

5-24-20, Jordan, MN
9:00 PM

I was listening to the radio and they were talking about what crazy times we're in and how we should write about it so we don't forget. It will also be something cool to read to my kids, if I ever have any. So, as of today, May 24th, 2020, we are currently in quarantine due to COVID-19. I'm in my freshman year of college at UW-Eau Claire. I left college on March 20th thinking I'd go back 3 weeks later, but the virus got worse and the entire world shut down. Stores closed, restaurants, bowling alleys, movies, everything except essentials like grocery stores and hospitals. There was a stay at home order urging people to only leave home when they absolutely needed to. I worked at a bowling alley that closed down so I got another job at Oak Terrace Senior Living Center. I like the bowling alley better.



From: I'm actually not sure why I job I enjoy more. I guess what see when I have to leave well how much they mean to me. Anyways, this pandemic is crazy. I miss college. I know I'm not the real victim during this, but I'm sad and lonely and ~~baa~~ bored. I have food, a house, a loving dad, education, a job, and I know I'm young and healthy. I feel bad because I'm whining about being stuck inside my house w/ all of my nice things while there are people risking their lives to keep the rest of us safe. It's just a really strange time and I'm not sure when it will be over.

Reflection:

I was listening to the radio on my way to work one morning in May, and the hosts had mentioned how they started quarantine journals so they could look back on them and remember what this time was like. I thought that was a really good idea to keep track of my feelings and thoughts during the pandemic. These pictures show the first journal entry I made later that night. I added the journal entry because it shows the feelings I was having during the first lock down, and I wanted to compare them to now. During the first lockdown, I worked as a care manager in an assisted living facility. As a care manager, I spent a lot of time with the residents and one of them taught me how to crochet on my break. The bag I have in the picture above is a model of the first bag my resident taught me to make, and I have been making them ever since and giving them as gifts. I chose to show this bag because I have made them for three seasons now each with yarn that reflects the colors of the season, and given that it is fall now I made the bag with fall colors. It feels like this bag is encapsulating everything that has happened for the last 7 months, which is crazy because it is just a crocheted bag. At this point in the pandemic, I still feel the same as I did back then. I think I am better at coping with loneliness now, however. I could not see my family for the holidays, and it was my first holiday season alone, but I felt good knowing that by being alone I was keeping people safe. I made about 4 of those bags during my Thanksgiving break at college, and I am excited to give them as gifts to my family for Christmas.

Past-Present analysis:

One would think that after each major pandemic, humans might start to understand how to help control them, but each pandemic seems to follow a similar pattern and we just never learn apparently. Through analyzing the documents written about the 1918 Flu pandemic and the current 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, there is an astonishing amount of similarities not only in the virus itself, but in the way humans react to the virus. From the way the virus spreads and its symptoms, to frontline workers risking their lives for their patients, to the people who think they are invincible and do not want to comply with regulations, these pandemics follow similar themes and it is important that as a society we recognize this to avoid similar catastrophes in the future.

The most prevalent themes in all of the sources I read was loss and grief. In 1918 and now, families were being broken apart, loved ones died and many people lost everything they had. In 1918 New York, 21,000 children were half or fully orphaned after their parents had died from Influenza. 7,200 families had lost one or both parents and 700 of these families would need help from the city to stay afloat. This is extremely similar to circumstances now. A video source I watched told the story of a woman named Eli who contracted Covid-19, and she lived at home with her mother and she passed the virus to her mother and she passed away. Not only is Eli processing the loss of her mother, but she is also feeling extremely guilty for exposing her to the virus even though she had been following all the cautions. These viruses leave families stranded and in need of aid from the government just so they can eat. When listening to Eli's story, you can physically feel the pain she is going through, and oral stories like hers do such a great job at showcasing the real people hurt by these pandemics.

Another source from 1918 that intersected so well with a source from 2020 about nurses and doctors feeling immense grief. I found this especially impactful because I work in health care, and I personally have seen the effects of Covid on patients. In a letter to a friend, a volunteer nurse worked at a nearby army camp during the 1918 Influenza pandemic. She talked about people dying alone and only getting interaction with other humans when the nurses would come by. Nurses then and now are overworked and did not have as much time to focus on each patient. It also makes it easier as a nurse to not know your patients too well in case they pass away since she had mentioned up to 90 people would die each day. In a source from 2020, doctors and nurses are feeling similar effects as they watch their patients die alone. Families are not allowed to be with their loved ones during their final days, and health care workers are spread so thin that many people are dying completely alone. It is incredibly frustrating for healthcare professionals because they risk their lives and watch patients die alone, but then have to watch as people ignore guidelines and regulations set in place to stop the spread. But there has always been and are always going to be people who deny these pandemics for their own selfish reasons. People aboard steamships in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1918 did not follow quarantine guidelines resulting in several deaths on the ship during the voyage. This also allowed the virus to spread as passengers aboard were carrying the virus, ignored safety precautions and spread the virus through close contact with other people. I can add my own personal experience to this through my time spent working at an assisted living facility. I was one of the only faces the residents saw throughout their day. Some of them had their health decline rapidly, but we could not let families come in to say goodbye. When we did allow 10 feet apart

outdoor visits, many families would not wear masks and come within 10 feet. They did not seem to care that there were other residents we needed to keep safe, and if just one person brought the virus into the facility, all of them would be put at risk. It was so painful to watch the residents die alone, and even harder having to tell their families afterwards knowing they feel guilty for not being with their loved ones, even though they had no choice.

Pandemics cause more than just physical effects as well. After the 1918 pandemic had settled down, the survivors of the virus were left with physiological trauma, as well as many mental symptoms that had not been seen before from an illness. Survivors had “pronounced fatigue, lassitude, depression, sleepiness, hallucinations, emotional lability, and even dissociation accompanied the physical debilitation of the disease” (Porter). In 2020, there is not enough research yet to say what the long term effects of Covid are, but some common ones to note include increased anxiety after having Covid, indefinite loss of smell and taste, and increased fatigue. In the story mentioned earlier about Eli, she mentioned how nervous she is to even leave her bedroom although she was cleared by doctors. There can be any number of long term psychological or health effects of Covid, but we have not experienced it long enough to know for sure. This is another reason why it is so important to take the virus, and any virus for that matter, seriously.

It would be foolish of me to say that society would handle another pandemic better if we were exposed to one again. We can clearly see the same patterns of pandemics across history and our response as a society to them. Some people do everything they can to stop the spread, while others are perfectly fine living side by side

with a virus. The fact, however, remains that it is so important to document these times in history so we can learn and grow from them as we evolve. These documents are the only way we can see into the past, and without the documented lived experiences of real people we would never know how closely linked everything is and we would be even more lost today.