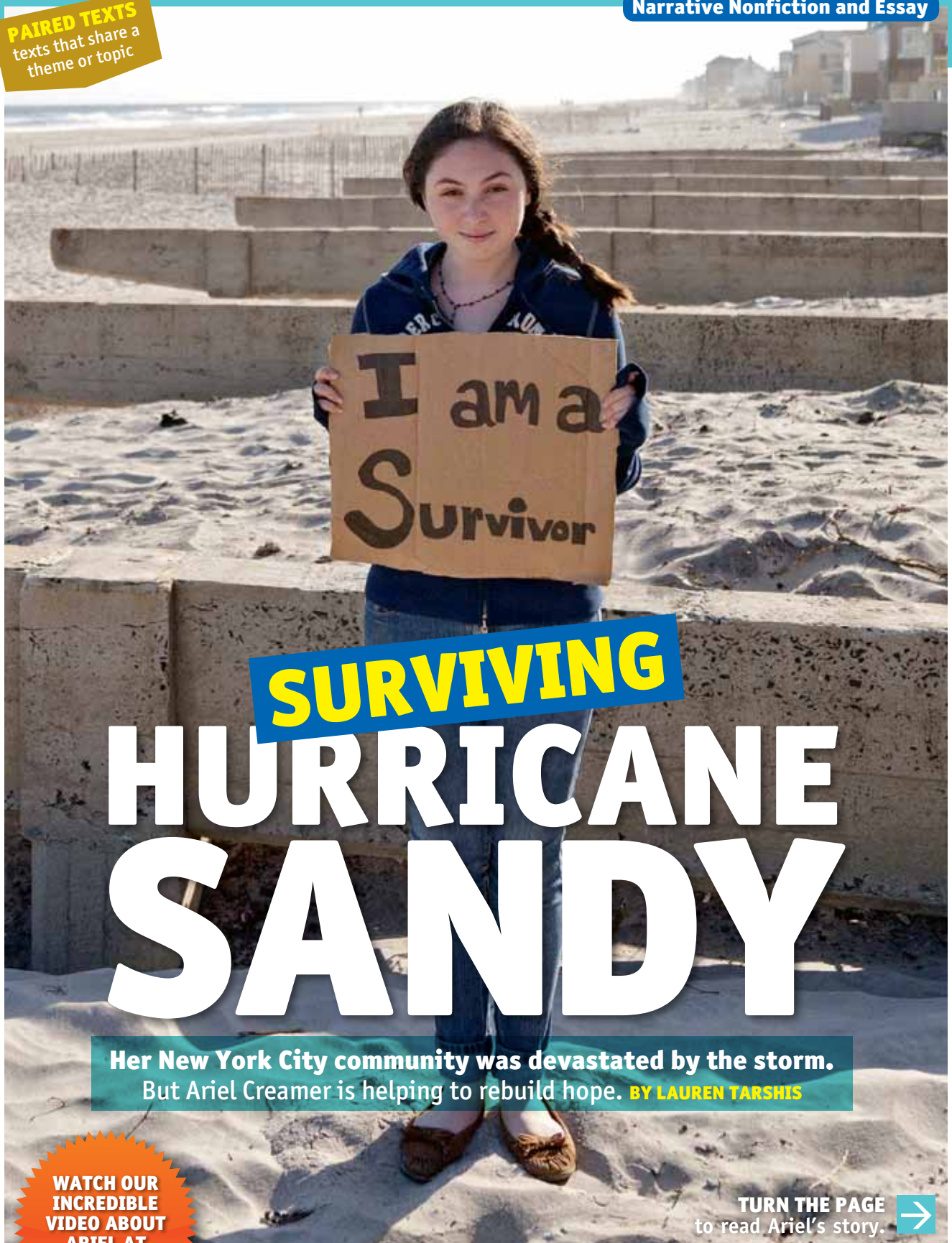
PAIRED TEXTS
texts that share a theme or topic

Narrative Nonfiction and Essay



SURVIVING HURRICANE SANDY

Her New York City community was devastated by the storm. But Ariel Creamer is helping to rebuild hope. BY LAUREN TARSHIS

WATCH OUR INCREDIBLE VIDEO ABOUT ARIEL AT SCOPE ONLINE

TURN THE PAGE to read Ariel's story.

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Ariel Creamer, 14, has always felt lucky to live in Rockaway, New York. The community sits on an 11-mile peninsula, a sliver of land that juts into the ocean. Though Rockaway is part of New York City, some areas feel more like a seaside resort than a big city. Living just a few blocks from the beach, Ariel can see the ocean from her house and hear the waves as she drifts off to sleep.

"It's the ocean that makes this place so special," she says.

On October 29, 2012, that ocean turned ferocious. That was the night Hurricane Sandy slammed into the East Coast. The storm was enormous—as large as the state of Texas—and it hit with devastating force. Thousands of homes, businesses, and cars were destroyed; millions lost power for days. At least 159 people were killed.

Rockaway was hit especially hard. During the hurricane, the wild waters of the Atlantic surged over the beach, flooding neighborhoods up and down the peninsula. Thousands of homes were damaged, some **irreparably**. A few were sucked into the sea and washed away completely. Just blocks from Ariel's home, a sweeping fire broke out after downed electrical wires fell onto a three-story building. In nearby areas, 20 different fires erupted as seawater came into contact with electrical systems. Even as the floodwaters rushed into basements and first floors, more than 100 stores, restaurants, and houses burned to the ground.

Sandy's fierce winds lifted cars and fueled raging fires that destroyed nearly 130 homes in Breezy Point, Queens. What does the map tell you about why the Rockaways were so vulnerable?

JEMAL COUNTESS/REDUX (TOP); UPI /MONIKA GRAFF/LANDOV (BOTTOM); MAP: JIM MCMAHON/MAPMAN™

Last-Minute Escape

Ariel's family originally planned to ride out the hurricane in their home, but just hours before the storm hit, Ariel's father decided that staying was too dangerous. The family escaped to Brooklyn shortly before the city's bridges closed.

When they returned to Rockaway the next day, they found their neighborhood in ruins. Roads were clogged with sand and wreckage. The playground where Ariel used to take her little sister had been washed away. Yet Ariel's family was fortunate. Though their basement was flooded, their house was still standing.

Rockaway, however, was a disaster zone, and the tight-knit community was in shock. There was no power or running water. Many of Ariel's friends had lost their homes to flooding or fire and were living far away. Ariel's school was so damaged that she had to temporarily attend a school in Brooklyn, forcing her to commute an hour each way by bus.

A Silver Lining

In those first months, Ariel missed her old life—her friends, her walks on the beach, and her favorite restaurant, which had burned down. All around her, people were suffering, especially the poor and elderly. As the weather got colder, residents stood shivering in long lines, waiting for water and other necessities from relief organizations.

The men and women helping Rockaway heal inspired Ariel. Volunteers came from around the country with carloads of donated clothing and toys. Neighbors devoted their spare time to helping others rebuild. Teenagers climbed dozens of flights of stairs to deliver water and food to elderly people trapped without power—or elevator service—in high-rise buildings. "My mom told me you can't control what happens to you," Ariel says. "But you can always choose how you want to deal with it."

Ariel's choice was to help.

She created a program called Survivors Silver Lining, a Facebook page that matches survivors in need with donors who want to help. Ariel built the page late one February evening, posting information about a boy named Patrick who'd lost his entire Lego collection when his house burned down. Within days, Patrick's Legos had been replaced.

In the coming months, Survivors Silver Lining would help numerous kids: Christopher, who received a new Nook; brothers Charlie and John, who got a new drum set and keyboard. Ariel also worked with other organizations to bring much-needed supplies to Rockaway. Her efforts have made her something of a celebrity. Last April, she traveled to the White House, in Washington, D.C., where she was honored as a Hurricane Sandy Champion of Change.

Today, the scars of destruction are still visible in Rockaway—but hope is in the air, blowing in the salty ocean breeze. The streets are clear, and many homes have been rebuilt. Special precautions, such as elevated foundations, will help protect new structures from flooding. And against all odds, Rockaway's seven miles of beaches reopened to the public in May.

"I can't imagine living anywhere but Rockaway," Ariel declares. "My neighborhood will be back, even stronger than before."●

ESSAY

This fireplace is all that remains of a home destroyed by the May 20, 2013, tornado that pounded Moore, Oklahoma. At least 24 people were killed.

AFTER THE DISASTER

Does it always make sense to rebuild?

BY JUSTIN O'NEILL

Few things test the resilience of the human spirit more than natural disasters. Often our first impulse is to get everything back to exactly the way it was as quickly as possible. Even when entire cities are demolished by a tornado or wildfire, we come together and rebuild.

But might it be time to change our thinking?

Rather than returning devastated towns and cities to how they were—only, perhaps, for them to be devastated again—why not seize the opportunity to rebuild in smarter, safer ways?

Extreme Weather

The United States has a number of extremely disaster-prone areas. Moore, Oklahoma, for example, was rebuilt after tornado strikes in 1998, 1999, 2003, and 2010. Now this city of 55,000 residents is rebuilding again, after yet another tornado slammed it in May 2013. Then there is Dauphin Island, Alabama, a small and scenic strip of land in the Gulf Coast lined with beautiful beach homes. Since 1979, nearly a dozen hurricanes have hit Dauphin. Each time, the federal government—which is required by law to help cities and states rebuild after major disasters—has helped pay for restorations, spending at least $80 million on Dauphin over the past 34 years.

Money isn't the only issue, of course. Rebuilding in these vulnerable areas means that people's lives will continue to be at risk. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the number of severe weather events causing at least $1 billion in damages has risen from two per year in the 1980s to

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more than 10 per year since 2010. Many scientists believe that global climate change is contributing to this rise—and that we can expect it to continue.

Does it make sense to keep building back up what nature continues to knock down?

Building Better

There may be a few places where not rebuilding is the smartest and safest thing to do. But in most areas, we just need to be willing to make some changes, whether it's moving oceanfront neighborhoods back from the beach or building carefully landscaped, fire-resistant zones around homes in wildfire country.

New Orleans has set an excellent example of smart rebuilding. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, killing at least 1,833 people. Eighty percent of New Orleans was flooded. Today, the city has been largely rebuilt—and it is stronger than ever. It has installed a major new flood barrier, 350 miles of **levees** and floodwalls, and the world's largest **drainage-pump station**. Many new buildings are designed to be flood-proof, and many new homes are elevated, to keep them safe from floodwaters. Similar steps are being taken in New York and New Jersey, the areas hit worst by Hurricane Sandy last October. Tougher building codes are being enforced and houses are being raised.

Brad Pitt started a foundation to build super flood-proof homes like this one in New Orleans.

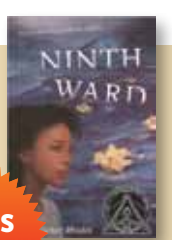
We can also draw inspiration from other parts of the world. In Japan, for example, amazing innovations protect high-rise buildings from earthquakes. Enormous rubber **shock absorbers** and sliding walls help these buildings withstand quakes, as they did in 2011, when the fourth most-powerful earthquake on record hit Japan. Can California—the most earthquake-prone part of the United States—take a cue?

Sometimes the best defense against extreme weather is nature itself. Waterfront homes and businesses may need to be moved inland and natural defenses against flooding—such as **wetlands**, coral reefs, sand dunes, and flood plains—restored. These **ecosystems** naturally slow and reduce storm surge—the wall of seawater that rushes onto land during a big storm.

As we struggle with the long-term **implications** of climate change, it's time to take a close look at where and how we rebuild—and to summon the courage to consider a future different from the past. ●

WRITING CONTEST

There is a Tibetan saying that "tragedy should be utilized as a strength." In two paragraphs, explain what you think this saying means and how it applies to natural disasters. Use details from both "Surviving Hurricane Sandy" and "After the Disaster." Send your response to STORM CONTEST. Five winners will each get *Ninth Ward* by Jewell Parker Rhodes. See page 2 for details.



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