bars from Joe's Mountain Market. I didn't get to ask Ava what the brother did, because Elidee came into the locker room, so we had to stop talking about her.

I realize that what I just wrote makes us sound gossipy and not very nice, but most people were actually going out of their way to be nice to Elidee. When she had trouble opening her locker, three people swooped in to help. Tara Gonyo said she liked Elidee's sneakers, and then the Pinkerton twins started talking about theater stuff because Elidee was in her school's drama club in New York and McKenzie and Madison are in ours.

I bet the situation with Elidee's brother is hard, though. I can't imagine having to visit my older brother in prison. If he got a life sentence, I'd probably get his room. But Sean would never do anything like that. He works at Joe's Mountain Market and doesn't even take the day-old doughnuts without asking first.

The bus is almost at my house, but I have to tell you one more thing about Elidee. She ran a six-minute mile in gym today. I am really hoping this is not a regular thing.

Your friend from the past,
Nora Tucker



Friday, June 7-
Text messages
between Elidee
and her mom

MAMA: You home yet?

ELIDEE: Yes

MAMA: How was your first day?

ELIDEE: Ok
People were pretty friendly

I'm like the only black person here though

MAMA: I thought there were some other families

ELIDEE: One other kid in our grade

Paul something

He nodded at me but I didn't talk to him

MAMA: What did you do in your classes?

ELIDEE: Not much because everything's winding down

Ran a mile in gym

MAMA: How did that go?

ELIDEE: I got the best mile time because nobody's very fast here

MAMA: It's a smaller school. Maybe you can run on a team in the fall

ELIDEE: The gym teacher was all excited and wants me to run cross-country

MAMA: That's great!

ELIDEE: I doubt they're as good as Morgan Academy

MAMA: So run for your new team and show those Morgan Academy people what they missed

ELIDEE: Maybe

MAMA: Got homework?

ELIDEE: Just a thing we're supposed to do over the summer for extra credit in English

MAMA: You should do that tonight because we're going to see Troy tomorrow

ELIDEE: Ok

MAMA: Have a snack & I'll make dinner when I get home from the hospital

ELIDEE: See you later

MAMA: Love you to the moon and back xo

ELIDEE: To Pluto and back

MAMA: That's not even a planet anymore

ELIDEE: Still counts

MAMA: Then I love you to RR245 and back

ELIDEE: ?

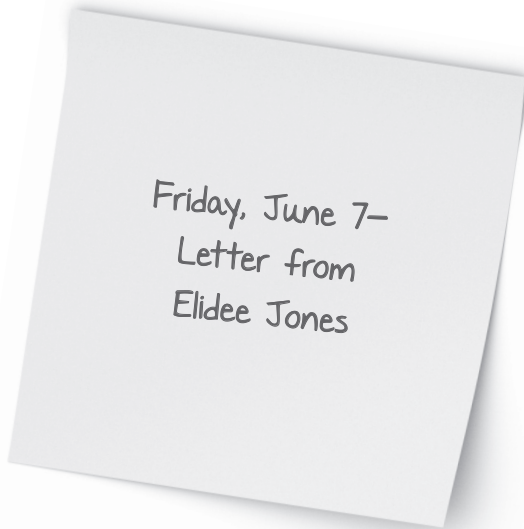
MAMA: Dwarf planet out past Pluto

They found it in 2015

ELIDEE: You win

Love you

MAMA: Love you too



Friday, June 7-
Letter from
Elidee Jones

Dear future Wolf Creek residents,

This is the second of five letters I'm supposed to write to you for extra credit. My new English teacher told me to check out a poet she likes, so I got a William Carlos Williams book from the school library. This was harder than you might think because the librarian here likes to get all his books back before school ends so he can lock them up for the summer. At my old school, Ms. Sanchez sent us home with books to read while school was out. She never seemed worried about what came back and what didn't. I had to promise to bring this poetry book back on Monday.

That works out fine because the poem Ms. Morin likes is really short anyway. It's about how so much depends on a red wheelbarrow. That's it. I haven't seen any wheelbarrows in Wolf Creek, but maybe that's a thing here? Anyway, I wrote my own version of the poem on the bus ride home:

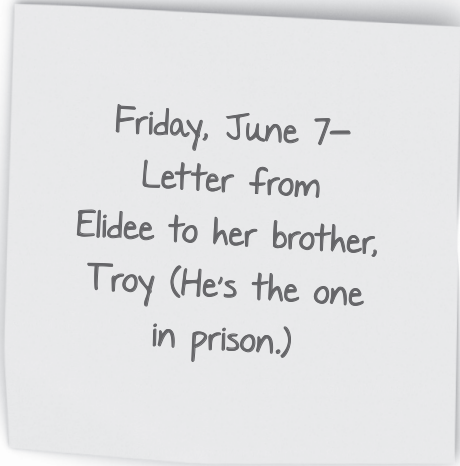


So much depends
On a thick concrete wall
Smudged with bird ~~poop~~ droppings
Beside Joe's Mountain Market!*

*That's Joe's exclamation point—not mine.

It's not as pretty as the other poem, but neither is your Main Street. Also, I'm definitely no William Carlos Williams. I looked him up online at school, and he was a grumpy-looking old white guy. Maybe I'll get a different poetry book at the public library if they let people borrow books over the summer there.

Sincerely,
Elidee Jones



Friday, June 7—
Letter from
Elidee to her brother,
Troy (He's the one
in prison.)

Dear Troy,

It's messed up, living here now. Our school bus drove by your big old wall this morning and again this afternoon, and I thought about where you might be and what you were doing in there. You get up early, right? So by the time we drove by at 7:30, you were probably eating toast at a long table full of men in green pants and shirts. When we drove by this afternoon, I wondered if you might be in the yard. Mama says you get to go outside an hour a day. Maybe you were out there throwing a basketball around with a bunch of other guys who hung out with the wrong people. Or maybe you were back in your cell already. Maybe you were reading or writing up stuff for your appeal. Mama prays for that every night, you know. Even though Aunt Maya told her every single inmate in there's working on the same thing and none of them are going anywhere.

But you know what? You know who Alexander Hamilton was, right? You always liked social studies class best, so I bet you do. He was one of America's Founding Fathers who fought for freedom for other white guys. He ended up being America's first Secretary of the Treasury and some other stuff, too. He used to live on some island in the Caribbean until a hurricane destroyed everything, and then he wrote about it and got sent to America to go to college. He wrote his way off his island. Wrote his way out. They talked about that in a play I saw on a field trip before we left New York, and I kept thinking about your appeal. You've always been pretty good with words, so maybe you can write your way out, too. You never know. And let's face it—you don't have a whole lot else to do in there, so I think you should keep working on it.

We're coming to see you tomorrow, so I'm not mailing this letter; I'll bring it then. Mama bought some nuts and beef jerky and Starbursts for you at the market. She's going to try and bring them. The rules on the website for prison families say you have to have everything a certain way, just so, and only some kinds of packages are allowed. We're trying to be careful to get it just right so you can have your stuff. Mama says you've been complaining the food's ten times worse than a school cafeteria's in there. I'm not so sure. You've never gone to school in this town, and I doubt those prison cooks could come up with much worse than the school's grilled cheese. It's like eating salted snot pressed between a couple pieces of bread that got left out on the counter too long.

I hope that made you laugh.

I bet not much is funny in there, but I miss hearing you laugh.

I miss a lot of other things, too, now that we live here. I miss walking home from school with Alaya and Gina and Rachel instead of riding a smelly bus. I miss stopping at the bodega for chips. I miss hearing languages that aren't English and seeing faces that aren't white. I miss petting Mrs. Cruz's dog Onyx when they're out walking in Mullaly Park. I miss the park, too—the playground and the old men reading newspapers on benches and the sound of the 4 train rumbling over the track by the basketball courts. Our apartment here has a yard, which Mama said would be better than a park, but it's empty and weedy and way too quiet. At least Mrs. G. lives in the apartment upstairs. Even though I don't see her much, it's nice knowing she's up there when Mama's at work, which is a lot. I miss having her around more.

Also, I miss the planetarium. Remember when we used to go to the Friday night shows? Mama and I still play that love-you-past-the-moon game. It started with that book where the bunny tells his mama he loves her to the moon. And then the mama says, "Oh yeah? Well, I love you to the moon and back!" I don't know if you remember this, but when I was little and learning about the solar system, Mama started saying that with other planets at bedtime. I'd tell her I loved her to the moon, and she'd be like, "Well, I love you to Mars!" or Saturn or Neptune. It's funny—we still do that when we text now, only we try to find things that are farther away. It was easier to get ideas when we lived near the planetarium. We live so far from everything now.

I really miss Grandmama. I miss her suppers and her hand on my shoulder and the way she French braids my hair, with one fat braid on each side. When we left, she gave me a bag full of hair

oil because she said stores here might not even sell it. Mama's braiding my hair for me now, but she only does one braid and never gets it as tight. Grandmama braided it so tight I'd have a headache.

I bet pretty soon I'll even miss the headache.

You probably miss a lot of things, too. I hope Aunt Maya's wrong and your appeal works out and you get out and we can all go home.

Love you,

Elidee

PS You might meet my English teacher, Ms. Morin. She told our class that she teaches at the prison sometimes, and you guys are going to do the same project we're doing in class, where you get to tell your stories as part of a time-capsule project for the library. You should do that if you get the chance. They say they want to include everyone's voices, and your stories are probably more interesting than most people's. Plus then we can both be in there. The time capsule, I mean. Not the prison.



Friday, June 7-
Recorded conversation

LIZZIE: Hi!

NORA: Hi! Did you bring your notebook?

LIZZIE: Yes and I also brought this! It's recording right now.

OWEN: Is that spy gear? It looks like a pen that shoots poison darts that I read about in a book once.

LIZZIE: Nope. It's a digital audio recorder.

NORA: Oh cool! We can use it when we do interviews for the time capsule project!

LIZZIE: I'm actually using it to record everyday conversations to get a better sense for language and timing. Grandma says she heard on NPR that it's important for comedians.

NORA: Can't we also use it for interviews for the articles?

LIZZIE: Sure.

OWEN: I'll help!

NORA: But you don't like to write.

OWEN: I like to draw. I'll be the comics guy.



MRS. TUCKER: Nora!

NORA: What?

MRS. TUCKER: Come get your clothes out of the dryer so I can finish this wash!

NORA: Coming!

LIZZIE: I was hoping things would be more interesting and hilarious over here, but this sounds just like my house.

NORA: It's a mom thing. Let me get my clothes, and I'll meet you in my room so we can start writing!

LIZZIE: Cool. Can I use your computer?

NORA: Sure. How come?

LIZZIE: Ms. Morin says I have to type up any conversations I want to put in the time capsule project. I want to transcribe what we just recorded while you're folding so I can figure out how long that's going to take.

LIZZIE'S REFLECTIONS: This tiny two-minute conversation where absolutely nothing happened just took me 19 minutes to type, and there is no way I'm going to keep doing this. Nora's brother Sean says there might be some app that will transcribe audio for you, but unless I can get that, this is going to be my only recorded conversation in the time capsule. Sorry, future Wolf Creek residents. But I hope this little sample makes you feel better. As you can see, you're not missing much.

Friday, June 7-
Staff Writer Bios
for the *Wolf Creek*
Community Time
Capsule Times

Nora made me write this cheesy
biography as if we're award-winning
journalists who work at the New
York Times or something, so I'm
making her add this Post-it. Let it be
noted, future Wolf Creek residents,
that I understand how silly this is
and am only doing it for Nora. I also
love that Owen drew pictures to go
with our bios. -Lizzie

THE WOLF CREEK COMMUNITY

★ ★ ★ TIME CAPSULE TIMES ★ ★ ★

Owen drew this picture
of me. My hair isn't quite
this big in real life.



MEET THE STAFF WRITERS

NORA TUCKER is a rising eighth grader and future editor in chief of the *Wolf Creek Middle School Gazette*. A lifelong resident of Wolf Creek, she lives with her parents and two brothers, Sean (who's 17) and Owen (who's 8). When Nora is older, she wants

to be a journalist or a novelist or both. Probably both. In addition to writing, her interests include running, reading, Alcatraz history, and fighting imaginary villains in defense of her younger brother.

Owen also drew my picture,
and my braces really are this enormous.



LIZZIE BRUNO is an almost-finished 7th grader and reluctant journalist. She's an only child who lives with her mom in Wolf Creek except for when her dad makes her spend a week with his family in Massachusetts every summer so he can prove what a great dad he is. I'm guessing there's only about a 20 percent chance you're still reading this,

but just in case you're one of the one in five, Lizzie's favorite things are math, comedy, Nora, potato chips, and her grandma. Not necessarily in that order.

Friday, June 7-
Nora's article for the
Wolf Creek Community
Time Capsule Times

THE WOLF CREEK COMMUNITY

★ ★ ★ TIME CAPSULE TIMES ★ ★ ★

MIDDLE SCHOOL PREPARES FOR ANNUAL FIELD DAY

by **Nora Tucker**

Students and staff of Wolf Creek Middle School are preparing for the annual field day competition next week. The event is a local tradition, dating back more than forty years.

“We looked forward to it all year,” said Lisa Tucker, who took first place in the girls’ Mad Mile Race in 1980. “There used to be a dodgeball tournament, too, but they got rid of that because parents complained. Those red balls really do hurt when you get hit with one.”

In place of dodgeball, the school now offers a Slip ‘N Slide on the soccer field, which has been a big hit.

“It’s pretty fun,” said seventh grader Lizzie Bruno. “My favorite part is when the teachers decide to try it. Last year, Mr. Russell got going so fast he slid right off the end of the plastic and kept rolling down the hill.”

This year’s field day will be Friday, June 14, rain or shine, in back of the school.

Friday, June 7—Lizzie's
parody* article for the
Wolf Creek Community
Time Capsule Times

*"Parody" means this isn't
actually real news; it's Lizzie's
comedy piece making fun
of the news here. Also, the
quotes aren't real. Lizzie
made them up.

FRANKFURTER FACE-OFF:

TOWN COUNCIL SIZZLES WITH RED-HOT CONTROVERSY
AS WHINERS ARGUE OVER WIENERS

by Lizzie Bruno

Wolf Creek's town council is set to debate what may be its most crucial issue of the century next week: What brand of frankfurters should be served at the Fourth of July Cookout?

* 38 *

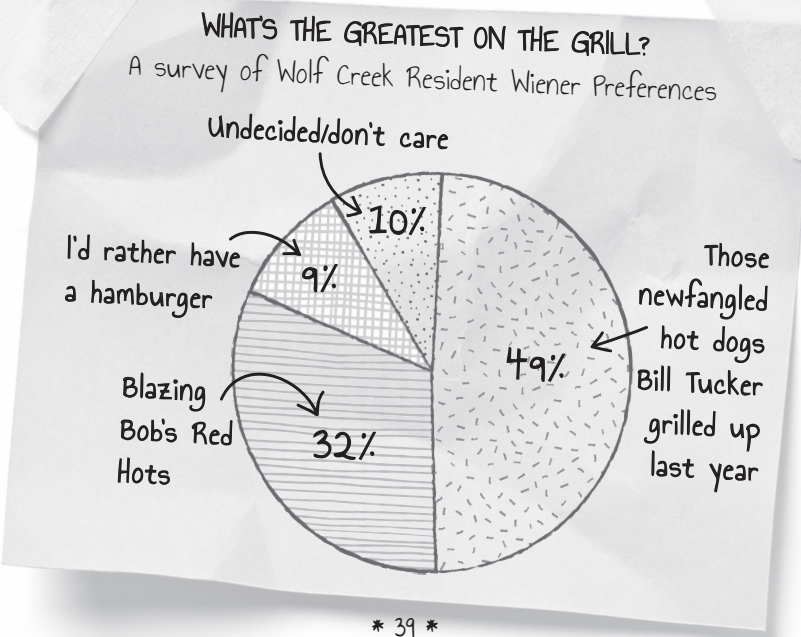
This hot-dog hullabaloo began when Mr. Ledbetter got a raging case of poison ivy last summer.

"It was all over his face and up and down his arms, and I don't even want to know where else," said Ledbetter's hiking buddy Stuart Eldridge.

Ledbetter had to step back from his traditional role as Independence Day Grill Master. Local resident Bill Tucker (that's Nora's dad!) offered to help out, which everyone thought was nice of him at the time.

However, on the morning of the cookout, Mr. Tucker went out and bought some kind of hot dog he found on sale instead of Blazing Bob's Red Hots, which is the tradition. It turns out most people liked the on-sale hot dogs better (see pie chart below).

But now, Mr. Ledbetter is back at the grill and wants only Blazing Bob's again. The town council has been flooded with letters from emotional residents who are weeping for their fabulous foot-longs and don't know how they'll be able to go on if the substandard sausages prevail instead. "If it ain't a Blazing Bob's Red Hot," said longtime resident Doug Toole, "then it ain't worth the mustard."



Saturday, June 8-
Letter from Nora Tucker
(Whatever you do, don't
skip this one, because
we actually have something
to report now!!)

Dear future Wolf Creek residents,

BREAKING NEWS: TWO INMATES BROKE OUT OF DAD'S PRISON OVERNIGHT!!!

Seriously! Lizzie and I were working on our newspaper articles last night, and we went to bed at around ten. Then at eight this morning, the doorbell rang, and it was a state trooper who told Mom about the breakout. Mom already knew, though, because I guess Dad got a phone call at five this morning, when they were discovered missing, so he had to go to work then.

(By the way, you know those alarms on the prison towers that are supposed to go off to warn everybody if inmates break out? Yeah, they totally didn't go off. I don't know if they'll be fixed by the time you're reading this or not, but I wouldn't count on them if I were you.)

Anyway, Mom told Lizzie and me not to say anything to Owen because she doesn't want him to be scared. Mom says this

isn't going to last very long because it's June in the mountains, so even if the police don't find those guys right away, it won't be long before the blackflies do, and then they'll be begging to go back to their cells. (Do you still get blackflies in the woods every June? Maybe by the time you read this, you'll have found a way to get rid of them, and if that's the case, you're lucky because they're mean little things. Dad says they're vampires with wings.)

Mom also told us she got an early-morning call from Lizzie's mom, who's at the hospital with Lizzie's grandma. Her grandma was supposed to go to work this morning—she's a civilian worker at the prison—but I guess she woke up with chest pains, so they went to the emergency room to have her checked out. She's fine—it wasn't a heart attack or anything—but they're still at the hospital, so Lizzie's mom can't pick her up until later.

And that reminds me—I got that recipe for you from Lizzie's grandma:

Priscilla's Magical Minty Brownies

- 1. Mix up two packages of any brand fudge brownie mix according to the directions.*
- 2. Pour a little less than half the mix into a 10 x 15 inch baking dish.*
- 3. Put a layer of York Peppermint Patties on top of that.*
- 4. Pour the rest of the mix over it and bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes or until they seem done.*

I was expecting something fancier, but I guess that was the secret of her secret recipe. Sometimes things aren't quite how they seem.

Anyway, back to the prison break. Lizzie and I wanted to go out reporting, but Mom said no because of the manhunt happening now. I told her I think that's pretty unfair, since Sean was allowed to go to the market for work, but she didn't care. I kind of wish college was still in session so Mom would have less time to worry and make new rules. Unfortunately, she gets to work from home a lot of the time until it gets busy again in August.

So now Lizzie and I are going to collect background information instead. Our school paper adviser says that's important to have in news stories so readers can see how what's happening now fits into the bigger picture. So Lizzie's making some charts about the prison, showing the population and stuff, and I'm collecting all my notes about Alcatraz history from my book research so we can compare the two escapes. There are some pretty cool stories from Alcatraz. One team of guys who tried to escape made dummies and left them in their beds so it would look like they were sleeping instead of running around free. Pretty smart, right? More to come . . .

Your friend from the past,

Nora Tucker