

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 read the poem, “On the Other Side” by Lynn Ungar. During the reading they will annotate and record their own feelings, reflecting on their experiences during the pandemic.

Students will then 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.

After the lesson students will complete an optional survey where they will offer their own perceptions and opinions on the impact the global pandemic had on their social and emotional health and wellbeing. In the survey they will answer the questions of:

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

Optional Extension: Students will work individually to research one of the currently available vaccines for COVID-19 and write one paragraph advocating for its use OR students can write one paragraph discussing scientific evidence for non-use of the COVID-19 vaccines.

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

- Construct an argument for or against use of vaccines

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?
- Should the use of vaccines be required to prevent widespread illness?

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 *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?

Lesson Conclusion

Upon completion of the video and class discussion students will complete an optional survey. The survey will serve as a way to include statistical, rather than anecdotal, evidence to the project to confirm lesson findings and determine social emotional needs of students in the school. This survey was extremely beneficial to the project as a whole as it was a better way to share project findings with outside parties and served as a more accurate way to record student feelings and perceptions. This record also served as a way for educational and administrative teams to better focus interventions implemented in the school to the issues recognized as highest need.

Looking to the Future

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

Extension for 7th Grade Life Science Classes:

Key Question: Should vaccines be used as a method of preventing COVID-19

Overview:

Students will work individually to research one of the currently available vaccines for COVID-19 and write one paragraph advocating for its use OR students can write one paragraph discussing scientific evidence for non-use of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Lesson Procedure:

First, students will be given a graphic organizer with guiding questions and research links. Students will then use their iPad, or other available device, and research the most current information for Covid-19 using the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](#).

Students will then read the article, "[How Nine Covid-19 Vaccines Work](#)," from the *The New York Times* which explains the science behind each of the leading vaccines.

Lesson Conclusion:

Upon completion of their research students will complete a one-paragraph argument advocating for the use of one of the available COVID-19 vaccines. Students should use evidence stated in their research to justify why their chosen vaccine is the best for widespread use in our community.

Alternate assignment: If students are uncomfortable with vaccines or do not believe in the use of vaccines they are able to write a counter-argument explaining why our community should not be using these vaccines. They should include scientific evidence to support their claims.

Lesson Extension (*optional*):

Teachers can host a debate within each class encouraging students to participate in positive discourse over the use or non-use of COVID vaccines.