**Journal entry 1: COVID-19 connection** Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
**Due April 27**  Teacher’s name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Pd. \_\_\_\_

**Last week as you studied your vocabulary you learned what a dystopia is. So the real question is, are we living in a dystopian society today? Read the following article and then fill out the graphic organizer in Focus taking notes about how society does and does not reflect a true dystopia.**

**Thoughts on Living in a State of Dystopia** by Wayne Miller *Providence Journal*

I first discovered dystopia reading Stephen King’s 1978 “The Stand,” about an influenza pandemic. My Texas friend Christopher Brown is also a master of the genre. One of my fiction books, the collection “Since the Sky Blew Off,” includes some of my own dystopian shorts.

But I never expected to be writing the story of a real-life pandemic.

That, of course, is what I and many of my newspaper colleagues, here at The Journal and elsewhere, are doing.

The first article I wrote that referenced coronavirus disease read:

“The first American case, a man in Washington who traveled to China, was confirmed on Monday. The man fell ill but is recovering.

″‘While CDC considers this is a serious public health concern,’ the agency wrote on its website, ‘based on current information, the immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV [the strain of virus] to the general American public is considered low at this time.’ ”

My story was published on Jan. 22.

Eight weeks.

How long ago it seems.

Since Jan. 22, the sense of reality has dissolved — initially almost imperceptibly and then, starting around March 9, [when Gov. Gina Raimondo declared a state of emergency](https://www.providencejournal.com/article/20200309/NEWS/200309429), with whipsaw speed. We are living a new reality. More properly, surreality.

The National Guard has been called out. Testing and treatment tents are going up outside hospitals. Plans are being drawn to use facilities such as the Dunkin’ Donuts Center as satellite hospitals. Schools, restaurants, stores, and pretty much everything save for essentials are closed.

“Essentials.”

The word itself comforts and alarms.

#coronavirus trends and trends, the Twittersphere having become a hyper-anxious sphere.

The word “viral,” as in “going,” no longer seems right.

Other words and phrases that have entered the vernacular are familiar to some people — but to most of us, not.

Not like this.

*Cough etiquette. PPE. COVID-19. Shelter in place. Lockdown. Self-quarantine. Presumptive positive. Flatten the curve. Contact tracking. Social distancing. Distance learning.*

Distance.

Aloneness.

What? When? TBD. Uncertainty, open-ended.

Social creatures no more.

From the safety of our homes, as much cave as residence now, we become obsessive as we watch the news, check emails and texts, hang out on social media, hope for hope.

And seek silver linings.

We find few.

We look suspiciously at strangers, and sometimes, at non-strangers. Our hands are raw from washing and sanitizing, although that’s no problem now.

Dreams offer no relief.

We wake up every day to dystopia.

Yet there is comfort. Apart physically, yes, but we are together.

Last Sunday, I went to a favorite beach in South County.

It was unseasonably warm, which at first reminded me of climate change, but I let that go and settled into the moment.

Two teenagers were laughing as they walked. Older people strolled. Dogs romped. A child dug in the sand.

We happened on a collection of cairns and hearts shaped from rocks that people had built and we built a cairn of our own. Symbolism. Faith renewal.

Lying on a blanket, we looked at the pristine afternoon, not a cloud in the sky. We whispered love-yous.

We could see clearly to Block Island, a favorite vacation spot. Wonderful memories surfaced. Ones to be made on some fine tomorrow brought a smile.

Back home, the crocuses were blooming and the daffodils were not far behind. Birds sang. We played fetch with our puppy, oblivious to the world beyond our yard. We checked in on loved ones and cooked a good meal.

I thought of how dystopian fiction typically ends in desolation, the evil King character Randall Flagg roaming unchecked, the planet returned to the cockroaches, the sky blown off.

I thought of previous real-life dystopias, the Black Death and Spanish flu especially.

Our species survived, with none of the weapons available to us in 2020.

Unlike in fictional dystopia, this screen will not fade to black.

Be well.

Be safe.

Ignore rumor and nonsense. Heed direction from our public-health authorities and trusted leaders.

Some day soon, maybe see you on Block Island.

**Are we living in a dystopia?**

As you read the article, take notes fill out the graphic organizer taking notes about how society does and does not reflect a true dystopia.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **How society does reflect a dystopia** | **How society does not reflect a dystopia** |

**After reading the article make a judgement. Are we living in a true dystopia? If so, why? If not, why not? Please answer this question in several well-written sentences. Please continue to another page as needed.**