



## 1. Video Games

Over the course of this pandemic I have been playing on the computer more than ever, this holiday season in particular I had a lot of fun playing my favourite game, Europa Universalis 4 – a game which allows you to take control of any country in the globe from 1444 to 1820, as a history student it would be an understatement to say I enjoy this game. Secondly, I also got another game called Sea of Thieves which is a pirate game centered around playing with friends on the high seas, I was so surprised by how much enjoyment I got out of this game, while I have friends who play online with me on a regular basis, we all collectively had the most fun we've ever had online while playing this game together. I've always been a gamer, but I guess the pandemic has made me realize just how central video games are to my life and are core to who I am as a person in a way. I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, but these games certainly made me relax and destress from all that was going on around me!

## 2. Cooking

I haven't cooked much, before or even during the pandemic, but for the first time I made dinner for my whole family – I made beef stroganoff which is arguably an easy meal, but it was my first ever full meal completely made by myself for my entire family. It's kind of funny really because I started out watching a youtube tutorial telling me how to make it, I followed each instruction as I cooked along until I realized the video was for more advanced cooks, which combined several recipes – on top of that I realized I was missing many of the other ingredients. I had to stop watching and had a minor freakout but I finished it! The whole while I had my friend from South Carolina messaging me calling me dumb for not choosing a recipe, and for adding butter to the pot for beef – the recipe called for it!! In the end it actually turned out really well, I would definitely do it again, but this time without youtube probably haha.

## 3. Banjo

At the start of the pandemic, I was playing a lot of video games, which I mentioned above – the ones I didn't mention like Red Dead Redemption 2, Civilization VI all had excellent soundtracks that were moving, they all utilized the Banjo in their tracks. I felt like these songs were easily replicatable, in particular I was very attracted to 'Hard Times Come Again No More,' as I felt like the song was topical and easy to play. I picked up my dad's old banjo and began learning to play, listening to Pete Seeger's tutorials, and other tutorials online. I quickly learned how to play Hard Times and many others such as 'Will the Circle Be Unbroken,' 'The Foggy Dew,' 'The Rising of the Moon,' 'Solidarity Forever,' and a couple more. As you can see there I kind of got into Irish rebel music, and American folk, which are both some of my favourite genres! If it weren't for the pandemic, I wouldn't have had the time or space to get into an instrument!

## 4. Music

I'm pretty sure this is common with a lot of people, but playing music and finding new songs/genres has been a nice distraction from everything, I've mentioned before that I'm a huge fan of American folk and Irish music, but I've also been developing an appreciation for traditional Chinese music on the erhu, my personal favourite is 'Reflection of the Moon in the Erquan Pool' by Wang Guowei, it's

so calming and reassuring, in particular I feel like it's a very hopeful song. This song in particular to me atleast, reflects the general desire for hope, for change in the world's current situation – I'm not drawing this belief from particularly anything, it's just how I feel when I listen to it.

##### 5. My dog, Dobbs

My dog and best friend Dobbs has been absolutely a godsend during the pandemic, he's always right by my side and is always here when I need him. At the start of the pandemic he was probably the happiest member of the household, we couldn't go to work or leave him, so we spent all day with him – petting him and giving him treats, he's moved into my own room now and has claimed my bed as his own which is a little annoying, however it's always sweet to see his little head laying on my pillow or catch him staring at dogs outside going for their walks. Whenever the stress or anxiety of school/pandemic life kicks in, he's always there for me, he is really good at reading people and is quick to burry his head in your chest if he knows you're upset. And there were plenty of those moments every day, he also was pretty excellent and waking you up and making you get out of bed despite wanting anything but. He walks up to the side of the bed and makes light cries and a very sad "AooooOooooOo" that sounds as if he's on the verge of death, he's very dramatic sometimes. To summarise, he's helped me get through the worst of the worst.

