

Name: Avonlea Gallant

Age: 15

Grade: 10

Place of residence: Ferndale, Washington

My Experience with COVID-19

I never thought I'd live through a time when the world shut down. Church, the library, and all non-essential public spaces are closed. The summer camp I attend every year is not going to be held, and even the 2020 Olympics are cancelled.

When I first heard about the virus, I was unconcerned. After all, I thought, it was all the way in China, and was far from reaching us. I had no idea how very wrong I was. On February 19th, soon after the virus was getting major public attention, the first U.S. case of Coronavirus was reported. It was in my state. After many cases emerged in Seattle, I was worried. It was only about a week after that when I learned that COVID-19 had reached my county (Whatcom, WA). Costco began to run out of supplies, because people were panic buying left and right. We eventually went into lockdown on March 23rd, when a stay at home order was issued for all Washington residents.

I was shocked. How could a virus close school for the entire year? I was also disappointed that I was no longer able to do the things I loved so much, like going to the pool every Saturday with my cousins. I also knew that math would be an uphill battle from now on, because my part-time (alternative learning experience) school was closed. However, I'm grateful for being able to do other classes online even before the pandemic, which has made adjusting to a new routine a lot easier.

Many of my other plans were also changed. The Whatcom County Youth Fair, which I participate in every year, was cancelled. My friend's brother's wedding, which I was looking

forward to attending, is going to consist only of the bride and groom's family. At this point, it also looks like I am no longer going to have a sweet 16 celebration in August anymore.

However, the pandemic has been a valuable learning experience for me in many ways. I have learned a lot of things about myself, like realizing how much of a homebody I really am (it's been two months and I still haven't been bored), and how much schooling/ other work I can get done while being stuck at home. It has also helped me learn more about my family, and empathize with them. After all, I'm sure it's hard for my extroverted little brother not to see his friends for so long.

Another one of the positive consequences of being stuck at home, aside from being closer to my family, is that it has helped me take a step back and consider how I spend my time. Is it really worth it to be part of so many activities which make me go to bed every night feeling exhausted, dreading waking up to the same loaded schedule? One thing's for sure, I've learned to cut back now.

In addition to quarantine having it's good side, I also think it is helpful to remember that America has been through much worse things than the virus. Take World War II, for example. America faced rationing and shortages during this time, similar to today-- although the former is unofficial. However, Americans also faced persecution if they were German or Japanese, and most were forced to send loved ones off to war. In addition, they were expected to give everything they had and withhold no sacrifice for the war effort, even when they wanted nothing to do with the war that had taken the lives of many they knew. It was truly our darkest hour.

The Spanish Flu is another time that is comparable, but far worse, than what we are living through right now. During that time, there were many deaths. However, when social

distancing was observed, there was a decline in the number of deaths attributed to the epidemic.¹

But despite hardships, Americans have proven themselves to be resilient time and time again. This is why we can look to WWII and the Spanish Flu Epidemic as a source of hope for the future. We got through those hard times, and we'll get through them again. Even though it doesn't look like COVID-19 is going to end anytime soon, we can still hold on to the American characteristics of tenacity and the will to keep moving forward. We need them now more than ever.

We don't know what the future will hold, but I believe that it will be brighter because of what we have learned from this pandemic. Hopefully, handwashing will be given the emphasis that was needed even before the pandemic started, and things that can realistically be online, such as job interviews, will stay that way and save resources. After all, we don't need to travel everywhere. Many things can be done from home, as we've all learned over the past few months.

A news article I read stated my hopes for the future perfectly by saying that after life goes back to normal, "I hope we will remember it as the crisis that brought us together, and made us kind and caring toward one another."² That way, we won't see it as a catastrophe, but a catalyst for positive change.

¹ Nina D. Storchlic and Riley D. Champine, "How Some Cities 'Flattened the Curve' during the 1918 Flu Pandemic," National Geographic (National Geographic, April 7, 2020), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/03/how-cities-flattened-curve-1918-spanish-flu-pandemic-coronavirus/>.

² Lea Kabiljo, "Opinion: We May Be Separated, but COVID-19 Is Bringing Us Closer," *Montreal Gazette*, March 18, 2020, <https://montrealgazette.com/opinion/opinion-we-may-be-separated-but-covid-19-is-bringing-us-closer/>.

Works Cited

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