



LIVING HISTORY: LOCKDOWN 2020

ABSTRACT

Level: Key Stage 3 – ages 11-14 (Years 7-9)

Subjects: History and Creative Writing

Total task time: 1 hr 30 minutes. Can be done in 2 Sessions



Living History: Lockdown 2020



An exercise in living history by Llandudno Museum.

Level: Key Stage 3 – ages 11-14 (Years 7-9)

Subjects: History and Creative Writing

Total task time: 1 hr 30 minutes. Can be done in 2 Sessions.

Objective: To help students to develop descriptive language through sensory exploration. To make social connections between personal experience and historical accounts. To provide a writing for wellbeing space that allows students to record their experiences during lockdown.

History is made of true stories put together by historians based on palaeontology, archaeology, pictures, letters, newspapers, personal journals, biographies, autobiographies, and memoir. A memoir is a true story based on a single memory or a collection of memories about a single subject from the author's experiences. Historical memoirs help a researcher to see an event or set of events from point of view of the writer. A good memoir uses sensory experience such as smell, taste, texture, sound, and sight, and combines them with emotional descriptions to provide a snapshot of the experience for the reader.

My Example: I was 18 the first time I ever saw the ocean. Myrtle Beach, South Carolina in July was postcard picture perfect and I couldn't wait to explore. There are things a person born close to the sea wouldn't think to tell someone who has never been there. For instance, that the smell of saltwater bites the insides of your nose and makes a salty home for itself on the back of your tongue. How impossible it is to get all of the sand off of you before you get in the car. That everything you eat on a beach except for ice-cream tastes a little gritty. But mostly how the sea reminds a person of how small and fragile they are simply by stretching out to touch the horizon in an endless line of blue, grey, and white.

So what does the world look like through your eyes? Let's find out. The first thing to do is to try to capture the experience of doing something simple. Why? Because memoir requires you to take information you've experienced and relay it to your reader so that they can imagine it. Consider which of the following two sentences is more interesting to you.

1. The apple was good.
2. The apple was crunchy, sweet, and sun warmed with just enough tartness to let you know it was fresh.

The second sentence relays a combination of textures and tastes. If you have ever eaten an apple, your mind will automatically call up your own experiences of eating apples to help you imagine what eating THIS apple is like. If you have never eaten an apple, your mind will reach for the closest fruit you have experienced to help you imagine what eating an apple might be like. In historical accounts, we use these recorded real life experiences to recreate the past in our imaginations.

Task 1: Get a piece of fruit and write a short answer the following questions:

1. What is the fruit called? Does it have a nickname in your house?
2. What does it look like?
3. What does it smell like?
4. What does it taste like?
5. What does it feel like in your hands? How does it feel in your mouth?
6. What does it sound like when you take a bite?

After you have finished writing down your answers. Interview a parent, sibling, or friend about what their answers to these questions are. You might be surprised to learn that their experience of eating the same fruit is different than yours. That doesn't make anyone wrong, it makes us unique. Memoir not only shows an event, it tells us about the person experiencing the event. Let's keep going.

Living History: Lockdown 2020

Task 2: The Chronological Memoir (Task time about 45 minutes)

The type of memoir we are going to create is a chronological memoir which means that we are organising our information by the date it occurred, kind of like a journal. Write a paragraph about each of the following topics 1-6. Keep the topics in order and make sure that the information you are writing down is true. Remember that you are trying to help a reader recreate what you've experienced in their imagination. Try to include at least 1 of your 5 senses in each paragraph and don't forget to include your feelings. Don't worry about spelling or grammar at this point. Just write!

1. What does Lockdown mean to you?
2. What did your normal day look like before the lockdown started?
3. How did you feel on your first day in lockdown?
4. What does your day look like now that you are in lockdown?
5. What is the most interesting thing you've learned during lockdown?
6. In 1 year, what do you think you will remember most about being in lockdown?

Great Job! You might notice that your first draft is a little bit messy. That's okay, great writing always starts out messy. Our next task is to clean the writing up so other people can read and enjoy it.

Task 3: Preparing your Memoir for future readers. (task time about 30 minutes)

1. Read through your first draft and make sure that you have one example of each of the 5 senses discussed in Task 1 for each paragraph. Those senses are taste, sound, sight, smell, and texture or feeling. If you are missing a sense, try to add it in. For example, one thing I noticed on my first day in lockdown was how quiet my street was without cars.
2. Next ask yourself if you would understand what you wrote a year from now. If not, clarify your answers. It is helpful to read your answers out loud so that you can also listen for places where your meaning or language might not be as clear as you want it to be. Rewrite any sentences that are unclear.
3. Copy your corrected memoir in clear handwriting (or on a computer) so that it can be read by someone else. Don't worry about getting every sentence perfect because the most important thing is that it is true and written by you!
4. Finally, put your name, your age, and the date on your finished memoir on your draft. If you want, you can also put your town name on it. This information helps a historian know who, when, and where the memoir was created. You can also give your memoir a title at this point.

Congratulations! You've just made history.

If you want to do an experiment with Llandudno Museum on memoirs as history, you can ask a parent or guardian to email a picture or a copy of your memoir to deann@llandudnomuseum.co.uk with the subject line marked **Lockdown Memoir 2020**. One year from the first date of the UK lockdown, Llandudno Museum will make these memoirs available to the public to read. If you don't want to send it in, you can just put your memoir in an envelope with the date on it and put it away for a year. When you read it again think about how your thoughts on the lockdown might have changed over time.

Other nonfiction you might enjoy:

Historical Memoir

Night by Elie Wiesel, Ages 14 and older.

Walden by Henry David Thoreau, any age.

Living History: Lockdown 2020

Current Day Memoir:

Teen Angst? Naaah... by Ned Vizzini, Ages 14 and older.

Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me? (And Other Concerns) by MINDY KALING, Ages 16 and older

Do You Dream in Color? Insights From a Girl Without Sight by Laurie Rubin, Ages 13 and older.

Graphic Novel Memoir:

They Called Us Enemy by George Takei, Justin Eisinger and Steven Scott, Ages 12 and older

White Bird: A Wonder Story by R. J. Palacio, Ages 12 and older

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi, Ages 12 and older.

El Deafo by Cece Bell, Ages 7 and older

