In middle school social studies class, we cover a lot of history and life lessons! In the 6th grade, we learn all about the decisions and achievements of our ancient ancestors. By the end of the year, we learn all about the ups and downs of the Medieval World. You learn a lot about the bad, like corruption, bloody wars, and deadly disease, but also about the silver lining - the Renaissance and Age of Enlightenment. What we really learn is that the night is always darkest right before dawn. Why? Because what happened long ago, can teach us how to handle tomorrow. In the 5th, 7th and 8th grades, we learn all about the growth and struggles America has had in its past. From rebellious patriots, to brother fighting brother, America has dealt with its fair share of conflict and has come out a stronger nation from it.

How did you learn about all that? Through a lot of primary sources! We learned about the laws of ancient Mesopotamia by actually reading Hammurabi’s Code. We learned about the wise words and advice of Chinese philosophers by actually reading their works! We learned about the importance of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution by actually reading the documents! We learned about life in the Great Depression by listening to songs created during the time, and looking at images of the hardships people faced.

Now, we are living through history. The rise of COVID-19, and our world’s fight to keep it from overwhelming us, may be the story of your generation, just like mine was 9/11, like my parents was the Vietnam War, my grandparents were the Korean War and World War II, and like my great-grandmother’s was the Great Depression. Your generation just got your moment to show the world what you’re made of. Not just as a historian, but as a human being, I love reading the diary of my great-grandmother who immigrated to the US in the mid-1920s, and lived through the Great Depression while raising two young children. They give my family meaningful primary sources to know who our ancestors were, and who WE are because of them.

History has chosen you to live in this time. And 30 years from now, your children will want to know what it was like in the bad old days of the COVID-19 outbreak. They’ll want to know what it was like being out of school. They’ll want to know what it was like when Target ran out of toilet paper and hand sanitizer. They’ll want to know how you learned about what was going on. They’ll want to know who you knew that got sick, and how that felt. They’ll want to know what you did to keep busy. Just like we want to know what it was like to live through crazy stuff in the past, they’re going to want to know what you lived through NOW. You literally have the opportunity to be part of history, right now, and create materials invaluable to your family and future historians.
Assignment Guidelines
Your assignment, for as long as we are out, is to keep a daily journal about what your life is like during the school shutdown. Here are the expectations:
- Include the date at the top of each entry. Sign your name at the bottom.
  - Outline what happened each day. What was the news? Did a famous person contract COVID-19? What was the weather like? What did you wish you were doing that day? These are just a few ideas.
- Each entry must be between 100-200 words. You can write it in a Google Doc, and print it out, or use looseleaf, or a small notebook.
- Weekends - You should write on weekends too!
- These will be due when we return to school, to be displayed. Use pictures, drawings, or anything else to make it unique! It will be the first grade for the 3rd trimester.
  - It will be returned to you - grade & comments will be on a separate paper, so you can keep your journal to show future generations how life changed at this time. Who knows, I might even copy some to use as Primary Source documents in classes a few decades down the road!

Example of a Living History Journal Entry:

Friday, March 13th, 2020
Today was stressful! Instead of having our regularly scheduled teacher development day, with different activities throughout the day designed to help us become better teachers, we spent the day working on coming up with ‘distance learning’ activities for our classes. To try to figure how to make our lessons meaningful, but also possible for students to do at home, while also taking into account the work other teachers were preparing was an experience to say the least! Then, when I left school to go to Stop & Shop to pick up a few things I needed at home, the place was a madhouse! All the toilet paper and paper towels were gone from the shelves, and the check-out lines were insane. I spent more time waiting on a checkout line, than I did actually picking out the items I needed!

Mrs. Daly

(139 words. To find out your word count, highlight the text and go to “Tools” and click “Word Count”.)