

History has chosen us to live in this time

Last week, I looked out my classroom window at Morrison R. Waite High School and saw authentic education. Our brand-new welding teacher was outside with his class as Columbia Gas crews welded together parts to repair our broken heating system.

It was awesome. Kids, at school, were getting to see how their subject played out in the real world. I told that exceptional young teacher how awesome it was that his kids were getting to see the skill they were learning in a real-world situation, and contribute to solving a problem. I wished that my subject was that

relevant.

The old adage “Be careful what you wish for” has never rang truer for me.

I teach American history. Using primary sources, we try to understand the events that shaped our nation. We particularly use primary sources created by average Americans to understand what massive global events were like for individuals living through them.

This Thursday, as it became clear schools were going to close for an extended period, I had to think of a meaningful assignment for my students while they’re home. And as a person who looks through primary sources

all the time, I realized we could do something — all of us, kids and adults alike — that has terrible relevance right now.

Right now, we are living through history — the kind that will be in the books. The rise of COVID-19, and our world’s fight to keep it from overwhelming us, may be the story of this generation, just like 9/11, Vietnam, World War II and the 1918 Pandemic Flu.

History has chosen us to live in this time. And 30 years from now, our descendants will want to know what it was like in



**Life,
death,
history**
Joe Boyle

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 Kroger ran out of TP. They’ll want to know how you learned about

what was going on. They’ll want to know who you knew who 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. We literally have

the opportunity to be part of history, right now, and create materials invaluable to our families and future historians.

So, dear readers, indulge me in treating you like my students. Your assignment, for as long as this emergency lasts, is to keep a daily journal about what your life is like during the outbreak. Here are my rules:

- Include the date at the top of each entry. Sign your name at the bottom.

- Just kind of note what happened each day. What was the news? Did a famous person get it? Someone you know? What was the weather like? What did you wish

you were doing that day? These are just a few ideas.

- Each entry will have no less than 150 words.
- I really recommend writing them down; not just doing them on the computer.

As one of my beloved high school teachers said every day, “be good to each other.” Keep your hands washed. Keep your distance from people. Stay in touch with me by email. I’m gonna miss seeing you guys every day. We will get through this... we will get through this because of who we are. And we have the chance to really contribute something to the historical record.