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middle level learning

Teaching About the U.S. Capitol Siege

also

- A Virtual Lesson for Teaching the Civil War
- Epidemics and Pandemics as Social Phenomena

National Council
for the Social Studies
Number 70

January/February 2021
www.socialstudies.org



Teaching About the U.S. Capitol Siege the Day After it Happened

Samantha Mandeville

On January 6, 2021, when the U.S. Capitol building was under siege and the peaceful transfer of presidential power was at risk, citizens around the country sat on the edge of their seats watching the news.

For teachers, scores of questions began racing through their minds:

Do I talk about this in school? If so, how?

How do I keep my biases in check when speaking to students?

How do I engage with my students in an unfolding event?

How do I make sure to hear all students and their concerns?

How do I navigate discussions about racial injustice throughout the riots?

I find great support through the social studies educators' group on Twitter, #sschat. The group organized an almost immediate online discussion ("educhat") in which teachers all over the world could engage and share resources. During this chat on Twitter, educators shared resources such as infographics, lesson plans, and videos. Teachers developed amazing questions for the subsequent discussion with middle and upper school students.

My school's history department sent out an email with guiding questions, resources, and images to help in our planning. Similar resources also circulated in the #sschat. The guiding questions were as follows:

- *What can/should informed citizens do when things like this happen?*
- *If you were a leader in this situation, what would you do?*
- *What do you think/hope that historians will say about this moment in the future?*

With questions and resources in hand, I needed a vessel to help present and guide the discussion with my seventh graders.

I was inspired to utilize Pear Deck, which I have been using since the beginning of the school year. Pear Deck makes informational slides interactive and is a great tool for engaging with students during lessons. Students can answer questions on their own screen, use features such as drag and drop or drawing, and can explore embedded websites and documents. It's a great tool to use during remote learning, but I've found great success with it during in-person learning as well. Our school in New Hampshire is back to in-person learning. However, we have some students who are remote and some students in "satellite spaces" on campus. So I am teaching students both in person and virtually.

Within this specific Pear Deck, I wanted to include some strategies that I've had success with throughout my teaching career. I knew I wanted to have students conduct a "See, Think, Wonder." With this strategy, students examine an image and identify things they see with their eyes. Then, they develop thoughts and questions ("wonders") based on what they see.

continued on page 4



ON THE COVER: U.S. Capitol with security fencing after the January 6, 2021, insurrection (Credit: Victoria Pickering via Flickr CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



the information

What information do we currently know about the insurrection that happened on January 6, 2021? What additional facts or information would you like to have?

Students, write your response!

Peer Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar

what happened?

TIME	EVENT
8:17 a.m.	Hours before Congress convenes to count electoral votes, President Donald Trump tweets that states "want to correct their votes" and that Vice President Mike Pence should "send them back to the states."
12:01 p.m.	Trump addresses large rally near the White House, recycling many false claims about electoral fraud and urging supporters to march to the Capitol.
12:53 p.m.	Pence releases a statement that he lacks the authority to reject electoral votes, defying Trump.
1:06 p.m.	A joint session of Congress convenes to count the electoral votes, with Pence presiding.
1:10 p.m.	Protesters enter buildings at the U.S. Capitol Complex.
1:12 p.m.	An objection is heard for the certification of electoral votes for Arizona. The chambers split up to debate the objection.
1:24 p.m.	Police begin evacuating Capitol office buildings due to protest activity.
2:15 p.m.	Police lock down the Capitol and evacuate lawmakers and staff as protesters enter buildings in the complex.
2:31 p.m.	District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser orders a 6 p.m. citywide curfew.
2:38 p.m.	Trump tweets "Please support our Capitol Police" and exhorts supporters to "Stay peaceful!" but does not urge them to disperse.
4:17 p.m.	Trump tweets out a video message insisting without evidence that the election was "stolen" but telling his supporters "you have to go home now."

The Associated Press. "Capitol Timeline on Jan. 6." The Daily Times, 6 Jan. 2021. www.thedailytimes.com/news/capitol-timeline-on-jan-6.html. e99228c3-b93c-56cc-852e-c28d4ec3a194.html.

At 8 pm, Congress reconvened and certified the electoral college votes, officially declaring Joe Biden as the 46th president.

January 6, 2021



key vocabulary

coup/coup d'etat

a sudden and decisive action in politics, especially one resulting in a change of government illegally or by force

insurrection

an act or instance of rising in revolt, rebellion, or resistance against civil authority or an established government

insurgent

a person who rises in forcible opposition to lawful authority, especially a person who engages in armed resistance to a government or to the execution of its laws

25th Amendment

an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1967, establishing the succession to the presidency in the event of the president's death, resignation, or incapacity

definitions from dictionary.com



In the box to the right, type 3 things you see, 2 things you think about what you see, and 1 question you have.

These are anonymous to your peers.

Katopodis, Isaac. "Pro-Trump Mob of Rioters Swarms the Capital Building." Photos: Trump Supporters Storm the US Capitol, 2021. www.vox.com/2021/1/6/22210405/protesters-storm-us-capitol-trump-congress.

see think wonder

Students, write your response!

Peer Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar



In the box to the right, type 3 things you see, 2 things you think about what you see, and 1 question you have.

These are anonymous to your peers.

Angerer, Drew. "Police Stand Guard against Vandalism in the House Chamber." Photos: Trump Supporters Storm the US Capitol, 2021. www.vox.com/2021/1/6/22210405/protesters-storm-us-capitol-trump-congress.

see think wonder

Students, write your response!

Peer Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar



In the box to the right, type 3 things you see, 2 things you think about what you see, and 1 question you have.

These are anonymous to your peers.

Loeb, Saul. "Trump Supporters Runs through the US Capitol Rotunda with a Confederate Flag." Photos: Trump Supporters Storm the US Capitol, 2021. www.vox.com/2021/1/6/22210405/protesters-storm-us-capitol-trump-congress.

see think wonder

Students, write your response!

Peer Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar

violence did not win

You won't see an image to your right, but you WILL see a green link on the bottom right. Click on that to watch Vice President Mike Pence's brief speech after the insurrection. What are some of the key takeaways from his speech?

Students browse: www.rev.com/transcript-editor/shared/x5GLkAWtrmEVV6vZWfikXjaXKcFm8

Peer Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar

peaceful transfer

1 minute for quiet observation

You won't see an image to your right, but you WILL see a green link on the bottom right. Click on that to examine an infographic about the **peaceful transfer** of power in our democracy. Make note of the information in the blue box at the bottom of the infographic.

Students browse: drive.google.com/file/d/1vxRVIACS_yiyiTOh6Bt9AbPAmY5nBS4G/view?usp=sharing

Pear Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar

time for reflection

2 minutes for quiet reflection

One of our goals as a Derryfield student is to become informed citizens of our community.

What can/should informed citizens do when things like this happen?

Students, write your response!

Pear Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar

time for reflection

2 minutes for quiet reflection

If you were a leader in this situation, what would you do?

Note: Leader does not necessarily mean *president*.

Students, write your response!

Pear Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar

time for reflection

2 minutes for quiet reflection

History helps to mold culture and civilizations around the world.

What do you think/hope that historians will say about this moment in the future?

Students, write your response!

Pear Deck Interactive Slide
Do not remove this bar

TEACHING ABOUT THE U.S. CAPITOL SIEGE *from page 2*

This is a great strategy that helps students develop inquiry skills as well as give them insight to a moment in time. I encourage students to avoid some questions such as “Why did this happen?” or “What’s going on in the photo?” since I do provide students more information about the image after they conduct their See, Think, Wonder.

Going into class on January 7th was terrifying. I was not at all sure what students had heard about the events. They receive so much of their news from social media that I was worried that they would have many misunderstandings. But I was pleasantly surprised at how composed and engaged the students were in the discussion.

When prompted with, “What can/should informed citizens do when things like this happen?” my students’ responses included:

- *Informed citizens should learn about the topic and research it without jumping to conclusions.*
- *When things like these occur, our duty as Americans is*

to stand together and try to show how wrong this is.

- *Informed citizens should work to make things right.*
- *I believe that most citizens should remember the lessons that are revealed because of events like this. If everyone learns that violence doesn’t win, then they won’t cause it.*

When prompted with “If you were a leader in this situation, what would you do?” my students responded:

- If I were a leader I would try to get as much information about the event as possible. I would make sure that the public knows what happened and the media was covering the situation. I would also look in to see if anything had to be done or if there was damage or someone got injured and I would do my best to make sure it gets fixed or make sure they get help. I would also make sure to reassure the public that they should stay calm and they are okay, once the situation is handled.

- If I had a lot of power in the government I would probably do something similar to what Mike Pence did and even though I believe in something else I would do the right thing. If I had less power I might help others understand what is going on and peacefully show others the right way with no violence.

When asked, “What do you think/hope that historians will say about this moment in the future?” some responses were:

- I hope that in the future people will recognize the violence and work to keep it from happening again, but that they also notice how the violent people didn’t win.
- I think that historians will treat this moment as an attack on the Constitution and to the peaceful transfer of power. I also hope that historians think that the people at this event accomplished nothing....

It’s amazing what can happen when you help students, both younger and older, navigate tough discussions. I am so grateful to the massive community of educators that I’ve connected with online through Twitter who shared resources and worked together to help our students process this horrific event and to guide them along the path of becoming informed, active, and engaged citizens. 🌍



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She would like to thank the History Department and Administration of Derryfield School for preparing guiding questions and a list of resources with such speed in order to support teachers. She would also like to thank the #sschat community for hosting a crucial Twitter chat that allowed teachers to share resources and ask questions. Thank you to Ryan Canton (@TheSwish) for additional questions to use in discussions.

Teaching the Civil War in 2020–21

Deirdre O'Connor

As I closed out my classroom last June, I looked up at the whiteboard and noted the date scrawled in green marker: March 13, 2020. A wave of emotions rolled over me as I reflected on the three months since that fateful Friday. It had not been a temporary three-week good-bye as the students, families, and faculty believed. No, March 13 ended up being the final in-person day of the 2019-20 schoolyear for many schools across California and the country.

As my school pivoted to emergency distance learning, I found myself, like many others, challenged to teach the Civil War online to eighth graders. In addition to the new challenges of the teaching module, many history educators face a mountain of information about the Civil War and limited class time to teach it. So what gets cut? Which topics get the deep-dive, thought-provoking lessons? If you read California's content standards, there are seven substrand standards for the Civil War under the umbrella standard of analyzing the causes, key events, and outcomes of the war. Middle school teachers are expected to get through all of it in mere weeks. Add in the complications of distance learning and it is easy to become overwhelmed.

The Civil War, undoubtedly one of the most important historical events in our nation's history, has left scars that can still be seen and felt across the country to this day. Thus, young Americans need to have a working knowledge of this period to understand the systemic racism that plagues our nation. I created the Civil War Battle Project and the Civil War Soundtrack to not only effectively teach the content but also to engage students in a creative manner in spite of our physical distance.

Sage on the Stage

One part of the process of having students critically think about the significance of the Civil War in our nation's history is learning about key battles. I have done what I'm sure many peers have done when teaching the battles of any war: lecture with a slide or two per battle; give the important statistics—prattle them off chronologically or by theater; and then test students and hope they study enough to memorize all the

numbers I had thrown at them. In my own education, this is how I had learned about the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War.

After teaching the Civil War this way my first year, I reflected on the successes and failures of the unit and then adapted my curriculum for the following year. The following year, I had students partner up to research the battles using the fantastic and detailed American Battlefield Trust website (www.battlefields.org/). If you've ever used this website, you know what a treasure trove it is. This approach seemed to go better in terms of student enjoyment and assessment, but I still wasn't completely satisfied. The next adjustment to the way I taught the Civil War battles was to adapt it for distance learning. In the spring, I could not require synchronous learning or partner work due to the constraints of Covid-19. I had to come up with a new format and that's when I decided that what I really wanted my students to learn, besides the impact of a battle, were the historiography skills of researching and organizing the information.

The Civil War Battle Project

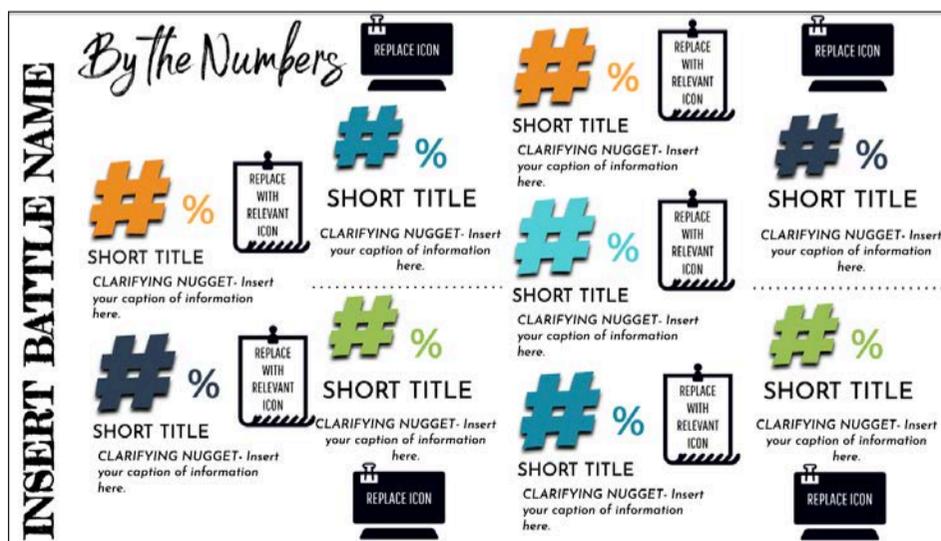
My Civil War Battle Project includes many pedagogical practices that I stand by:

- Student choice is at the center of the activity
- Students use reputable resources in their research process
- The activity implements up-to-date technological skills that I attained from fellow educators
- The design and format of the lesson is creative and hooks student interest
- The assessment portion requires students to show their depth of knowledge in a non-traditional way

The purpose of the activity was to describe key details about a major battle from the Civil War and explain its impact on the course of the war. The final product was to create an infographic to demonstrate their depth of knowledge from the research they conducted. When creating the lesson, I followed

the format that I use to create all of my lessons: anticipatory set, guided practice, independent practice, and assessment. To engage students in the activity, I used my Bitmoji (cartoon avatar) and created a speech bubble that featured a small, interesting piece of information for that particular battle. For example, for the Second Battle of Bull Run, I made a speech bubble that said, "No, it's not deja vu! They really did fight again in the same location.... See how it turned out the 2nd time around!" and for the Battle of Hampton Roads, I said, "Interested in ships? Battles at sea? How to make a wooden ship into an iron one overnight? Then check this out!" By including a fun teaser into the content and leaning on the sense of humor that my students are accustomed to, I increased the likelihood of student engagement, despite the physical distance.

As guided practice, I offered two formats for students to watch me walk through the activity. Students decided to either attend our Monday Zoom meeting or watch a tutorial of my guided teaching. Either way, I showed them how to use the three included websites to find the necessary information about their chosen battle. I voiced my thinking process on how to start off with the basic "5 Ws" and then move on to deeper thinking, like creating a conclusion on the impact that battle had on the course of the war. I emphasized the question, "If this particular battle hadn't taken place, what might have happened?" After concluding the research, students were required to create a "By the Numbers" slide that I used as a summative assessment. The "By the Numbers" slide is actually a template shared from teachers Amanda Sandoval and Stacy Yung who were inspired by Ryan O'Donnell's original "By the Numbers" lesson.



By the Numbers – Teachers Ryan O'Donnell, Amanda Sandoval, and Stacy Yung have created many wonderful, free online resources like this one. You can access this By the Numbers template and many others by following their Twitter accounts @creativeedtech @historysandoval and @stacyyung.

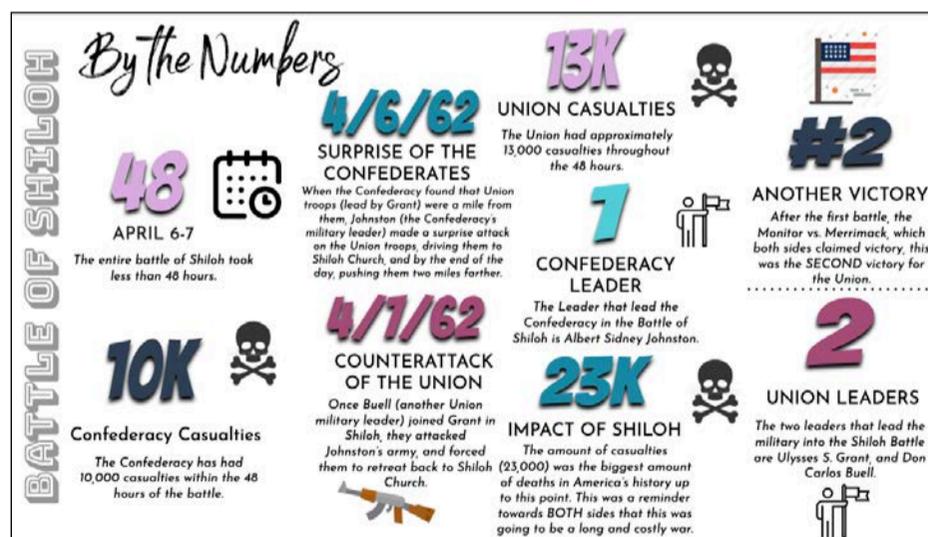
In this type of assessment, students create an infographic that includes a total of nine different pieces of information. I created guidelines for six out of the nine numbers they had to create, leaving three up to their own critical thinking.

The six required statistics were:

- The events of the battle
- Dates of the battle
- Significant military leaders of the battle
- Confederate and Union casualties
- Victor of the battle
- Impact of the battle on America and the war effort



Student Sample 1 - This student's advanced battle technology skills are evident with the use of a battle map background image and the way it is configured so as not to overshadow the information.



Student Sample 2 - This student does an excellent job including key information as well as explaining the significance of the Battle of Shiloh for the nation's morale.



Student Sample 3 - This student demonstrates an understanding of using numbers to represent different statistics and key details of the battle.

In these student samples, the six required statistics are included. What makes these three stand apart is their apt use of technology to create an infographic that is stylish and straight-forward. In the school year, I made sure to spend time teaching my students the Google Slides skills that I have learned from professional development. These infographics are a superb example of the sharing of that knowledge. The use of different backgrounds, including the meticulous use of a map of the battlefield, shows that students went above and beyond to use every possible means to relay their knowledge. The vector images, like a skull and crossbones, speak to the message students' wanted to convey to their audience. When I asked my students for feedback on this activity, it was overwhelmingly positive. Students said they had fun creating the infographic and could see themselves using this tool in their future high school courses to help organize key information. Any time even one student tells me that something I've taught is a tool they can add to their toolbox, I know I have done my job.

Taking Another Look

In the future, I would give students the option to create the infographic on paper because I know that some students struggled with the editing tools. I also would like to have students present their infographics to the class or to small groups. I was not able to do this in the spring due to the restraints of distance learning, but I absolutely want to implement student presentations or a gallery walk in the future. I want students to get exposed to the other battles that they did not research. I am considering creating another resource for students to take notes on the battles that they learned about from their peers' presentations. As always, there is room for growth and development.

A Profound Impact

When creating lesson plans, I always try to ask myself, "What do I want the students to walk away with?" When creating my lesson plans for Civil War content, "rote memorization of battle dates, key figures, and casualty numbers," is not my answer to that question. Instead, I want my students to walk away with an understanding of how deep of an impact the Civil War had on Americans. Would I rather have my students know that the first ambulances, the American Red Cross, the national cemetery system, and the process of identifying deceased soldiers all were founded because of the Civil War? Absolutely.

Having my students critically think about the impact of 2.5 percent of the nation's population (mostly young men) dying in four years is more impactful than having them memorize the start and end dates of the Battle of Bull Run (or Manassas depending on who you ask, since there are Union *and* Confederate names for the same battles). Have you ever truly stopped to imagine what it would be like to be on the battlefield of Gettysburg in which over 7,000 soldiers died, 33,000 were wounded, and 10,000 were missing or captured and only 2,400 people lived in the town to provide aid? Or what it would have been like to be at home reading newspaper headlines for six weeks straight reporting the deaths of 65,000 soldiers in the Bloody Spring of 1864? The impact of the war was profound and transforming for our young nation. "How could it be possible to live through that type of death and war and not be transformed?" asks Drew Gilpin Faust in the PBS documentary *Death and the Civil War*. When I look at my Civil War curriculum, I want my students to walk away understanding that notion. The Civil War is not some irrelevant, 155-year old event. There are vital lessons from this era that our students can learn from and apply to today.

Final Thoughts
How did this battle change the course of the Civil War?
How did this battle impact America?

The battle of Antietam was the bloodiest war America has seen and it only lasted 12 hours with 22,717 deaths. It showed Americans the amount of death and destruction that could come from fighting this war. It changed the course of the Civil War because the North counted it as a victory, so Lincoln passed the Emancipation Proclamation which freed all enslaved people in all the states. This was a major turning point in the war and it weakened the South heavily. With all the slaves freed, there would be no one to work on the Southerners' plantations for free, which means less cotton and less money. This battle impacted America because it made Americans question if thousands of lives were worth the price of war and if they should be fighting against other Americans.

Student Sample 3.A - This student demonstrates a solid understanding of the critical thinking question that was asked as a follow-up to the By The Numbers activity.

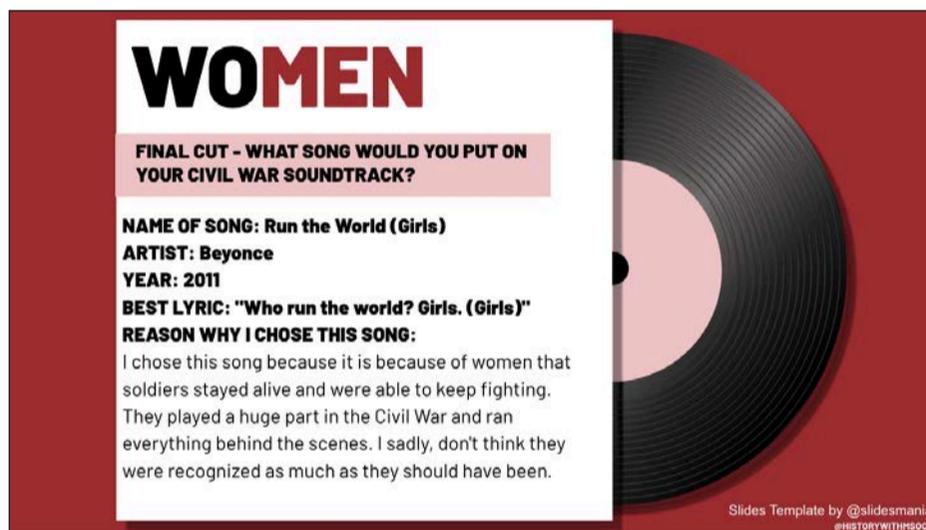


The Civil War Soundtrack - I adapted this album soundtrack slides template from the wonderful Paula at @slidesmaniaSM. Check out her free slides templates over at slidesmania.com

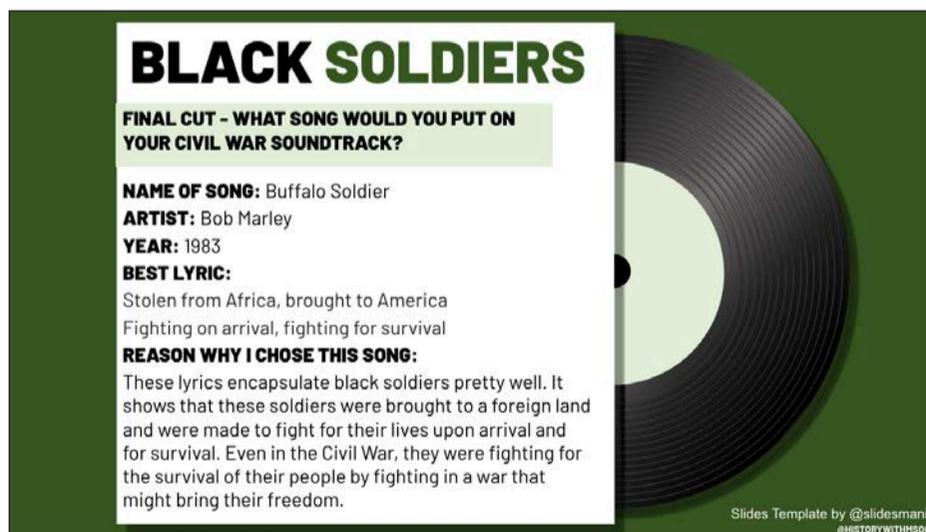
The Civil War Soundtrack

For a curriculum that fosters a comprehensive narrative of the Civil War, I created the Civil War Soundtrack lesson to go hand in hand with the Civil War Battle Project. I designed an activity on Google Slides for students to create a music playlist that they thought represents the Civil War. In order to choose a song that represents a topic, you have to know and understand the topic. The purpose was for students to research how the Civil War was impacted by different people and new technology.

My anticipatory set for this lesson was the music. Most middle schoolers love music and telling them right off the bat that they were doing a project that actually required them to include music immediately piqued their interest. I also included student choice in the activity, which quickly engaged their interest. Students were required to research women, Black soldiers, and then had a choice between medicine, music, photography, and the Union Army Balloon Corps. I included a reading passage or website for students to use to conduct their research on the topic and afterwards, they took notes on a few slides with important information. The most challenging and engaging part of this project was choosing the perfect song for the topic. As you can see in the student samples, I let students include contemporary music and as long as they explained their rationale for choosing the song, they could use it. While I guided the students through the instructions, I used the Vietnam War as an example. In retrospect I will create next year's example about the Revolutionary War since my eighth grade students have not learned about the Vietnam War in school.



Student Sample 4 - This student critically analyzed the importance of women in the war and how their work was received by America at that time.



Student Sample 5 - This student critically analyzed the struggles before, during, and after the Civil War that Black soldiers and African Americans faced.

PHOTOGRAPHY

MUSIC CRITIC REVIEW - "PHOTOGRAPHY FOREVER CHANGED HOW PEOPLE VIEWED WARFARE." DEFEND THIS CLAIM WITH EVIDENCE.

WRITE YOUR RESPONSE HERE (4-5 SENTENCES)

I feel like this changed people's views on warfare because of the way we found out about false photos. In the photo from the Civil War, *Home of the Rebel Sharpshooter*, it depicts a Confederate soldier who died defending his post, but it was later found that this was all staged. People depend on photography as primary sources, and evidence, but because we know this picture was staged, how can we know others were not? People's views changed because it made them reconsider what actually happened during battles since we found out that there are photos that are false. Were the photographers trying to hide something? Is warfare worse than what people say it is? Is it better and people want to gain popularity from the conflict? We don't know and, people can't trust something they don't know.

Slides Template by @slidesmania
@HISTORYWITHMSOC

Student Sample 6 -
This student critically analyzed the important role of photography in how the Civil War was reported to Americans at the time and the significance of primary sources in fully understanding an event.

Once again, this activity was well-received by my students and in their feedback they stated that in addition to enjoying the musical aspect, they also enjoyed learning about "other stuff." What my students meant by that is that by researching the impact that women and Black soldiers had on the war and the nation, they walked away with a more comprehensive narrative of the Civil War. They learned that in order to understand the impact of the war on the nation's economy and family unit, they had to know about the women who went into the workforce in factories, schools, and battlefield hospitals, while fathers, uncles, and sons went off to battle for months and years on end. Students realized, when discussing the fight to end slavery, that they should include the fact that African Americans weren't even legally allowed to join the army when the Civil War broke out. Students learned that modern medical practices would not have evolved without the gruesome surgeries and lack of safety protocols found in the battlefield hospitals. Students learned about how the insensitive display of horrific battlefield photographs splashed across newspapers impacted contemporary mainstream media. These struggles and victories personalize and humanize the Civil War to a new rising generation of Americans.

My hope is that by engaging in activities like the Battle Project and the Civil War Soundtrack, middle grade students will enter

high school equipped with the foundational historiography skills to continue learning about, analyzing, and cherishing our nation's rich, extensive history. 🌍

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Epidemics and Pandemics as Social Phenomena: Pivotal Moments in History that Altered Society

Eric B. Claravall

Studying social aspects of a disease can help students understand the pervasive role and effect diseases have on human society. In particular, studying epidemics and pandemics as social phenomena provides a context for seeing connections between civic virtue, economic decision-making, geopolitical concepts, and historical change/continuity. This article offers a framework for middle school (or high school) inquiry-based instruction that highlights the role of disease in human experiences throughout history. With appropriate scaffolding, elements of this framework can also be used with upper-level elementary students. The framework can help develop critical thinking and disciplinary literacy by incorporating background knowledge, tier-3 vocabulary, multi-media sources, and close reading of historical documents. It also addresses students' diverse academic needs. Presenting different learning modalities (e.g., graphs, pictures, videos, and texts) and text complexities, enables equitable access to information for students with reading challenges. Lastly, this structure also addresses the Common Core State Standards and the C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards (see Table 1 on p. 16).

COVID-19 is the name given by the World Health Organization (WHO) to the disease associated with the coronavirus—19 being the year the disease was discovered.¹ The virus is officially known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2. By the close of 2020, COVID-19 had taken more than 1.5 million lives around the world—and had dramatically altered the way we live our lives. The illness has ushered a drastic socio-cultural shift previously only imagined in science fiction or dystopian novels. Physical distancing and wearing masks have been the principal strategies for stopping the spread of the disease while we await access to a vaccine. In some societies, governments have imposed strict lockdowns and constraints on daily activities. This has been a particular challenge in Western democratic societies, where individual liberty is highly prized.

Taking COVID-19 as a proximal event, introduce this unit lesson

by encouraging students to reflect on their lived experience during stay-in-place or lockdown measures. Invite students to share these experiences and make connections to how diseases can affect the lives of large numbers of people. Students' reflections can further evolve into essential questions that address larger issues related to diseases and human activity. Begin the inquiry with the following essential questions, after reviewing and explaining relevant vocabulary (e.g., socio-cultural: a collection of traditions, beliefs, knowledge, and identities that represent a particular group of people. From social, which refers to society, and culture, which refers to collective artifacts of social life).

- What role does **geopolitics** play in the transmission of this disease?
- What economic effects can a **pandemic** have on a country?
- How does a pandemic affect the **socio-cultural** dynamics of society?

Developing Background Knowledge: Setting the Historical Context

One of the most cited pandemics in history is the fourteenth-century plague that decimated the populations of Europe and Asia—"the black death," a disease caused by the bacteria *Yersinia pestis*.² Using excerpted historical sources related to bubonic plague (available on the Stanford History Education Group website, <https://sheg.stanford.edu>)³, teachers can provide background knowledge and set the historical context of pandemics and epidemics. After reading, have students compare the ways that people today describe getting sick with COVID-19 and the way people in the fourteenth century described bubonic plague. Students can create a T-chart or a Venn diagram to make their thinking visual. As students tease out similarities and differences, they will gain deeper

knowledge of the nature of each disease (i.e., signs and symptoms) and its interaction with human behavior and environment (i.e., its transmission and the ways to alleviate suffering). For example, when people sick with COVID-19 cough and sneeze, they can spray droplets containing the virus as far as six feet. To contain the spread of the virus, governments can mandate the public to wear masks.

Unpacking Tier-3 Vocabulary

A tiered approach to vocabulary instruction provides an alternative way of learning word meaning through context. This instruction depends on how much attention is needed to learn the meaning of the words.⁴ Tier-1 vocabulary includes the most basic words—like people, death, disease—that students learn outside the classroom. Tier-2 vocabulary consists of high-frequency words found across disciplinary texts (e.g., population, produce, communicate). Tier-3 vocabulary refers to low-frequency words that are specific to a particular disciplinary area. Direct instruction of content-specific words (i.e., Tier-3 vocabulary) can support students’ development of conceptual knowledge in social studies. Building on the previous discussion about the bubonic plague and COVID-19, introduce key vocabulary words. This gives students’ additional academic language to use during small group or class discussion and in writing expository essays. Learning these words also adds to students’ understanding of the role of human behavior in the transmission of diseases. The following words can be reviewed with students at the start of the lesson:

Epidemic – The presence of a disease in a specific community that results in a high number of deaths.

Epidemiology – The study of how diseases spread or are dispersed among groups of people; how they can be prevented and controlled.

Geopolitics – The study of the relationship and interaction between geographical location, states, civilization, people, and economics.

Pandemic – An epidemic that spreads to multiple countries or regions and becomes a global health problem.

Pathogen – An infectious living organism that carries the disease such as virus or bacteria.

Teachers can also incorporate morphological instruction to equip students with psycholinguistic tools when deconstructing highly specialized words. Morphological instruction involves breaking down complex words into smaller word structures, or morphemes. Words like *epidemic*, *epidemiology*, *geopolitics*, *pandemic*, and *pathogen* have Greek roots (e.g., demos, genes, geo, logos, pathos). The goal here is to expose students to additional strategies for deconstructing the meaning of content-specific words. Knowledge of Greek roots and suffixes can generate exponential vocabulary learning.⁵ Figure 1 illustrates the meaning of the Greek roots and the prefix associated with these vocabulary words. When teaching morphological structure, it is important to emphasize that synthesizing two Greek roots, or attaching a Greek root to a word, creates a new concept. This synthesis involves inferential thinking and contextual understanding. For example, when combining the Greek root “geo” to the word “politics” (i.e., activities people do when making decisions to function together in groups), a whole new vocabulary word is formed.

Figure 1. Greek Roots and Prefix Definition

Morphological Structure	
Greek Roots:	
Epidemia	Prevalence of disease
Genes (genea)	Generation or race
Geo	Earth
Logos	Study, feeling, word
Pathos	Suffering or emotion
Prefix:	
Pan	all, of everything

Understanding Diseases as Social Phenomena

Aside from the human toll of transmission of infectious pathogens, diseases throughout history have had dire consequences on social structure, social life, and human behavior.⁶ The bubonic plague contributed to the demise of feudalism when massive death led to a labor shortage. Peasants left feudal lands to pursue higher wages in cities, and the land they abandoned became untilled and worthless.⁷ The spread of smallpox to the Pequot fishing and farming communities off the New England coast, diminished those communities’ ability to protect

themselves from European settlers.⁸ Military and political leaders' uninformed and misguided decisions during the 1918–19 influenza epidemic, resulted in an estimated 50 million deaths in the United States. When the first outbreak occurred in the trenches and barracks of Europe, military officers did not act swiftly to contain the spread. There was no mandated quarantine to curb the epidemic.⁹ The 1980s emergence of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) fueled increased homophobia because the virus had initially ravaged the gay community. Gay men were targeted with hate speech and violence.¹⁰ And today, COVID-19 has led to an economic crisis and unprecedented shifts in the way we live and interact with others. These are just some of the social ramifications that teachers can cover when teaching about diseases as social phenomena. By studying the geopolitical factors, economic effects, and socio-cultural ramifications, you can engage students in thinking critically and interrogate their civic responsibilities to address the social issues associated with the pandemic.

Geopolitical Factors. Using topographic and demographic information, such as the ones found at the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (see Figure 2), have students explore the transmission of COVID-19 and the progression of the outbreak in different areas of the world. Students can use COVID-19 as a case study for understanding the rate of infection, and how travel in our interconnected world led to the spread of pathogens from China to Europe, the Middle East, and America. You can divide the class into small groups to analyze the rate of infections between countries. Students can use the information in Figure 2, to compare the number of COVID-19 cases in different countries. Then, prompt students to look at how the U.S. government's lack of preparedness fueled the health care crisis and the inequity that unfolded in testing.¹¹ The limited testing kits and the absence of contact tracing in the early days of the pandemic intensified its spread.

Likewise, students can research the disproportionate effects of COVID-19 on certain communities, particularly African American communities. This activity exposes students to the social determinants of health that affect racial and ethnic minority groups.¹²

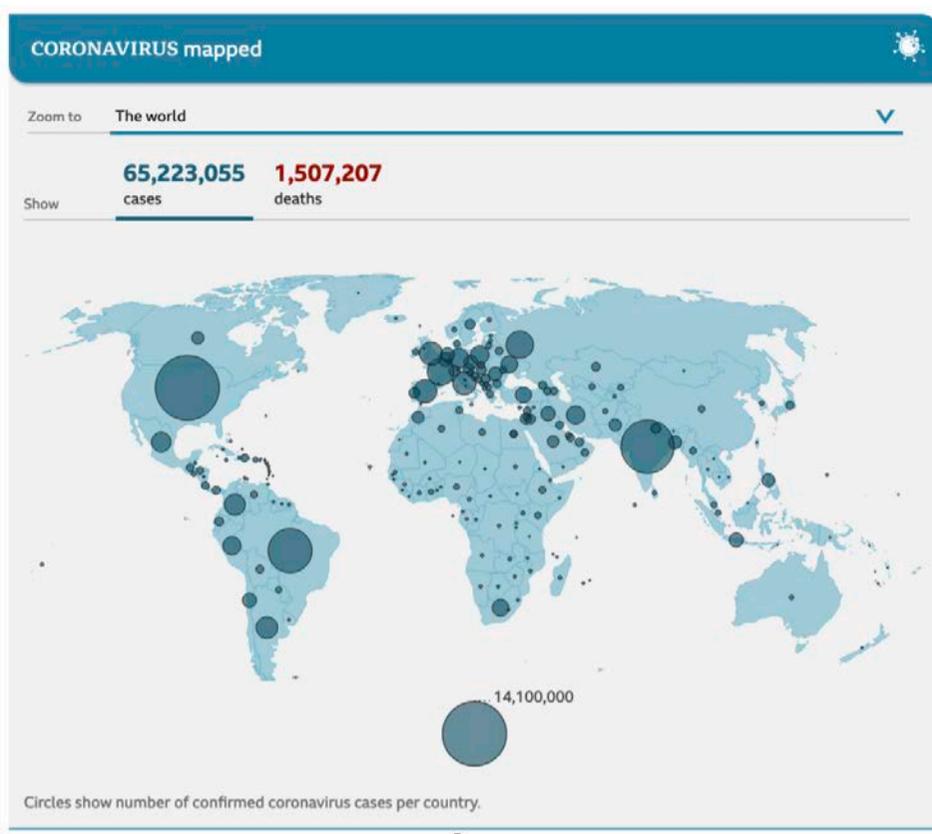
The Economic Effects. Using the data visualization available from the Center for Disease Control (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/data-visualization.htm), analyze with students the effects of COVID-19 lockdowns on the economic health of a country. Figure 3 illustrates the impact on stock markets, the number of jobless claims in the United

States, travel restriction, consumer demands on a commodity like orange juice, and industrial production in China.¹³ The overarching goal here is to challenge students' thinking on the relationship between the disease, the economy, and health inequality in the United States. Divide the class into small group discussions focusing on a specific economic indicator and have groups develop a hypothesis. Model how to formulate a hypothesis using "if-then" statements—*if* people are panic buying toilet tissues, *then* the price is going to increase and there will be a toilet paper shortage (i.e., the law of supply and demand). Then, have students corroborate their hypothesis by reading two or more articles on [Newsela.com](https://newsela.com). This open educational resource provides simplified articles taken from different trustworthy and reliable online newspapers and magazines. Each article has different readability levels based on the Lexile scale. Two possible articles are "Why Coronavirus Looks Different to Black America" and "What It's Like to be Asian During the Coronavirus Pandemic."

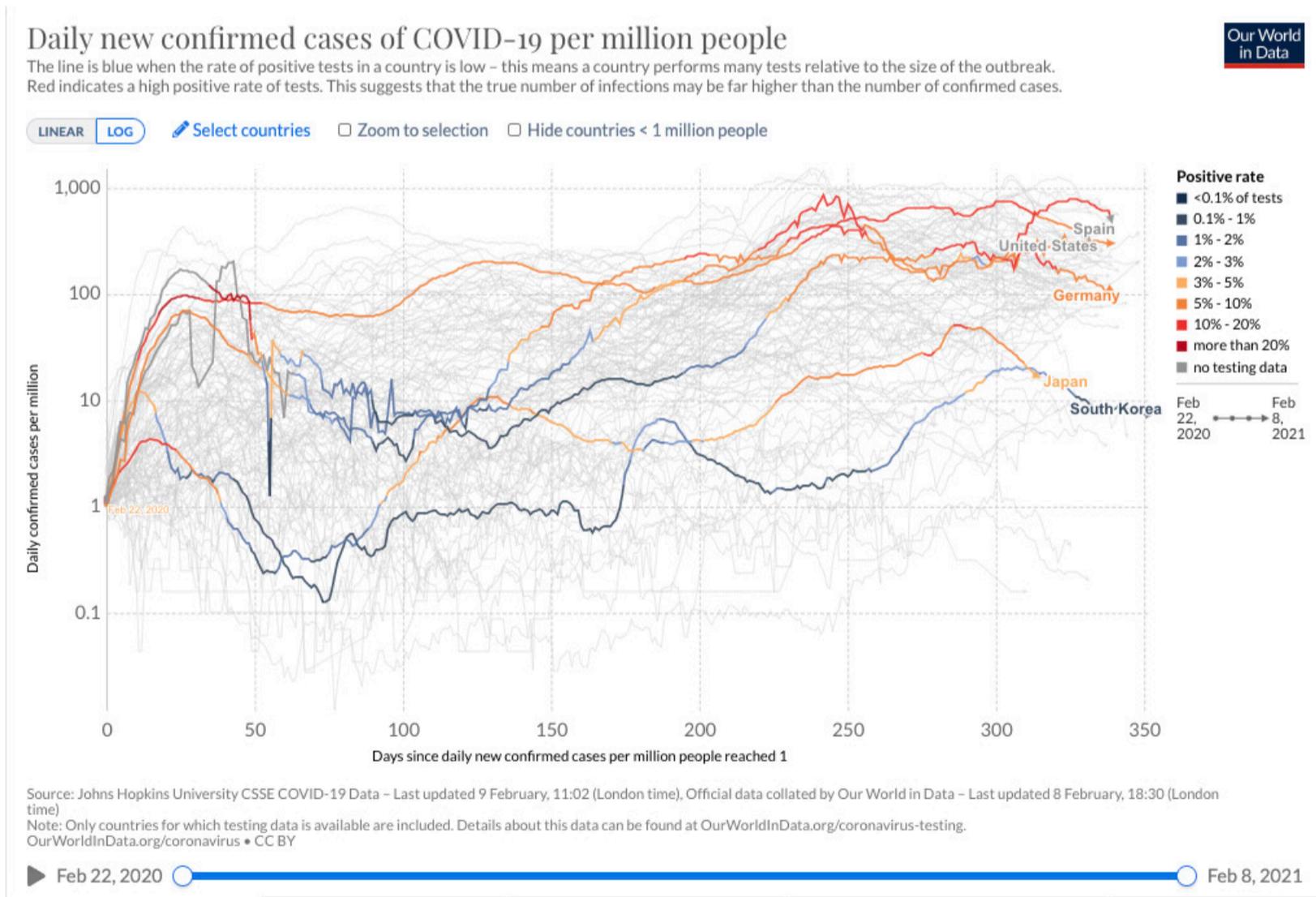
Socio-cultural ramifications. History is replete with narratives depicting xenophobic behaviors in the United States and other societies. This fear toward a particular race or members of an outgroup has resulted in severe hostility escalating, in some cases, to genocide. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, has given rise to an increase in anti-Asian racism.¹⁴ Discuss with students ways that COVID-19 has spurred xenophobia toward Asians across the globe.

Figure 4 provides an example for studying the racial rhetoric of government officials posted on Twitter. Students can analyze and discuss how such rhetoric can feed into discrimination or hateful behavior. This can be done in a small group discussion, as the teacher walks around and elicits students' thinking. Using a four-square graphic organizer (see Figure 5), each group creates a multilayered interpretation and analysis of specific socio-cultural issues caused by COVID-19.

Figure 2. Using Maps for Comparison and Contrast



www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/world/coronavirus-maps.html
(This information was accessed in November of 2020. The data visualization may have changed due to the ever-changing number of cases and surges.)

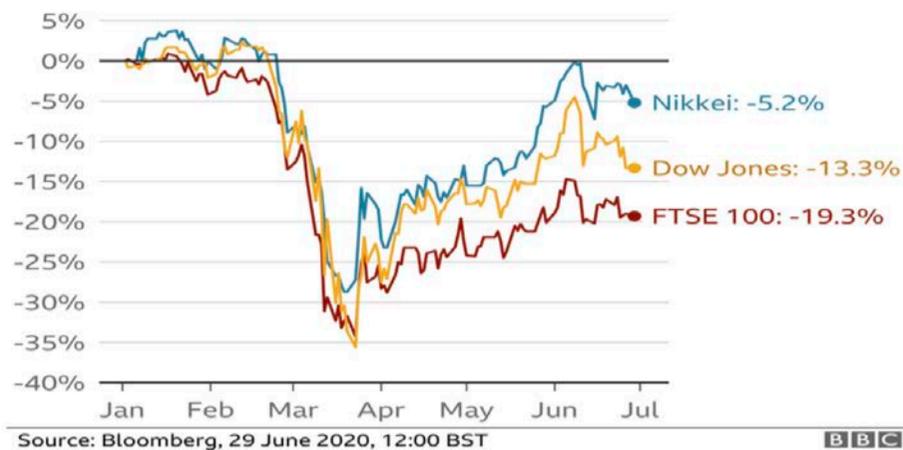


ourworldindata.org/grapher/rate-of-daily-new-confirmed-cases-of-covid-19-positive-rate?time=earliest..latest&country=JPN~USA~DEU~KOR~ESP~FRA

Figure 3. Understanding the Economic Effects of COVID-19

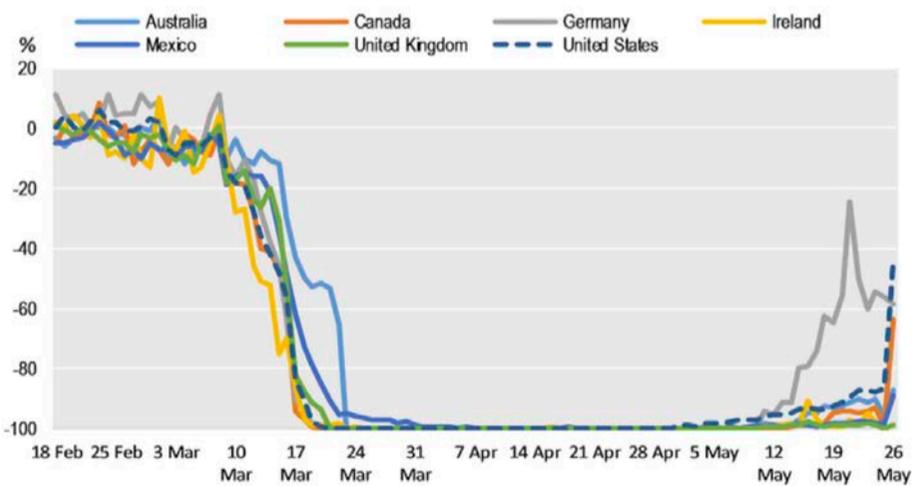


Stock Market



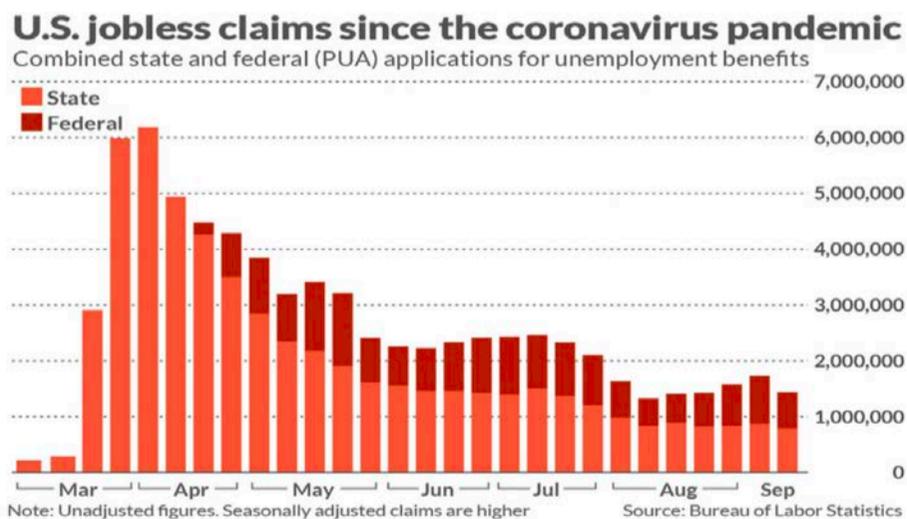
www.bbc.com/news/business-51706225

www.statista.com/chart/22974/covid-19-travel-restrictions-by-country-region/



Note: Data includes online reservations, phone reservations, and walk-ins at restaurants on the OpenTable network; estimates are based on a sample of approximately 20 000 restaurants.
 Source: OpenTable.com.

www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/food-supply-chains-and-covid-19-impacts-and-policy-lessons-71b57aea/



www.marketwatch.com/story/us-jobless-claims-fall-in-mid-september-but-economy-still-appears-to-be-suffering-sizable-layoffs-2020-09-17

Table 1. *Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Social Studies States Standards (C3 Framework)*

CCSS
<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.6-8.1.A Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound, and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.9 Analyze a case in which two or more texts provide conflicting information on the same topic and identify where the texts disagree on matters of fact or interpretation.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.9-10.7 Translate quantitative or technical information expressed in words in a text into visual form (e.g., a table or chart) and translate information expressed visually or mathematically (e.g., in an equation) into words.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.8 Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid, and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.</p> <p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.</p>
C3 Framework
Civic and Political Institution
<p>D2.Civ.1.6-8. Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a variety of governmental and non-governmental contexts.</p> <p>D2.Civ.6.6-8. Describe the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people’s lives.</p> <p>D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens’ and institutions’ effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level</p> <p>D2.Civ.6.9-12. Critique relationships among governments, civil societies, and economic markets.</p> <p>D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.</p>
Economics
<p>D2.Eco.11.3-5. Explain the meaning of inflation, deflation, and unemployment.</p> <p>D2.Eco.6.6-8. Explain how changes in supply and demand cause changes in prices and quantities of goods and services, labor, credit, and foreign currencies.</p>
Geography
<p>D2.Geo.5.9-12. Evaluate how political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics of various places and regions</p> <p>D2.Geo.12.3-5. Explain how natural and human-made catastrophic events in one place affect people living in other places.</p>
History
<p>D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts.</p> <p>D2.His.14.6-8. Explain multiple causes and effects of events and developments in the past.</p> <p>D2.His.14.9-12. Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past.</p>

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MIDDLE LEVEL LEARNING

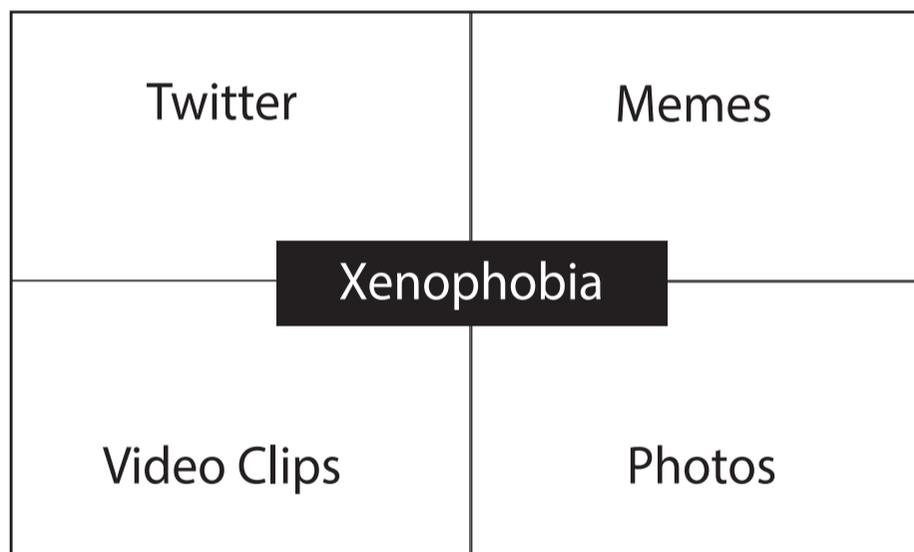
Jennifer Bauduy, *MLL* Editor • Michael Simpson, Director of Publications • Rich Palmer, Art Manager

Figure 4. Xenophobia on Social Media



<https://twitter.com/NYCMayor/status/1239717504727035904?s=20>

Figure 5. Four Squares



Conclusion

The essence of learning about the past is to understand the present. More than 100 years ago, the world was shaken by an influenza pandemic. During the nineteenth-century flu pandemic, millions of people, including 675,000 Americans, died.¹⁵ As of this writing, more than 20 million people in the United States have been infected by COVID-19. Historically, diseases such as influenza, smallpox, and HIV, have been game changers in human society, pivotal moments that altered people's lives. And now, as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, the U.S. government continues to face challenges to combat its rapid spread. While a strategic and efficient system of governance is essential to slow down, if not to stop, the rate of infection and death, individual civic duty also plays a key role to arrest

transmission. Through the study of epidemics and pandemics, students can gain greater understanding of the connection between civic virtue, economic effects, geopolitical ramifications, and historical continuity and change. 🌍

Notes

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