

**Second Place Winner**  
**Division I – 7-9th Grades**  
*A Fight for Lives*  
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On December 9th, 1979, smallpox was the first-ever disease to have been confirmed eradicated by vaccination. The world worked collaboratively to send teams of medical personnel to every poverty struck country to distribute smallpox vaccinations. Up to that point in time, thousands of people suffered from the fatal disease that spread through cities like wildfire. The only way to ensure not getting it was vaccination. There was no cure for smallpox and only 70% of the victims survived. Smallpox was a very painful disease that was recorded as feeling like fire all over the skin. The virus was incredibly contagious, and as soon as one person had it, everyone else nearby might as well have had it too. At this point in time, one man, Edward Jenner stood up and showed moral courage by his persistence to continue vaccinating others for free, even though the persecution and judgment.

Edward Jenner was an average doctor living in the 1700s. Jenner began working under John Hunter, a well-known doctor of the time at only 21 years to learn more about medicine, his passion. Hunter taught all he knew to Jenner but the most important thing Jenner learned from his instructor and a good friend was to discover new things for himself. Jenner devoted his life to healing others and saving lives. In the late 1700s, smallpox outbreaks were not uncommon. Smallpox destroyed cities, snaking through them at a horrifyingly fast pace. There were theories as to how to cure the victims of smallpox such as bleeding and other similar practices that truthfully did nothing but weaken the unfortunate victim. Jenner was determined to find a working cure, or way to slow down the spread. One day, while Jenner was making his rounds, he overheard milkmaids singing while they were working. Their song was about their inability to get smallpox. After some research, Jenner discovered that each milkmaid had built an immunity before by getting cowpox, a similar virus in the same family as smallpox. After learning this, Jenner decided to test out a theory. His first test was on James Phipps a healthy 9-year-old boy, and a cowpox infected milkmaid named Sarah Nelms. He took material from Nelms's arm and scratched it into the young boy's arm. Phipps came down with a small case of cowpox but healed quickly. Jenner soon exposed Phipps to smallpox, more than twenty times. Phipps never came down with smallpox. After more similar tests, Jenner knew that he had discovered the vaccination.

Jenner began giving out vaccinations, occasionally for free. At one point, Jenner opened his home to the public to hand out free vaccinations. He called it the vaccination hut. The vaccine practice began becoming more popular. Other doctors began distributing vaccination and saving lives. Unfortunately, many people were angry that there was a new vaccine for smallpox. These people felt that smallpox was a part of life and that it shouldn't be tampered with. They also thought that disease was a force created by God that had some sort of purpose on the earth. Some of these people disliked Jenner and his notions so much, that they even physically attacked him. Jenner never stopped fighting just because other people disagreed with him. He never gave up and stopped giving out vaccinations. Jenner showed moral courage through this, never giving

up on his beliefs and theories. As a doctor, Jenner's job was to save lives, but some felt that the vaccine was too life-saving and was not the will of God. Jenner was an important role model when he was a pillar of strength against the raging winds that wanted to destroy him and his ideas. He never wavered in his beliefs and worked to promote his life-saving ideas.

In modern-day, no one hears about smallpox epidemics. Ever since Edward Jenner created a vaccination, the world has been safe from an incredibly dangerous disease. Jenner's actions have affected my life positively because smallpox is less of a threat to the world and Jenner showed me how to become a beacon of light in pure darkness. Although there are plenty of other dangerous diseases in the world, one that was considered one of the most dangerous is now nonexistent. Jenner's actions encouraged me to stand up for my beliefs and theories. Smallpox was a disease that killed many with each epidemic. But because of one brave person who was willing to face angry crowds of people who disagreed, there is one less thing to fear. The world today has many problems such as global warming, poverty, and hundreds of other crises that are a large threat to Earth. The one that I feel the strongest about is climate change. This can relate to many different problems such as ocean plastics, or deforestation. One of my passions aside from global warming is writing, and someday I hope to write interesting but informative books to educate children and even adults about the serious threats that global warming causes, and ways we can fight the changes. Every step I take reminds me of the courageous actions of Edward Jenner and his story. His story has also helped me gain a better appreciation for all the materials we have such as vaccines for other dangerous sicknesses like influenza and even polio. Jenner's story will stay in my mind for the rest of my life, and will constantly remind me to never stop fighting for the things I believe in and want to fight for.

### **Bibliography**

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