

Teaching the Archive

A Journal of a Plague Year: An Archive of Covid-19



"I Am" Poem Lesson
June 2020
Kathryn Jue
Garden Grove High School
Arizona State University

“I Am” Poems

Essential Question: What feelings and experiences are people having during the COVID-19 crisis?

Student Outcomes: Students will be able to read archive documents to describe the feelings and experiences that people are having during the COVID-19 crisis. Students will be able to access and navigate items using the archive. Students will answer the essential question through the creation of an “I Am” Poem.

Introduction:

1. What feelings have you felt today?

2. Choose one of those feelings you’ve experienced today. What might you have said or done today that showed someone that feeling?

3. What kind of feelings have you experienced during the COVID-19 era? (If you have not experienced COVID-19 related feelings, what feelings do you think you would feel?)

4. List three different types of people you think would be most affected by COVID-19.

5. Of your three, choose one and explain why you feel this person would be most affected.

“I Am” Poem Instructions:

“I Am” poems help show a person’s point of view and feelings through poetry. For this assignment, you will be creating an “I Am” poem based on items you find in the Journal of the Plague Year Archives.

To begin, go to the explore the archives tab on the Journal of the Plague Year website. Look at your answer to question 4. Choose one of these types of people to search for in the archive. Examples could be students, teachers, children, businesses, artists, restaurant workers, health care workers, elderly, skeptics, government, immigrants.

Read at least FIVE different items from your chosen people group to help brainstorm your poem.

“I Am” Poem Preparation Questions:

1. Read the first item for the people group you have chosen.
 - a. What is the title of the item?

 - b. What is the date of the item.

 - c. Describe the item. Is it a written reflection? A picture? A meme? Be sure to read the description! What does the contributor say about the item?

 - d. What feelings do you think the contributor has about COVID-19 based on the item and the description?

2. Read the first item for the people group you have chosen.
 - a. What is the title of the item?

 - b. What is the date of the item.

 - c. Describe the item. Is it a written reflection? A picture? A meme? Be sure to read the description! What does the contributor say about the item?

 - d. What feelings do you think the contributor has about COVID-19 based on the item and the description?

3. Read the first item for the people group you have chosen.
 - a. What is the title of the item?

 - b. What is the date of the item.

 - c. Describe the item. Is it a written reflection? A picture? A meme? Be sure to read the description! What does the contributor say about the item?

 - d. What feelings do you think the contributor has about COVID-19 based on the item and the description?

4. Read the first item for the people group you have chosen.

a. What is the title of the item?

b. What is the date of the item.

c. Describe the item. Is it a written reflection? A picture? A meme? Be sure to read the description! What does the contributor say about the item?

d. What feelings do you think the contributor has about COVID-19 based on the item and the description?

5. Read the first item for the people group you have chosen.

a. What is the title of the item?

b. What is the date of the item.

c. Describe the item. Is it a written reflection? A picture? A meme? Be sure to read the description! What does the contributor say about the item?

d. What feelings do you think the contributor has about COVID-19 based on the item and the description?

“I Am” Poem Creation

Using the information from the five items you read, create a poem that shows the feelings and experiences of the people group you chose. To write the “I Am” poem, follow the template below.

For example, if I read items about health care workers my first two lines might be:

“I am a tired nurse.

I want people to wash their hands.”

What you fill in is based on the items you read in the archives. The words do not have to be from the items, use the items to inspire your own words.

"I Am" Poem

I am...

I want...

I hear...

I see...

I am (repeat first line)...

I say...

I worry...

I try...

I hope...

I am (repeat first line)...

*Notes for teachers:

This activity is generally done in groups and pairs. Teachers are encouraged to use the introduction to facilitate a full class or small group instruction. Poem creation can be done in collaborative groups or partners. Depending on age and subject area, illustrations can be incorporated to accompany the poems.

Teachers are highly encouraged to have students share their poems. This can be done in small groups through clock partners or lines of communication, or they can be shared via the whole class.

“Ticket out the door” type closure questions could be:

1. What was the hardest part of using the archive? Why?
2. To which poem did you have the strongest reaction? What was that reaction? Why do you think you reacted that way?
3. Did you relate to any of the experiences in the five items you read? If so, which ones and why? If not, explain how the experiences of those five items differ from yours.
4. What feelings did you experience looking at the items in the archive? Why do you think these items caused these feelings?