Distance Learning for
Contemporary Issues (12th Grade) - G
Weeks #7 May 18th - 22nd

Essential Question:
How has the Covid 19 pandemic information and facts changed over time?

Instructions:
1. As we move through this historic pandemic around COVID-19, journal how our government reacts to a nation in crisis. Document where you get your sources of information, noting why those sources are credible. A journal entry can be as simple as a paragraph documenting info and dates. Be sure to put in what you are feeling and going through during the week.

2. Maintain a journal of events by making at least 3 different entries each week. Below is the focus that each week’s journal should touch on. It can be online using Google Docs or on paper.

3. Choose one of the following ways to present your information: a Paper, a Journal (Paper), a PowerPoint or a Video Journal.

Week #6

Focus on what you have learned, as a high school senior, during this pandemic.

Thoughts - There have been so many things that have come about during this pandemic. You are kind of stuck in no man's land - a place that no one wants to be but no one knows how to get out of. You can’t move forward and you go back and redo your last few months of high school. For some it has been a blessing to not have to get up every morning for school and others are going crazy because “social distancing” is not their thing.

Questions to ponder - Tell us what you have learned about life; about what you were looking forward to that didn’t happen and how that made you feel. Share your thoughts on everything from what it felt like the first week to now, just a week or two before you were to walk across the stage and graduate. Share your thoughts and feelings about the choices of the gov’t and what you wish they would have done instead. Write 3 different entries about changes in your life and what you think about them. Tell us what you think and why!

Below are a few sources that may help you in your process. You may or may not use them in your own journaling, they are here to help you.


For high school seniors, coronavirus brings a sad ending and unexpected lessons

By Joe Heim March 31, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. EDT

In mid-March, on what turned out to be the last day of school, Annalisa D’Aguilar walked the hallways of her performing arts high school in Manhattan. The subway had been mostly empty on the way to school that morning. Many of her fellow students had stopped showing up as fears of the novel coronavirus swept New York City, the area of the country hit hardest so far. On that day, the school’s typically packed halls were empty.

“It just felt insane to walk around and have no one there,” D’Aguilar said in a phone interview from her Brooklyn home. “My friend said it felt like we were in a war. The next day they canceled school for everyone.”

D’Aguilar is a senior at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. She’s a drama major and had spent most of the year working on two productions that were set to stage in March and April. She’d learned her lines, hit her marks, knew every scene. Tickets were already sold.
One play included a choreographed dance to an instrumental version of the Lorde song “Royals.” When she listened to the song this weekend, she began to cry. “I recognize that although these are all big things to me, it’s small in comparison to what’s going on in the world,” she said.

Like many of the approximately 3.7 million high school seniors across the country, D’Aguilar has had the last stretch of school pulled out from under her by an invisible and unforgiving menace. Grades and final projects float in limbo. Close friendships have been socially distanced. And as the coronavirus cancels spring, it is leaving in its wake entire rites of passage of the ultimate year of America’s K-12 schooling.

Prom dresses hang in closets maybe never to be worn. Senior trips have been canceled. Senior pranks abandoned. And at many schools, the graduation ceremony, high school’s final triumphant act, is in jeopardy.

Students said they understand why the decisions have been made. Sacrifices are being asked of everyone, and making exceptions for them, they know, would only risk more damage. They’re already seeing the cost up close. This weekend D’Aguilar learned her great-aunt tested positive for the coronavirus.

“It’s easy to be really mad about something like this, but the only thing we can do to get rid of coronavirus is to give up some of these things,” said Piper MacIntyre, 18, a senior at Garfield High School in Seattle. “It’s sad, but I don’t feel cheated. It just feels unlucky.”

In a sense, national trauma has accompanied members of this senior class all their lives. Most were born in the dark and often frightening year following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. They were fifth-graders when a gunman killed 26, including 20 children, at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn. They were sophomores when another gunman killed 17 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla. The country has been at war externally since the members of this senior class were born and has been increasingly driven internally as they have come of age.

So perhaps seniors in this class have learned the hard way to be prepared for whatever is thrown at them.

“Everything is not promised to you,” said Mia Jones, 18, a senior at KIPP DC College Preparatory, a charter school in the District. “Things can be ripped from you at any minute. So you need to cherish everything.”

Jones bought her prom dress last month but hasn’t had it tailored. She’s not sure she’ll need to. She thinks the senior brunch at Union Market will be canceled, too. Few schools have said graduation ceremonies will be canceled, but many seniors are realizing it’s a distinct possibility.

“That is what everybody has been working for all of our high school career,” Jones said in a phone interview. “I would want that to stay the most. Even though it’s just walking across the stage, it’s a big deal. College isn’t the path for all of us, and this is the last time we’ll all be together.”

At Lawton High School in Lawton, Okla., Zac Shell and his friends have joked that they’ll have to pick up their diplomas at a drive-through ceremony. But humor doesn’t always work.

“We joke and try and make each other feel better, but I’ve had friends who have cried because they’re so upset,” Shell said. “It just all happened so quick. We’re confused and dazed. For the rest of my life I’ll remember this.”

Shell said he asked a senior girl to the prom one day and school was canceled the next.

“We were just, like, well it was cute while it lasted,” Shell said, chuckling.

For senior athletes, the shutdown of school brought with it the realization that their final spring season was over mostly before it started. Joey Graham, a senior lacrosse player at the private Landon School in Bethesda, said missing his final season at the school he has attended since fourth grade was crushing. “I’ve always looked forward to being a senior, and a pretty large chunk of the year is being lost,” he said. “And it’s pretty heartbreaking.” But Graham, 18, took solace from an email his lacrosse coach sent to the players soon after the spring season was canceled, citing the team motto: “Be in control, be grateful and compete.”

“He said, ‘You guys need to carry these lessons with you no matter what you’re doing. Be in control. Be grateful. Compete to keep your family safe and the older generation safe,’ ” Graham recalled. “It’s a cool life lesson that through hard times you can get through by following those words.”

Across the country, at Edison High School in Stockton, Calif., senior Dmetrio Cavens-Summers, a track athlete and football star, is also mourning the loss of spring sports. But he, too, has tried to keep everything in perspective.

Cavens-Summers lives with his brother and his mother. When his mother developed a cough a couple of weeks ago, he immediately thought the worst. “I’m not going to lie, I was scared,” Cavens-Summers said. His mother recovered, but he continues to consume news about the coronavirus and post updates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on his Instagram account, trying to counter the wild rumors he has seen posted by others in his age group.
If prom and graduation are canceled, Cavens-Summers said, he’ll roll with that. His focus now is trying to keep his wits about
him. “The world’s going crazy. No one was prepared for this, but the best thing it has taught me is to be calm and be humble,”
he said. “I’m just keeping my mind focused on what I need to do and to stay calm for my teammates and my family.”

While the disruption to these seminal high school events has been widespread, many seniors recognize the historic sweep of this
pandemic and how it will alter the world in ways big and small.

Seniors not planning on going to college will enter a job market that has been devastated by the virus. Just weeks ago, the
economy seemed to be humming along and help-wanted signs were everywhere. That changed overnight.

There’s uncertainty, too, for students planning to continue their education. Colleges and universities have been battered
financially as well. Some seniors worry that their college career will be delayed. Others are waiting to hear if the financial aid
they expected to receive is still going to come through.

Emma Dabelko, a senior at Athens High School in Athens, Ohio, is still deciding where to attend college this fall. But she
knows what she wants to study — international development and global health — and is energized about the next school year
even as she mourns the loss of this one. “Losing out on this American tradition and everything that comes along with that is
really difficult,” said Dabelko, 18. “It’s definitely not always fun to be the people who have to live through a historical event
like this, but it does happen. So in a way it’s amazing to think about because this is going to be such a major event that people
will be taught about and look back on for a long time.”

She said the pandemic could deliver lessons that might not have emerged in the classroom. “It can be a learning moment for a
lot of people to think about who we value and what we value in our everyday life,” she said. “I know I’m going to value some
of the small things that I hadn’t before.”

**College-bound during coronavirus: Should high school seniors rethink their options?**

Prospective students need to consider more than the obvious factors amid the COVID-19 outbreak.

April 13, 2020, 4:22 PM EDT By Madeline Merinuk

Ask high school seniors what’s on their minds as summer draws nearer and, chances are, most will say college. The milestone
often introduces logistical challenges and a wave of emotions as prospective students navigate a new phase of independence.

Now, add on the pressure of a global pandemic.

Andrea Peña said that colleges' administrative decisions during the coronavirus pandemic didn’t have a direct impact on her
school choice because the educational and financial aspects of committing to college were more important factors.

Young adults currently looking to commit to college find themselves in a highly unusual situation. “Now that we have COVID-
19, some students can’t travel to visit schools that they are choosing between, and some summer sessions are at risk of being
canceled,” Andrea Peña, a 17-year-old high school senior from Parkland, Florida, told TODAY.

And it’s not only school tours that are missing; many students can no longer meet admissions counselors face to face. And
what’s more, no one is truly sure whether the fall 2020 semester will take place in person. “Every decision the school makes
certainly has an impact on the decision I make,” said Colin McLoone. Photo courtesy of Colin McLoone

“I heavily depended on my second visits to help me make my decision, and now I just don’t have that choice,” Colin McLoone,
a 17-year-old senior from Brookfield, Connecticut, told TODAY.

With so much uncertainty looming, TODAY talked to some experts to see if there are any special factors that high school
seniors should be considering during this hectic time.

**What should students do before making a college decision during the coronavirus outbreak?**

“All colleges are in triage mode right now,” said Dani Babb, CEO and Founder of The Babb Group, an online educational
resource for professors. "I know that college presidents are working in collaboration to try to figure out what to do collectively."

1. **Look at colleges' health services — both physical and mental.**

A school’s on-campus health system is often overlooked, says Kathleen E.R. Murphy, strengths coach and advisory board
member at the University of Maine Business School. “Both the physical and mental health support facilities on campus are
important, particularly in this time period,” she said. Since many college students struggle with mental health, make sure the
school you’re committing to is providing the services to help students with any mental or physical health care concern, she
advised.

2. **Reach out to current students and faculty.**

“I think it's important for the kids to be proactive and to reach out to the schools that maybe they haven't heard from yet, either
on social media or call them because I know that there are a lot of people that are available at the colleges,” said Murphy.
Babb suggests high school seniors reach out to current students at the college as well. “I think it is really helpful for prospective students to get online and talk with current students to get a feel for the school climate and the overall environment.”

Miles Diviert, an 18-year-old high school senior from Sandy Hook, Connecticut, said that college admission counselors have been incredibly communicative. “Admission counselors have been amazing during this process,” he said. “I felt that there was more information available to me then there would be at an accepted students’ day.”

3. Press admissions for financial help

Colin McLoone, the student from Brookfield, Connecticut, told TODAY that the decisions colleges are now making — particularly the way they address students' financial aid requests — have an impact on which school he chooses to attend. “This completely changes the financial outlook toward certain schools that maybe were affordable enough before, but might not be now,” he said.

“A lot of students were accepted to schools under certain financial conditions, but now that some students have parents whose income may have changed drastically, students should definitely be asking schools how they are going to help them financially,” Babb said. She explained that many admissions advisers have the ability, usually at their discretion, to alter a student’s financial aid. “It might be worth it for a student to go to a college and say, ‘Hey, I’m considering you, but I have a better offer from this college. I need you to bring the tuition down,’” said Babb.

Should you consider a gap year instead of committing to college?

For students looking to get the full on-campus experience during this uncertain time, it's worth considering waiting a semester, or even a year, before entering higher education. A gap year — popular in Europe — is a great way to gain perspective and develop occupational skills. (Malia Obama put a spotlight on the trend back in 2016, when she deferred enrollment to Harvard University.)

“This some colleges are prepared to answer these contingency-based questions and others are not, and I think that’s something students should be paying attention to,” Babb told TODAY. But, this may not matter to students who are primarily focused on their studies and care less about the social aspect of college.

Regardless, if you don’t want to be going to college during this uncertain time, you shouldn’t feel like you have to. “You shouldn't go to school because somebody else says you should be going,” said Murphy.

What are colleges doing for current and prospective students?

With all of the havoc caused by this pandemic, colleges are taking more preventive measures than ever to protect their current and incoming students. Students across the nation are now attending “Zoom University,” as many have dubbed it, and admissions teams are also providing new online resources for prospective students. Though with growing scrutiny over Zoom's privacy and security issues — including “Zoombombing,” where strangers crash meetings they weren't invited to — there's no telling how long Zoom classes will last.

Many colleges are relaxing their deadlines for application and test scores. The University of California school system, in particular, is suspending all test score requirements and says that no acceptances will be rescinded if a student cannot meet final transcript deadlines. “The University’s flexibility at this crucial time will ensure prospective students aiming for UC get a full and fair shot — no matter their current challenges,” University of California President Janet Napolitano said in a statement.

A representative from the CUNY school system told TODAY that many of their schools are taking measures to help their incoming students as well. Hunter College is holding live Q&A sessions on its Instagram account in which students can have their questions answered live; it also invited admitted students to join an app where they can talk with current students to learn more about what it's like to be a student at Hunter. CUNY as a whole has offered flexible commitment and deposit deadlines for their students.

The University of North Carolina is offering a variety of virtual sessions for incoming students. A representative from the UNC media relations team told TODAY that they are holding Zoom presentations to educate students about on-campus resources, as well as planning to launch an online social community where incoming students will be able to directly communicate with their new classmates online.

SUNY is also making efforts to give their students online opportunities, including virtual tours and learning sessions, and has extended deadlines to give students more opportunity to consider their options. “We all have to think much more creatively in order to retain our students and attract others,” SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson told TODAY.

Coronavirus is changing some high school seniors’ college plans

Some are considering a gap year, a later transfer date, or a college closer to home.
By Terry Nguyen

Most high school seniors have resigned themselves to the fact that their senior spring — once full of milestone events like graduation, prom, and graduation — will be spent indoors. For those planning to head off to college in the fall, the uncertainty of the coronavirus pandemic and what lies beyond summer is a cause for concern.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of college campuses have closed, truncating not just the academic year but also the opportunity for prospective students to tour campus, attend admitted student events, and get an in-person feel for the school. Thirty-seven states and the District of Columbia have now mandated or recommended the closure of public and private schools. Campus visits are an essential aspect of the decision-making process for many students, including those with the financial means to tour or scholarship recipients who have been flown out by the colleges themselves. Most admissions offices have transitioned to hosting events online, but virtual tours and Zoom sessions can only do so much to acquaint students with a college’s environment.

With National Decision Day around the corner on May 1 — the traditional deadline for most students to accept admissions offers — many students are worried about committing to a campus they haven’t set foot on. About two-thirds of nearly 5,000 high school seniors surveyed by the education marketing firm Carnegie Dartlet found the May deadline to be unreasonable. And although many colleges have extended the deadline to June 1 or later, some students don’t believe an extra few months of deciding time will ultimately make a difference, especially if most of the country is still on lockdown.

“One of the most important things when choosing a college is the campus atmosphere and what the students there are like,” said Rachel Kedem, a senior from Sacramento County, California. Kedem is deciding between UC Santa Cruz, Boston University, and Emerson College, and says “it’s really difficult” since two of her top-choice colleges are in Boston. She’d visited Boston University before and would feel more comfortable committing to the school, she said, “but it’s hard to tell what the right decision for me is at this point.”

Kedem’s family had planned to tour colleges in the spring after she received all her offers and financial aid packages. The virtual tours and webinars have been semi-helpful when it comes to hearing professors and student leaders speak, Kedem said, but she said she was banking on the campus visit to be sure of her decision. “Is the atmosphere more competitive academically? Is there a strong school spirit? Is there a tradition students really care about? These are things I won’t be able to certainly find out unless I go there and talk to current students,” she told me.

Current college students — many of whom acknowledge that their admissions offices are doing the best job they can to aid prospective students — are trying to solve the social disparity Kedem described. Justin Thach, a freshman at Stanford University, had initially created a spreadsheet of current students’ contact information, intended to help high school seniors in the Coca-Cola scholarship program he was part of. Since Thach decided to make the sheet a public resource, however, the document has grown vastly. More than 650 students across hundreds of schools have posted their information for prospective students to reach out, he said.

College contacts for Class of 2024

“I’ve talked to about 10 students so far, and with talking to someone individually, I can give more direct answers to their questions, and they can get a sense of the individual people and how they interact with others on campus,” Thach told me. He added that he sympathized with the seniors and wanted to create a resource anyone can use, especially to help low-income or first-generation college students. Education experts say some first-generation students struggle with social isolation, due to a lack of family support or the need to work extra hours in college. Therefore, figuring out whether a campus offers sufficient social support is crucial for many.

“It’s just answering questions on our part,” Thach said. “A lot of what I’m doing is dispelling or addressing stereotypes, and I’m trying to address those preconceived notions as best as I can because I know how influential those impressions can be when you’re deciding.”

Already, various universities have considered the possibility that campuses won’t reopen in the fall. In this scenario, many first-year students could enroll in classes without even setting foot on campus until 2021 — something that’s led students of all ages to reassess their finances and plans for the coming year. On social media, some students are actively considering a gap year — a privilege that’s usually associated with people from more affluent backgrounds, since many colleges don’t offer financial aid for the period out of school. While studies have found that a gap year or time off from school decreases the likelihood of college completion, some students might not have a choice in delaying college, especially if their finances have been upended by Covid-19.
About 70 percent of 1,100 students surveyed by the ed-tech company Cirkled In said Covid-19 will likely affect their financial situation, and more than 25 percent said it’ll affect their ultimate college choice. Many families are rethinking whether their children should even start college in 2020 or if they should enroll in a school closer to home to reduce costs.

Andrea Boyack, the mother of a high school senior in Kansas, told me her son is leaning toward taking a semi-gap year, in which he would take a few online classes at a local community or state college and transfer to his first-choice campus in 2021. Boyack’s son has Asperger’s syndrome, and “getting information about support for students with special needs has been very difficult” with virtual webinars, she said. The family had planned to tour campuses before deciding on the best fit, but that might have to be pushed to next year.

“It was a big development when he finally agreed to the possibility of taking a gap year, since he was really looking forward to going to college,” Boyack said. However, Boyack and her son ultimately decided there was too much uncertainty and risk to getting him settled in a different state, only to have him potentially relocate home. Even if campuses did remain closed, Boyack said it didn’t make sense to pay the same amount of tuition for online courses when there are other cost-effective options nearby. Institutions, from Ivy League schools to community colleges, are already projecting losses of more than $100 million and bracing for more revenue decline in the fall, if enrollment numbers are down.

“Yeah, I just don’t know if I’m down to pay over $42,000 for Zoom classes,” one student tweeted. In anecdotes posted online and in national surveys, students say they prefer in-person learning, and the likelihood of starting fall semester online has led some seniors to consider a gap year or, for returning college students, a leave of absence.

“I know two students who’ve taken a leave of absence during spring quarter out of financial concerns,” Thach said. “The people I’ve talked to, some are concerned about paying full tuition when we just have online classes. They’re approaching fall quarter the same way and might consider taking a leave of absence.”

High school graduates from lower-income backgrounds are more likely to delay their college enrollment than their wealthier peers, according to multiple studies. They also experience longer breaks in their education and are less likely to graduate. Due to many families’ precarious financial situation, low-income students are significantly at risk with the pandemic-induced recession — particularly if they don’t have enough money for an enrollment deposit or if their family’s financial picture entirely changes.

The pandemic not only disrupts many students’ educational trajectory but also exacerbates existing barriers to access, such as college advisement resources and technology to study from home. Carrie Warick, director of policy and advocacy for the National College Attainment Network, told Politico that “the longer [students] are out of school, the more dire the impact is going to be.

“The biggest concern is that you might have students who weren’t previously low income, who now are,” Warick said. “Not only are they facing that loss of income, but if they’ve already done their FAFSA, they now need to contact the financial aid office to let them know there’s been a change and ask for an updated financial aid package.”

Diane Klein, a law professor at the University of La Verne, published a blog post on Medium advising parents and students of all income levels to consider taking a gap year if they can. “The upheaval most people are experiencing right now is incredibly difficult, and any honest educator has to admit those are the worst possible conditions to try and carry out education, especially for those making the transition to college,” she told me.

Even if campuses do open up by August or September, Klein said parents should plan for the possibility that a second coronavirus outbreak could occur in the fall, especially if there isn’t a vaccine by then.

“For people to go into debt, move their kids into a dorm or apartment hundreds of miles away, and find out a few weeks or months later that they have to go home again, that’s an unreasonable demand,” she told me. While some students’ enrollment decisions are contingent on their financial aid package, Klein thinks it’s not too soon to ask to see whether a student could defer a semester or two to get the full experience they’ve signed up for: “Many of these students have worked so hard, and I want them to get a full-value higher education — whether they’re paying for it, borrowing for it, or recipients for a lot of aid.”

Some high school seniors feel like they’re stuck at a crossroads. Many can’t afford a gap year in a struggling job market and feel constrained by the choices they have to make in quarantine — a reality that has only begun to sink in. College, for some students, is a four-year commitment, and like many other students, Kedem is stressed about such a big decision. “I have to weigh my options as best as I can,” she said, “and a part of me is really worried I might make a decision I’ll later regret.”