

The Power of Perspective and reflection during the COVID-19 pandemic

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.

Key Research Question

How has student achievement been impacted by their adaptability to virtual learning in the time of COVID-19?

Lesson Plan

Lesson Overview

Students will watch *Cocoon*, a short film by Andrew Hinton, which explores perspectives from elementary, middle, and high school students living in Portland, Oregon, during the global lockdown in the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Students 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.

Lesson Objectives

- Analyze the social and emotional impacts the pandemic has on their lives
- Recognize the ways in which people in society are impacted by the pandemic
- Understand the need for community and social interaction

Essential Questions

- How has the pandemic impacted your social and emotional well-being?
- Why is social distancing and isolation so difficult?
- In what ways has the pandemic allowed you to see the world in new ways?

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 that you have fallen "down the rabbit hole" and "into a new story"?
3. Ungar writes, "Everything here is foreign / Nothing quite makes sense." Describe the ways in which the pandemic has changed your perspective.
4. Read the last line of the poem. How does this make you feel?

5. Ask students to make predictions. What do you think the individuals in the film are feeling due to isolation during the pandemic?
6. Ask students: Why did you choose those feelings?

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.)

1. Give students the note-taking sheet, the [Film Analysis Tool](#). While watching the film, ask students to pay attention to the social, emotional, and physical impacts of quarantine on the students. Ask students to write down their notes, observations, or quotes from the film.
2. Watch the film, [Cocoon](#) (12 minutes).
3. Ask students to share in small groups what stood out to them most while watching the film.
4. Lead a discussion using the following questions:

Describe how the filmmaker captured the students in the film. How did this emphasize their feelings of isolation? (*Answer: The filmmaker captured all of the students behind windows.*)

Make a list of some of the impacts the pandemic has had on the students' lives and families. (*Some answers include: changes at school, learning online, isolation, job loss, and the health and well-being of their families.*)

One student in the film said, "I think it's Wednesday." During quarantine, did you lose track of time and the day of the week? If so, why do you think that is the case? Were you able to stay on a schedule during quarantine? If not, how did your daily routine change?

"A lot of people I know are struggling with keeping up with their assignments and actually going to the Google Meets for classes because it just doesn't feel real." Describe what you think this person means by "it just doesn't feel real." What do you think is the difference between participating in school in person versus using technology like Google Hangouts and Zoom? What do you think we gain from human interaction?

Share the following quote from the film: “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.” Ask students: What do you think about this statement? Do you agree? Why or why not? What might a new normal look like for you? 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?

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. 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, documenting similarities and differences from these two time periods.
2. Research and explore a person’s story during 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?
3. 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 parent, school leader, or teacher by responding to the following questions: How might you redesign learning experiences to address the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students?

Looking to the Future

Follow-up activities and resources to explore current events and updates to the story.

For current Covid-19 information and data visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

1. Read [“How Nine Covid-19 Vaccines Work.”](#) an article in *The New York Times* which explains the science behind each of the leading vaccines.