📖 LESSON PLAN

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

COMPANION FILM

Cocoon

by Andrew Hinton

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

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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

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1 Pien Huang, "'A Loss To The Whole Society': U.S. COVID-19 Death Toll Reaches 500,000." NPR, February 22, 2020.

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

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2 "Adolescent's Wellbeing During COVID-19: Parental Resources." CDC, 2021.

3 Trisha Korioth, "Study: Suicidal behavior in youths higher during COVID-19 closures than in 2019." American Academy of Pediatrics, December 16, 2020.

4 "Map: Coronavirus and School Closures in 2019-2020." Education Week, updated September 16, 2020.

5 "1.37 billion students now home as COVID-19 school closures expand, ministers scale up multimedia approaches to ensure learning continuity." UNESCO, March 24, 2020.

6 Jal Mehta "Make Schools More Human." *The New York Times*, December 23, 2020.

7 Emma Chiappeta, "Using the Pandemic as a Teaching Tool in High School." Edutopia, July 21, 2020.

8 Jal Mehta, "Make Schools More Human." *The New York Times*, December 23, 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.

2. Read "How Nine Covid-19 Vaccines Work," an article in *The New York Times,* which explains the science behind each of the leading vaccines.

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.

- "How teenagers can protect their mental health during COVID-19." UNICEF, 2020.

- "Teen Stress Badge." XQ Institute, 2020.

- "Student Journaling During Coronavirus." Facing History and Ourselves, November 23, 2020.

- Burger, Ariel, "Connection Beyond Distance: A Visualization for Humans in Quarantine." Thrive Global, April 17, 2020.

- "Civic Duty and Connection in the Days of Covid-19." Storycorps, August 10, 2020.

- "The Influenza Epidemic of 1918." National Archives.

- Corum, Jonathon and Carl Zimmer, "How Nine Covid-19 Vaccines Work." *The New York Times*, March 22, 2021.

- "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.

Social	Emotional

Physical	Other thoughts or observations

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?

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