

My name is Ella Bowman and I'm 12 years old, I currently reside in Nampa, Idaho. I like to ride horses, be adventurous, read, and I like cooking and baking with my grandma. I currently go to Lone Star middle school, my elementary school I went to when Covid hit was Willow Creek Elementary. And I've lived through history. I like to think that my experience with Covid was a lot better than most people but like everyone, I had challenges. When Covid hit, I was in the fifth grade. I was sick before my school went to online completely. However, I just had the cold, not coronavirus. I believe it was a Friday, everyone was given the option to return to school. I went to school and half the school wasn't there. To this day, I remember that day. The day before that Friday I never saw my childhood best friend, Shelby, again. She moved schools and wasn't there on Friday. I had class at the kitchen table, on the floor of my room, on my bed, at my desk, or outside.

I didn't begin middle school like a normal year. My first day was online, and I didn't get to do any of the fun things my brother would talk about. Last year, we had 5 first days of school: back and forth: online, in-person, half days, and 4 days a week. We had to wear masks all day, and they were strict about it. We had one-way hallways, which made sure we got our steps in. Everyone living through this pandemic always knows that whenever someone is gone for two weeks, they either have Covid or something related like that. Something that we also know very clearly is that we all must keep 6 feet distance.

The beginning of this school year is a lot better, Covid wise. Masks are optional, we get lockers, and we're less strict with rules like last year. We don't have one-way hallways, and we get 10 to a table. Last year it was only 3 to a table. This year is truly like my first year of middle school but altered.

I would agree that from 4th grade to 7th grade, things have changed. When I was in fourth grade, I had no caring concern in the world. I had so many fun memories in elementary school and when the pandemic struck, I was worried all that would go away. I had a "Fortnite" phase in the 5th grade, so during the mandatory two-week quarantine, I played video games. Then again, I'm sure every kid played Fortnite at one point.

I remember when my family was stocking up for food, I kid you not, the shelves were empty. Some would totally believe me and others it would be harder for people to wrap their heads around. A lot of perishables were stripped off the shelves. My parents like to playthings safe. They wouldn't let me touch anything in the stores, and I couldn't hang out with my friends, unless if we wear masks. My friends came over with masks and we hung out outside. In the rain. Yes, it was raining that day, but we wanted to hang out outside. We had a campfire, we put an umbrella over it but stopped because the umbrella was getting hot. So, my friends and I went to great lengths to have fun during the pandemic. Also, I was pen pals with one of my friends, and our group of friends held Zoom meetings so we could chat.

My grandpa also took this situation very seriously. For a whole year, I couldn't get more within 6 feet of them and couldn't go into their house. When they finally got the vaccine, I was able to see them.

However, just because I didn't have a super hard time doesn't mean other people didn't. The suicide rates came up, more people were dying than being born, and people legitimately became animals. I had a friend who wanted to commit suicide, myself. The world has changed: some in good, some in bad. Something that truly did help me process a lot of this was just simply writing it down. Journaling helps a lot, and I tried to document a lot of the experience. My dad likes to make sure that his family has a good experience and life, so he took us on drives and fishing. Things that you can do without being in a crowd.

I had it a lot better than most people, but I still had an experience with the pandemic. All in all, I'm glad I had this experience. I'm glad I lived through history and I'm glad that I have a story to tell.