

Dear Diary: A Quarantine Reflection

I've honestly never really been good at keeping a diary. I always stopped writing because I forgot, or I got too bored to keep it up. Back in 2020, I decided that the diary I'd been trying to keep had to be closed for good because it became too much for me to try and document the isolation and fear that plagued my mind daily. The next summer when my family and I realized I needed to get out of New York City for the summer, I signed up to attend Phillips Academy Andover's Summer Session, a 5-week summer program in Andover, Massachusetts. A group of assignments from my Medicine and Society course at Andover became the first time I'd written in a diary since the beginning of the pandemic. The assignment was to write about our lives during the quarantine period once we arrived. Originally, we had no idea what Andover would look like concerning covid restrictions, but it seemed like our first 10 days on campus would be in a full quarantine inside of our dorm rooms by ourselves. This idea terrified me. At home, we had finally started to open up again and with vaccines rolling out, things had felt like they were going back to normal; I was seeing my friends more frequently, going in person to school, and, in general, feeling less anxious about the pandemic. Hearing about going into an even greater isolation than I'd had in March 2020 was almost enough to convince me not to come. Thankfully, once I got here they changed to a light quarantine, and my anxiety calmed down a lot, but it was definitely still present. Despite my initial fears, I'm ultimately so glad I came to Andover because it has been really nice to get away from the city and live a relatively normal life for a month. That being said, I feel a sense of guilt for being so far away and so distant from the rest of the world. As I'm enjoying my classes and walking around this beautiful campus, I remember that there are so many things happening in the 'real world' that feel so far away from my life here. When I left home I had been watching the news about the building that collapsed in

Florida, but now I feel like it is much harder for me to get access to the news, due to CNN not being constantly played in my living room. For some reason reading the paper on my computer does not feel the same. Part of this is due to how I feel distant from my family. The past year has brought me so much closer to them, and I'm honestly not used to not seeing my parents every morning while I make breakfast or not talking to them about current events during dinner while we eat together. I still get to see them over facetime, but it is obviously a very different experience that can never really measure up to the real thing. These feelings of anxiety, guilt, and distance were all things that came up while I was writing the assigned quarantine journals.

Overall, writing this diary has brought to my mind many feelings that I don't think I would have realized if I had not been writing it. Throughout the writing process, I grew to better understand my feelings and figure out how to process the emotions that have been brought up by continuing to live through the light quarantine at Andover.