

# FROM SPANISH FLU TO COVID-19: WHAT CAN THE PAST TEACH US?

## A UNIT in Three Lessons

### Unit Overview:

Students will learn that America has faced a pandemic before - in 1918. They will compare and contrast the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic with COVID-19 today. Students will learn about the purpose of an archive and record their own experiences with COVID-19 in a time-capsule. Students will have the opportunity to submit their time-capsule to be preserved in the archive of the Fresno County Historical Society.

### Unit Summary:

COVID-19 is not the first time that our country has faced a pandemic. Just over 100-years-ago the Spanish Flu sickened over 105 million Americans and more than 500,000 people died. In Fresno County Halloween was canceled, schools were closed and masks were mandatory. Thanks to the many historical lessons about the Spanish Flu during and after 1918 the country was able to respond today's pandemic with many of the solutions learned then.

This unit will teach students about the history of the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. Students will learn about how Fresno County responded to the pandemic and compare and contrast the government and local responses from 100 years ago to the responses of to COVID-19 today. Students will also learn about the purpose and value of a historical archive and about information and experiences collected for preservation from ordinary citizens just like them. Students will understand that Fresno County has its own archive at the Fresno County Historical Society. The unit will culminate with each student recording their own personal COVID-19 experience by completing the My 2020 COVID-19 time-capsule. Each time-capsule will be submitted to the Fresno County Historical Society's archive where it will be preserved for future generations

### Time Allotment:

Taught in three 40-50 minute lessons.

### Grade Level: 4-5

### Standards

#### *History-Social Science Content Standards*

#### **Chronological and Spatial Thinking**

1. Students place key events and people of the historical era they are studying in a chronological sequence and within a spatial context; they interpret timelines.
2. Students correctly apply terms related to time, including *past, present, future, decade, century, and generation*.
3. Students explain how the present is connected to the past, identifying both similarities and differences between the two, and how some things change over time and some things stay the same.

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## Research, Evidence, and Point of View

1. Students differentiate between primary and secondary sources.
2. Students pose relevant questions about events they encounter in historical documents, eyewitness accounts, oral histories, letters, diaries, artifacts, photographs, maps, artworks, and architecture.
3. Students distinguish fact from fiction by comparing documentary sources on historical figures and events with fictionalized characters and events.

## Historical Interpretation

1. Students summarize the key events of the era they are studying and explain the historical contexts of those events.
2. Students identify the human and physical characteristics of the places they are studying and explain how those features form the unique character of those places.
3. Students identify and interpret the multiple causes and effects of historical events.
4. Students conduct cost-benefit analyses of historical and current events.

## Reading: Informational Text 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

1. Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
3. Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text, including what happened and why, based on specific information in the text.
7. Interpret information presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., in charts, graphs, diagrams, time lines, animations, or interactive elements on Web pages) and explain how the information contributes to an understanding of the text in which it appears.

## Writing Standards 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.
  - a. Introduce a topic clearly and group related information in paragraphs and sections; include formatting (e.g., headings), illustrations, and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.
  - b. Develop the topic with facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, or other information and examples related to the topic.
  - c. Link ideas within categories of information using words and phrases (e.g., *another*, *for example*, *also*, *because*).
  - d. Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to inform about or explain the topic.
- e. Provide a concluding statement or section related to the information or explanation presented.

## Reading: Informational Text 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

1. Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
3. Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts in a historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text.
7. Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

## Writing Standards 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.
5. With guidance and support from adults and peers, focus on a topic and strengthen writing as needed by revising and editing.
6. With guidance and support from adults, use a variety of digital tools to produce and publish writing, including in collaboration with peers.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- **Define** what an archive is and identify the type of material that is housed in an archive.
- **Summarize** the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic from a century ago and differentiate it with what is happening with COVID-19 today.
- **Identify** and **describe** the human and physical characteristics in the photos and public notices from the 1918 Spanish Flu.
- **Explain** how COVID-19 is connected to the Spanish Flu Pandemic, identifying similarities and differences between the two, and **identify** what has changed over time.
- **Record and Share** their own personal experience with COVID-19 and how it has affected them and their families.

## Materials

Newspaper Articles:

*Fresno Morning Republican, October 1918*

*Fresno Weekly Republican, January 1919*

Photographs:

*Pop Laval, Armistices Day Parade, Fresno, November 1918*

*National Archives photo collection from digital exhibit on Spanish Flu*

Public Health Notices:

*US Dept. of Treasury's Public Health Service Flyer on Influenza, 1918*

*California Board of Health "How to Make a Mask" instructions, 1919*

*Fresno County Department of Public Health COVID-19 Infographic, 2020*

*CDC Infographic on mask wearing, 2020*

Video:

[https://video.wixstatic.com/video/50b680\\_a8379a5f5755430791e544af8b3b7c2f/1080p/mp4/file.mp4](https://video.wixstatic.com/video/50b680_a8379a5f5755430791e544af8b3b7c2f/1080p/mp4/file.mp4)

Workbook:

*My 2020 COVID-19 Time Capsule*

Web Resources:

*What's an Archives?*

<https://www.archives.gov/about/info/whats-an-archives.html>

*National Archives News - The Flue Pandemic of 1918*

[https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/flu-pandemic-](https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/flu-pandemic-1918#:~:text=Before%20COVID%2D19%2C%20the%20most,deaths%20in%20World%20War%20I)

[1918#:~:text=Before%20COVID%2D19%2C%20the%20most,deaths%20in%20World%20War%20I\)](https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/flu-pandemic-1918#:~:text=Before%20COVID%2D19%2C%20the%20most,deaths%20in%20World%20War%20I)

## Introduction Activity: Defining an Archive

**Set-up:** Explain to the students the significance of saving important documents and items from the past.

**Read to the students the definition of an archive from Merriam Webster Dictionary:**

Definition of *archive*

1: a place in which public records or historical materials (such as documents) are preserved  
also : the material preserved —often used in plural reading through the archives

2: a repository or collection especially of information

**Use the What's an Archives? from [National Archives website](#) (see Web Resources) to explain to the students the purpose and value of an archive.**

*An archive is a place where people can go to gather firsthand facts, data, and evidence from letters, reports, notes, memos, photographs, and other primary sources.*

*The National Archives is the U.S. Government's collection of documents that records important events in American history. The National Archives and Records Administration is the Government agency that preserves and maintains these materials and makes them available for research.*

*Whether or not you realize it, you probably have an archive in your home. It might be in a filing cabinet in your study, a box in the basement, a chest in the attic. It is your personal archives: a collection of material that records important events from your family's history.*

*Both a family's archives and the nation's archives save items to serve as proof that an event occurred; explain how something happened, whether for personal, financial, or sentimental reasons; may be located in more than one place.*

*There are ways that your family archives and the National Archives, together, tell your family's story. For example, your family's archives might contain the final certificate for your great-great-grandfather's homestead; the National Archives may hold the original applications for the homestead. Your family's archives may include a photograph from the day your grandmother became a U.S. citizen; the National Archives contains the Government applications for naturalization of persons wishing to become U.S. citizens.*

**Explain to students that Fresno County has its own archive maintained by the Fresno County Historical Society. Read to the students the introduction of the Fresno County Historical Society from its [website valleyhistory.org](http://website.valleyhistory.org):**

*For over 100 years, the Fresno County Historical Society has worked to bring life to the heritage of our region by collecting, preserving, interpreting and holding in public trust the records and artifacts that document the people of Fresno County and the Central Valley of California.*

**Tell the students that their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic important to preserve so future generations can learn from the past.**

Have students watch the video (10 minutes): Valley PBS Special: COVID-19 and the Central Valley, A Community Conversation (featuring Elizabeth Laval, President of the Fresno County Historical Society).

**Class Discussion: What are the benefits of an archive? Why is the Fresno County Historical Society Collecting stories from the community? How does the collection of this type of information help future generations?**

### Learning Activity #1: History of the 1918 Spanish Flu

Use the *National Archives News - The Flu Pandemic of 1918* [website](#), as a class read the description of the flu pandemic and review photo gallery of images from the 1918 pandemic. Discuss observations with students from the website and photo gallery.

**Review the photos and answer the following questions:**

- What type of facial expression do the people in the photo have?
- Can you tell what season it is by the attire they are wearing?
- What location do the people in the photo appear to be at?
- What are the people doing in the photo?

**Call on different students to report out their observations and discuss. Have students compare their observations from the photos of 1918 to the pandemic of today and how people may be responding differently.**

### Learning Activity #2: What did we learn from the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918

After learning about the Spanish Flu, students will reflect, write, and discuss the following:

**How did the Spanish Flu impact/change America? What lessons were learned from the pandemic? Discuss the benefits of learning from the past and how it has influenced the government and local county responses to the current pandemic.**

#### **Think-Pair-Share**

Have students complete a 1-2 page reflection paper and respond to the questions above. Then have students pair up with a classmate to read their writing out loud and share their experience. Allow time for students to talk and respond to their classmate's reflection papers. Finally, ask a few students to share what they wrote or what they learned about their classmate's experience. Discussion similarities and differences in responses with the class.

### Learning Activity #3: My COVID-19 Time Capsule Project

**Set-up:** Read to students the introduction of My COVID-19 Experience website:

*Part of the mission of the Fresno County Historical Society is to preserve local history as it happens for the generations yet to come. The Historical Society is actively gathering materials and stories to document the COVID-19 pandemic in Fresno County. This will help to capture the full impact of the crisis to be understood in the future. Your help is needed.*

**Explain to the students that the following assignments will be collected to capture their live experience during COVID-19. These assignments will be placed in a time-capsule with the Fresno County Historical Society for future generations to learn from this critical event.**

#### **LIVING THROUGH HISTORY**

Have students complete the My COVID-19 Time-Capsule and complete the following assignments:

**Interview your parents:** Have students interview at least one parent or guardian and record (written, oral, or video) their answers to the following questions:

- What has been the biggest change?
- How is homeschooling working out for the family?
- How many days have you spent staying at home?
- What are your top three moments from this experience?
- What activities/hobbies have you most enjoyed doing?

- What are you most thankful for?
- What TV show did you watch?
- What is your favorite inside family activity?
- What is your favorite food to bake/cook?
- What is your favorite time of the day?
- What is your goal after this ends?

**My Community:** Have each student write a minimum of 1-page response to the following questions:

- Describe how your living arrangements have changed since living through the COVID-19 pandemic.
- What new hobbies have you taken up, if any?
- What things are you doing to help feel connected with others?
- List at least 5 things you are doing at home to keep busy.
- What special occasions/events (i.e. birthdays, holidays, celebrations) have passed during the time of COVID-19. How has each event/celebration changed for you? What was different?

**Journal:** Have each student keep a journal for 4 weeks to preserve their thoughts and feelings in narrative form about their personal COVID-19 experience. Example of journal entries: *How am I feeling; Words to describe how I feel; What I have learned most from this experience; I am most thankful for; The three things I am most excited to do when this is over.*

**Photos from this time:** Have each student provide 4-5 personal photos taken during this current time of COVID-19 that portrays the lifestyle and changes that have occurred. This may include family, pets, etc.

Collect all documents and items from each student for submission to the Fresno County Historical Society's archive as part of the COVID-19 collection.

Printed materials can be mailed to:  
 Fresno County Historical Society  
 COVID-19 Collection  
 PO Box 11336  
 Fresno, CA 93772

Digital Materials can be emailed to: [info@valleyhistory.org](mailto:info@valleyhistory.org) (subject line: FUSD COVID-19 Collection)

## Assessment

Use the following questions to guide a recap discussion, as a quiz, or a guideline for a quick writing assignment.

### Learning Activity #1: History of the 1918 Spanish Flu

**Quick write:** Have students complete a 1 page quick write to identify their observations from the photos of 1918 and compare and contrast it to the 2020 pandemic of today.

### Learning Activity #2: What did we learn from the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918

**Recap discussion:** Have the class review the public announcements from 1918 and compare them to the public announcements from 2020. Ask them to identify the differences between the response of the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Are we in better circumstances than we were in 1918? What lessons did we learn from the 1918 pandemic to help us better battle a public health crisis?

### **Learning Activity #3: My COVID-19 Time-Capsule Project**

**Recap discussion:** Ask students, what are the benefits of an archive? How does this help future generations? What can we learn from archives?

#### **Extension Activity**

##### **Learning Activity #1:**

**Reflection paper:** Each student identifies a photo and writes a response to the following questions.

- What type of facial expression do the people in the photo have?
- Can you tell what season it is by the attire they are wearing?
- What location do the people in the photo appear to be at?
- What are the people doing in the photo?
- How do the images from 1918 differ from today?

##### **Learning Activity #2: What did we learn from the Spanish Flu Pandemic of 1918**

Have each student select one of the articles or public announcement flyers provided in the materials section to review and summarize key findings of the article to share with the class.

**NOTE:** The resources provided for this Unit can be used for a writing performance task to align with SBAC testing.

#### **Distance Learning Options**

- Assign the readings and require two group discussions before presenting.
- Hold discussions via video conferencing software like Zoom, or chat service like Discord.
- Alternatively, require students to contribute to an online discussion board 1-2 times per week.
- Hold live stream or video presentations in which each student is required to fill 1 minute of time.
- Each group share out to class to ensure all students comprehend the content.
- Assign a short reflection essay.