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Documenting your Experiences: Journal Entries

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April-August 2019:

Sitting in class in my last year of middle school I was introduced to COVID. My journey through COVID started in my eighth-grade history class, with Mr. Lindula when we were watching CNN 10 by Carl Azus when I had first heard about COVID. It all started with a virus over in China that was making people very ill and had made itself important enough to be on this show. All I thought it was how it was affecting people in China, and it never occurred to me that it would spread to the rest of the world as quickly as it did. I was thinking how could a virus from China make it to Grand Rapids, Minnesota. I went on with life as normal, meaning, going to school, basketball practice, and hanging out with my friends. About a month later I found out that we would be completing the rest of the year online and that I would no longer be attending school, which to me sounded like heaven. Little did I know that this wasn't going to be the case and the whole world was about to make a dramatic change. I was then out of school and doing homework in bed, not seeing my friends, along with being a nanny to a little boy on top of it all. The idea of online learning was a major adjustment from what I had been used to. I felt bad for all the kids who didn't have Wi-Fi or weren't able to go to school, as for some of them that was their safe space or where they got to eat. With both of my parents being teachers, I saw this pandemic from all angles and the major effects it had on others. I finished school and into early summer I wasn't allowed to leave the house or see people due to the fear of the virus. Through this time, it was very isolating and lonely, and there was nothing I could do to leave the house except to go for a walk outside. This was soon over as my parents let me go out and see my friends, and this summer ended up being the best summer of my life. My friends and I spend every day on the lake, biking everywhere, having massive sleepovers, and living our best life as this virus isn't as harmful to us as others. This freedom came with a catch, and it meant that I wasn't allowed to see my grandpa due to the fear if he got COVID he may not recover, but he also chose to self-quarantine to the maximum extent and refused to go anywhere. This summer was filled with calls to my grandpa and lifelong memories with my friends, but I didn't know what the future would hold for my freshman year.

December 2020-January 2021:

At this point I am well into my freshman year of high school, and it couldn't be any more different than I could have imagined. The whole school is split into A and B alternating

days, there are 5 lunch periods, and people and being pulled out of school left and right due to close contact with a positive case of COVID. At this point COVID was understood a little better and vaccines were coming out and social distancing had become the story of our lives. This is also the first year I am on the varsity basketball team at my school, which adds a whole new level of excitement along with stress. Between going to school every other day and going to practice every day life is getting way to chaotic. One of the biggest changes COVID has brought is having to wear masks at basketball practice and games, which makes it seem impossible to breathe. My team and I hate having to wear them so during practice they are on our chin and for games we cut out a piece of the lining so that it is easier to breathe. I don't think we are "allowed" to do this, but we do anyway, and it makes playing much easier. Our team made it to the state tournament, but it is much different than it normally is, but then again everything is different. It makes me sad to know that we didn't get to experience so many things as they would have normally been. Soon it was New Years, and all my friends had gotten together to celebrate, and we were all hoping that this virus would go away so that we could resume our normal lives. Unfortunately, our New Year's wishes didn't come true, and we had to finish the school year partly in class and partly online. All I was hoping for was for life to return to normal, but I was scared that life as we knew it before would never be coming back.

#### June-August 2021:

Finally, it is starting to feel like the pandemic is not ruling over my life anymore. I am done with my freshman year of high school, and it is time for summer to come back in full swing. I don't have my license yet so I can't drive anywhere, but I have high hopes that this summer will live up to the last. I have been playing basketball on my AAU team and traveling all over the surrounding states for it, along with hanging out with my friend, going to the cabin, and seeing my grandparents again. I have now vowed that I don't ever want to wear a mask again unless I absolutely must. I spent the fourth of July at my cabin surrounded by friends and family, and I am happy to say that it seems like COVID never happened. This was my hope anyways, but not my reality. COVID seemed to sneak its way into our lives for good. We would sit six feet apart my instinct, wash our hands more frequently than before, and I have noticed that the whole world is much cleaner than it was before, which is probably a good thing. Moving into August it was time or the county fair to come to town and for soccer to pick back up. The fair was like, as I remember, which was full of kids, full of rides, and people having fun, and most importantly mask free! Soccer is fun and we don't have to wear a mask when we play it which is a blessing. I continued to hang out with friends and live life like the pandemic never happened, but as summer is coming to an end, I can't help but think about the upcoming school year. I hope that we will

be in person and not have to social distance, and mainly that I will finally get to experience a normal year of high school.

### Written Reflection:

Throughout writing these series of journal entries as my way of sharing my experience through COVID, they have proven to be very insightful. It is interesting to see how much my point of view has changed after being out of it for so long. My perspective of the situation then was filled with dread and confusion whereas now I wouldn't go back and change any experience I had. To write these journal entries as accurately as possible required me to talk to my parents, and friends, and to look back at pictures from this time. I felt it was important to show the change and hardships but to make sure the future reader knew it wasn't all bad and that good came from this. Making a primary source caused me to think about the other primary sources I have analyzed recently and more importantly how they impacted the creation of my own. From looking at other primary sources I was inspired and provoked to write it as if I was talking to a friend so I could tell my story as close to how I had lived it. I realized how much analyzing a different primary resource could play into how I wrote my own. Taking a deep dive into various other primary sources it aided me in techniques and key elements to use. I wanted to focus on my daily life, how I expressed myself, and what issues occupied my focus. Most importantly looking at the structure of the source, language used, and the tone of the article plays a major role in how it is perceived. The one primary source that stood out to me with the most impact was from The Nurse's Poem, "At sign out last Friday, we didn't say bed numbers. We said first names", (Amit Majmudar). This quote is so powerful in the way it displays a real and tragic side effect of COVID. I admire how she doesn't hide it from the world, but she shows what it is like to live and work through a pandemic. The level of clarity and honesty that she achieved in writing this poem was an inspiration to me. Provoking me to write my primary source as authentically as I could. I chose to write my primary source in a way that would make it feel as natural as possible. I felt that for me to accurately describe my experience it needed to seem as if I was just trying to remember and spell out that part of my life. The best way I was able to do that was through the idea of a journal entry. Through journal entries, I can portray this from a personal perspective, and this offers future readers an intimate glimpse into my experiences, emotions, and thoughts during this period. I also liked how this mode of communication could be detail-oriented in my life and shed light on the reasoning behind various actions. In all choosing to portray my experience in this manner I hoped to share some historical context with the pandemic. While humanizing the pandemic beyond just numbers and statistics and allowing the reader to connect and relate with my story. The goal for the future audience of this primary source is for them to be able to take away a variety of valuable information and insight. Hoping that they could further their knowledge

of certain cultural and social contexts by allowing them to see the everyday life of a girl in rural Minnesota during the pandemic. Along with seeing how people lived, interacted, and made sense of a constantly changing world. Another key takeaway for a future reader would be lessons from experience, meaning they read my reflection on this time, and they could learn how they would've done about the situation or a similar situation. Beyond the bigger picture and moving into a smaller point of view looking at more minor details or undocumented events. Since a journal entry is personal it doesn't involve statistics or official records, but this could help bridge the gaps in the historical narrative and preserve unique viewpoints. Overall, I hope that future readers see this historical pandemic not just as a series of unfortunate events, but as people's lives who were dismantled in a chaotic and stressful time. The individual stories show a journey through COVID filled with meaning and emotion showing not just what happened but what it felt like to live through. Not every story through a pandemic is chaotic and sad, but there can be glimpses of good and change that comes from this experience.