The Social and Emotional Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Grade Level: 9-12

Subjects
English language arts, Health, Science, Social studies

Themes
Change, Family and community, Mental health, Perspective, Resilience

What Students Will Uncover
How life and learning has changed since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic

Essential Questions
• Why is isolation so difficult?
• How do changes in routine affect our daily lives?
• In what ways has the pandemic allowed you to see the world in new ways?
• How has the pandemic revealed problems in our society?
• In what ways has Covid-19 presented opportunities to reimagine education?

Lesson Overview
Students will watch the short film Cocoon, told from the perspective of elementary, middle, and high school students during the global lockdown in the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Students

Materials
- Online access to the film Cocoon by Andrew Hinton
- Online access to Lynn Ungar’s poem “On the Other Side”
- Note-taking sheet: Film Analysis Tool

SDGs

Standards & Frameworks
• SEL Competencies
• C3 Framework
• CCSS ELA Standards
will engage in learning activities that prompt them to examine their thoughts and feelings about the pandemic and the ways in which it has impacted their social and emotional lives as well as their learning.

**Key Issue**

The Covid-19 pandemic has impacted education, learning, and the social and emotional well-being of students due to school closures, distance learning, and isolation.

**Lesson Objectives**

Students will:

- Analyze the social and emotional impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic
- Understand the perspectives of people from a different community and how they connect to their own thoughts and feelings
- Recognize the ways in which people in society are impacted by the pandemic

**Background**

**Putting the Film in Context**

This section is intended for the educator and provides information about the film Cocoon and the ways in which Covid-19 has impacted society, education, and learning.

In early 2020, the Covid-19 virus rapidly made its way to the United States and would end up shutting down many businesses and schools for months. The pandemic impacted many aspects of daily life but most significantly disrupted the world economy and the health and well-being of individuals and communities around the world.

Millions of people worldwide contracted Covid-19 and hundreds of thousands died from the virus. As of March 2021, nearly 2.55 million people worldwide, including 500,000 in the U.S. alone, had died from Covid.\(^1\) Covid-19 also directly impacted the

---

mental and physical health of many, leading to anxiety, depression, grief, and
teen suicide.[2],[3]

In March of 2020, many schools shut down and students participated in distance
learning by virtually joining classes at home.[4] More than 1.37 billion students
worldwide navigated how to learn at home through daily online classes on Zoom or
other digital platforms.[5] As of March 2021, at-home learning had continued for nearly
a year, and even longer in some countries and states, forcing educators to reinvent
and reimagine how to deliver distance learning to their students. Debates sparked
over how meaningful at-home learning was for students, especially when so many
struggle to secure stable internet access. Despite the challenges, opportunities have
emerged from the pandemic and revealed new ways to think about teaching
and learning.

The pandemic has exposed the limitations of a "one-size-fits-all" education.[6] Many
educators have embraced a creative and customized approach, which has allowed
students a greater sense of ownership over their own education. Some schools
are using this challenging and unique moment in history as a teaching tool to
help connect students to current events happening outside the classroom.[7] The
suddenness in the shift to online education has meant a steep learning curve for both
educators and students, and the long term effects of these changes is uncertain.
Educational scholars have realized the importance of creating more humanized and
individualized educational approaches as opposed to more institutionalized and
standardized models.[8] This more humanistic approach has allowed students who
otherwise feel alienated to flourish and engage in learning.

Cocoon, a short documentary by Andrew Hinton, captures reflections of students
—ranging in age from 4 to 17— during the early months of the pandemic in Portland,
Oregon. The film explores their perspectives and feelings about the pandemic on
issues including school changes, isolation, job loss, and the health and well-being of

3 Trisha Korioth, "Study: Suicidal behavior in youths higher during COVID-19 closures than in
4 “Map: Coronavirus and School Closures in 2019-2020,” Education Week, updated September
5 “1.37 billion students now home as COVID-19 school closures expand, ministers scale up
7 Emma Chiappeta, "Using the Pandemic as a Teaching Tool in High School," Edutopia, July 21,
2020.
themselves and their families. While students express their fears and insecurities, they also share what they have come to appreciate and what they miss the most— their friends, their teachers, and human connection.

Lesson

Setting the Stage: Lesson Introduction

Engage students with this exercise before introducing the story.

1. Ask students to read Lynn Ungar’s poem “On the Other Side.”
2. In what ways has the pandemic made you feel as if you have “fallen down a rabbit hole” and “into a new story”?
3. Read the last line of the poem. How does this make you feel?
4. In what ways has the pandemic encouraged you to be more curious or attentive about your immediate surroundings?

“Do not confuse the beginning of the story with the end.”

–Lynn Ungar

Engaging with the Story

Before watching the film, introduce students to the story and provide specific tasks of observation.

1. Tell students that they will watch a film about students’ experiences during quarantine in April 2020 at the start of the pandemic. The film is called Cocoon. Why do you think the filmmaker chose this title?
2. Give students the following note-taking sheet: Film Analysis Tool. Ask them to write down notes, observations, and quotes from students in the film which correspond to social, emotional, and physical experiences during quarantine.
3. Watch the film Cocoon (12 minutes).
Delving Deeper: Discussion Questions

Encourage students to examine the themes and issues raised in the film. (Note for educators: Just as quotes from a book or text are used to prove an analytical thought, students use the film to justify their reasoning.)

After viewing the film, lead a discussion with the following questions:

1. Ask students to describe the social, emotional, and physical experiences that students expressed in the film while making connections to their own experiences during the pandemic:
   - Describe the students' experiences and feelings about isolation during quarantine. How did the filmmaker capture this feeling and quality of isolation?
   - What were students' opinions on distance learning? What do you think the difference is between seeing people in person and using technology like Google Hangouts and Zoom? What do you think we gain from human interaction?
   - The pandemic, students expressed, has shifted their perspectives and experiences of time. What were some of their comments? Have you had similar experiences throughout the pandemic? In what ways has your daily routine changed since the start of the pandemic?
   - "I pay more attention to the birds," said one student. "They were always there, but I guess I never really heard them. I guess I never really paid that much attention to them." What are some things that you have noticed during the pandemic that you had not paid attention to before? What do you think enabled you to witness these things?
   - One student said, "I'm going to give a hug to every teacher and every kid I know." What are you looking forward to most when the pandemic ends?
   - "I don't think we will go back to the way it was. I think we'll go back to a normal, but it won't look like the one we had ... and I don't think that is a bad thing," said one student in the film. What might a new normal look like for you now? For schools? For society?
   - What part of the film did you relate to the most? Why?
   - What do you appreciate now that you didn't before the start of the pandemic?
Reflecting and Projecting

Challenge students to consider the film’s broader implications and to integrate their knowledge and ideas from various points of view.

1. Consider how isolation from the pandemic has affected people differently including people living in urban versus rural communities, old versus young individuals, and wealthy versus low-income communities. Choose one of these juxtapositions and conduct research to locate sources (from articles, books, etc.) to learn more. Write a short essay, a poem, or create an original piece of artwork to communicate your findings.

2. Using the National Archives website, examine and conduct research to learn more about the Influenza Epidemic of 1918. Choose one of the records. Create a slideshow to compare and contrast the Epidemic of 1918 to the Covid-19 pandemic. Document the comparisons and contrasts from these two time periods.

3. Research and explore a story of the pandemic. (For example, StoryCorps collected stories from essential workers.) In 2 or 3 paragraphs, describe the person’s life. How has the pandemic impacted his or her daily life, worldview, and perspective?

4. The pandemic has upended education and learning, revealing inequities that were already present. If you were to make recommendations to change or reimagine K-12 learning, what advice would you provide school leaders and teachers? Write a letter to a school leader or teacher. Include your thoughts and ideas about what could contribute to the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students. How might you redesign learning experiences?

What’s Happening Now

Provide students with follow-up activities and resources to explore current events and updates to the story.

1. For current Covid-19 information and data visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

The Social and Emotional Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Grade Level: 9-12

Take Action
with the UN Sustainable Development Goals

How will you support the well-being of yourself and your community during the pandemic?

Individuals, families, and communities around the world continue to suffer from the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

1. Shortly after the stay-at-home order during the global Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020, Rabbi Dr. Ariel Burger wrote a visualization practice to help one of his students struggling with isolation and anxiety. Access this short visualization and try it a few times within a week. After participating in the visualization, notice how you feel. In what ways do you feel more connected to others, your surroundings, and yourself? Write down your observations in a journal entry.

2. Facing History and Ourselves provides journaling ideas to reflect on experiences during Covid-19. Choose one of the following journal prompts: Self-Reflection, Reflecting on Media, Reflecting on Daily Life During the Coronavirus, or Reflecting on Acts of Kindness, Community, and Relationships.

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
Companion Texts

These texts are recommended by teachers who are currently using Cocoon in their classrooms.

- **Very, Very, Very Dreadful: The Influenza Pandemic of 1918** by Albert Marrin
- **The Plague** by Albert Camus
- **The Great Influenza** by John M. Barry

Resources

- Zucker, Bonnie, “Unstuck! 10 Things to Do to Stay Safe and Sane During the Pandemic,” Magination Press, an imprint of the American Psychological Association, 2020. (PDF)
- “Youth Mental Health Test.” Mental Health America, 2020.
- “The Influenza Epidemic of 1918.” National Archives.
- “CDC COVID Data Tracker.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Connections to National Curriculum Standards and Frameworks

**SEL Competencies (CASEL)**

- **Self-awareness.** The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior.
- **Social awareness.** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior.
- **Self-management.** The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.
College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework

- **C3.D2.Geo.2.9-12.** Use maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions and their political, cultural, and economic dynamics.

- **C3.D2.His.3.9-12.** Use questions generated about individuals and groups to assess how the significance of their actions changes over time and is shaped by the historical context.

- **C3.D2.His.7.9-12.** Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past.

- **D4.7.9-12.** Assess options for individual and collective action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

- **CCSS.ELA-SL.9-10.1 and SL.11-12.1.** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 [or 11-12] topics, texts, and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- **CCSS.ELA-SL.9-10.5 and SL.11-12.5.** Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understandings of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7.** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.2.** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
**Film Analysis Tool | Cocoon by Andrew Hinton**

**Directions:** Watch the film and write down what you heard students in the film share they experienced during quarantine. Notice anything that is similar or different from what you experienced and felt.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Other thoughts or observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We Want to Hear From You

We’d love to hear how you integrate (or plan to integrate) this lesson into your classroom. What were your favorite takeaways and student responses?

info@globalonenessproject.org

globalonenessproject.org

twitter/@goproject

global oneness project

Stories and lessons for growing minds.

©2021 Global Oneness Project LLC