

NASA announces new name of Mars 2020 rover

By Staten Island Advance, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.09.20

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Level **580L**



Image 1. Alex Mather, the student whose submission, Perseverance, was chosen as the official name of the Mars 2020 rover, reads his essay entry on March 5, 2020, at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, Virginia. Photo: Aubrey Gemignani/NASA

On March 5, NASA announced the name of the Mars 2020 rover. Meet Perseverance.

The word "perseverance" means continuing to do something, even when facing challenges or delays.

The robotic explorer was named by 13-year-old Alexander Mather. He took part in NASA's "Name the Rover" essay contest.

The U.S. space agency received 28,000 essays. They were written by kindergarteners to 12th-grade students. The essays came from every U.S. state and territory.

Thomas Zurbuchen works for NASA. He celebrated the name at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, Virginia. Alexander is a seventh-grader there.

New Name Is Fitting

"Alex's entry captured the spirit of exploration," said Zurbuchen. The new name is fitting. The rover has already been through many challenges. "We can't wait to see that nameplate on Mars," he said.

The 2020 rover contest began on August 28, 2019. Nearly 4,700 volunteer judges read the entries. They were teachers, experts and space fans. The judges narrowed the essays down to 155 semifinalists.

In 2018, Alex visited Space Camp in Alabama. He became a huge space fan. Alex checked NASA's website daily. He read about the lives of astronauts. He even created flyable model rockets with a 3-D printer.

Then he heard about the Mars 2020 rover naming contest. Alex knew he wanted to take part.

"This Mars rover will help pave the way for human presence there," he said. He wanted to help. "Refusal of the challenge was not an option."

Winner To Watch Robot Launch

Alex will forever be connected with the mission. He will also get to travel to Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. It is in Florida. There, he will watch the rover launch this summer.

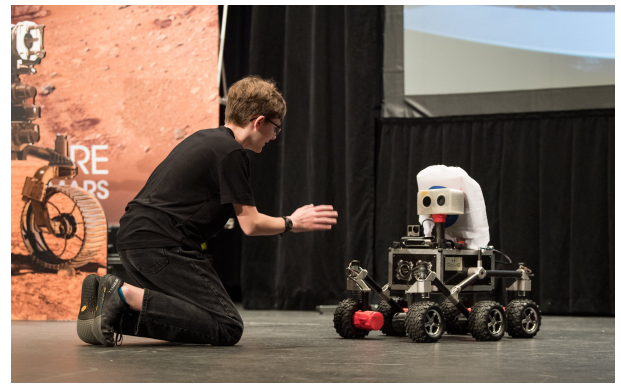
NASA also recognized the work of the semifinalists. Their entries were among the top names considered.

Lori Glaze works for NASA. She said the agency wanted to celebrate the semifinalists. The essays were written onto a silicon chip. The text is "smaller than one-thousandth the width of a human hair." The chip will be aboard the Mars rover.

The rover is currently in Florida. It is at NASA's Kennedy Space Center. It will launch this summer. The robotic scientist will study Mars. The work will help NASA prepare to send humans to the planet. The rover will land on Mars on February 18, 2021.

The Mars 2020 Rover could launch on July 17. The launch window runs through August 5.

The rover is part of a larger space program. NASA is also planning missions to the moon. The trips are preparation for human missions to Mars. By 2028, NASA plans to have a long-term human presence on the moon.



Quiz

1 Read the section "New Name Is Fitting."

Select the paragraph from the section that explains how NASA chose the contest winner.

- (A) "Alex's entry captured the spirit of exploration," said Zurbuchen. The new name is fitting. The rover has already been through many challenges. "We can't wait to see that nameplate on Mars," he said.
- (B) The 2020 rover contest began on August 28, 2019. Nearly 4,700 volunteer judges read the entries. They were teachers, experts and space fans. The judges narrowed the essays down to 155 semifinalists.
- (C) In 2018, Alex visited Space Camp in Alabama. He became a huge space fan. Alex checked NASA's website daily. He read about the lives of astronauts. He even created flyable model rockets with a 3-D printer.
- (D) Then he heard about the Mars 2020 rover naming contest. Alex knew he wanted to take part.

2 Read the paragraph from the section "Winner To Watch Robot Launch."

Alex will forever be connected with the mission. He will also get to travel to Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. It is in Florida. There, he will watch the rover launch this summer.

Which question is answered by this paragraph?

- (A) What will Alex get for winning the contest?
- (B) How many students tried to win the contest?
- (C) Why does the rover launch from Cape Canaveral?
- (D) Who is in charge of the launch at Cape Canaveral?

3 Read the sentence from the section "New Name Is Fitting."

"This Mars rover will help pave the way for human presence there," he said.

What does the phrase "pave the way" mean?

- (A) build roads in outer space
- (B) travel quickly using fuel
- (C) prepare or make possible
- (D) watch and look at closely

4 Read the paragraph from the section "Winner To Watch Robot Launch."

Lori Glaze works for NASA. She said the agency wanted to celebrate the semifinalists. The essays were written onto a silicon chip. The text is "smaller than one-thousandth the width of a human hair." The chip will be aboard the Mars rover.

Which word could replace "celebrate" WITHOUT changing the meaning of the paragraph?

- (A) honor
- (B) party
- (C) watch
- (D) forget

Answer Key

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