



## The Letter Assignment

*Tim Simmons*

Dear Granny,

Hi! How are you? This letter is an assignment for school. My teacher says that we need to learn the art of letter writing in this digital age. She says it's art, but we are not allowed to draw pictures in the letter. Because we are in distance learning, I had to write this on the computer. I guess the art is printing it and mailing it to you. I don't like distance learning. Momma says this is something I will remember my whole life because school has never been like this, so I'm keeping a journal. Here was my first week:

8/30/20

I am excited for school tomorrow. I wonder who is in my class. I wish we could go to the new classroom. I looked at Ms. Monaco's picture on the website and she looks nice. We will see how nice she is if Khalid or Martin are in our class. Martin is annoying but Khalid is funny. He told me a bunch of jokes about his uncle. My favorite was, "My uncle is so dumb, he got fired from the M & M factory for throwing away all the W's." Haha! I asked him to show me a picture of his uncle but he said there's no dumb uncle. What? He said his jokes are supposed to be "your momma" jokes but his mom said he can't tell them. We went to get snacks, and I wore my new mask. It has flowers on it. Momma has the same one but she has a big flower right in the middle so it looks like she's saying "Oh." Haha, so funny!

8/31/20

Today was the first day of school. I got up early and got ready. Momma said get dressed and be ready like we are going to campus. I couldn't log in for a while so I thought I missed the first few minutes, but the teacher got disconnected too. Ms. Monaco looked nervous. Every once in a while she talked while she was on mute. Kendra and Khalid were both there. I hope there are more kids tomorrow.

9/1/20

The second day of school. There were sixteen kids, but one left after five minutes. I went to our neighbor's apartment for class. I told Momma I don't need anyone to help me but she said they will help keep me focused. Mrs. Chavez wasn't there for the first thirty minutes because she has to go wake up another boy a few doors down named Nicholas.

His mom works and asked if Mrs. Chavez can help him log on to class. I can do it myself. Today was a little boring. Kendra sent me a message during class, and we planned to meet in Zoom after class. We played a little during summer, but her mom got the Covid and I couldn't see her after that.

9/2/20

Today was CRAZY! Some older kid ran into Khalid's room during class with a gun! We were unmuted so we heard a bunch of noise, and then his screen shut off. Ms. Monaco cancelled class. Momma called the school, and they said they were looking into it. I hope he's OK. I'm so scared for him. I didn't see the whole thing, only the end. I was looking at Kendra making faces. That seems so dumb now. There have been a lot of shootings on TV. I wonder if there were police at his house.

9/3/20

Khalid was not in class today! Ms. Monaco didn't say anything even though some students asked what happened. Why wouldn't she tell us! I can't listen to Ms. Monaco read to us. I just keep staring at Martin, his screen is all smudged so it looks like he's in an ice storm. I hope Khalid is OK.

9/4/20

Khalid is back! I stared at him all through class to see if he was shot. Maybe it's his leg. One time I saw him close one eye funny but I think he was winking at someone. I wonder if everyone else is looking at him. I wish we had recess so I could ask him what happened. It's lonely to take a break by myself. Ms. Monaco looks tired and gets annoyed if she unmutes you and you don't answer right away.

So, Granny, that was the first week of school! Momma talked to another parent and they found out it was a joke. Khalid's older brother is in 7th grade and he planned it to look like a movie. The police went to their house and everything. I bet they didn't know that would happen. What if one of the bad police officers actually shot them because they thought the gun was real! Momma and I talk about all the conflicts going on right now a lot. Momma says life is not black and white so you can't use words like always or all when you talk about people. She says life is more complicated than simple explanations, and we have to use our brain to understand what is going on around us. That's why school is important. I told her that distance learning is not helping our brains think about things, and she laughed. I don't think that's funny. My butt hurts, my eyes hurt. I can't wait until things get back to normal.

Last week, Khalid and I were in a Zoom breakout room waiting for the teacher, and I asked him if it was scary when the police came to his house. He always acts brave, and I didn't remind him that I saw him cry at school one time. He said it wasn't a big deal and he told the officers to chill. Yea right! He didn't say that! Then he said, "My brother is so dumb, he almost got shot pretending to get shot." See Granny, he's hilarious!

Love,  
Liliana

