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Auszug aus:

The coronavirus

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The coronavirus – A literary approach

by Carmen Müntzenberg

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Seit Anfang des Jahres 2020 beschäftigt das Coronavirus die ganze Welt und beeinflusst zahlreiche Lebensbereiche. Durch die zeitweise Schließung der Schulen und die Veränderungen in der Unterrichtsgestaltung waren auch Schülerinnen und Schüler von den Auswirkungen des Virus betroffen. In dieser Unterrichtseinheit setzen sich die Lernenden mit dem Phänomen „Corona" auf vielfältige Weise auseinander. Der Fokus liegt hierbei auf der literarischen Annäherung an das Thema mithilfe von Gedichten, Bezügen zu Romanen und einer Kurzgeschichte. Dabei schulen die Lernenden insbesondere ihre Lese-, Schreib- und Medienkompetenzen.

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Competences and skills:

By working with the material, students enhance various competences and skills. As they are dealing with such a current topic as the coronavirus, students especially practise their **research skills**. They also train their **reading comprehension** competence by working with fictional as well as non-fictional texts. Furthermore, students develop their **writing skills** by writing summaries and producing creative texts. Students also engage in discussions and, thus, improve their **speaking skills**. By working with several songs, their **listening comprehension** competence is trained.

Overview:

List of abbreviations:

A Analysis **CT** Creative Task **D** Discussion/debate
G Group work **LC** Listening comprehension
M Mind map/visualising **P** Working with a picture/cartoon
R Research **RC** Reading comprehension **T** Working with a text
VI Working with a video **W** Writing

Topic	Material	Methods/Skills
1: Facts about the coronavirus	M1–M2	A, CT, M, R, T, W
2: How to cure patients	M3–M5	CT, D, G, P, R, RC, T, VI, W
3: Surveillance as a means of protection?	M6–M7	A, D, G, P, R, RC, T, W
4: What will a future with the coronavirus be like?	M8–M10	CT, P, RC, T, W
5: Viruses in science fiction and music	M11–M15	A, CT, D, LC, T

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Facts

When the coronavirus was first mentioned in the news in January 2020, nobody expected the virus to become a global threat. For several weeks, the world watched China without suspecting that each of us would somehow soon be personally affected by the spread of the virus. Coming in contact with the virus does not mean that we all suffer from an infection, but it does mean we all should follow the health authorities' advice to take precautions to slow or even prevent the disease. Lockdown has also affected all our lives. Although coronaviruses have been known by physicians before, this new form called COVID-19 poses new challenges to all doctors, especially as it is highly infectious and there is no medicine or vaccination in existence as yet to treat the population of the world.

In the past, coronaviruses have not been feared since their symptoms were usually mild and came along with typical cold symptoms. But things are different with COVID-19 which has killed about 700,000 people during the first 8 months of its existence. Every country of the world has been trying to fight the virus in its own way and many pharmacy companies are trying to develop drugs or vaccinations. Until either is found, everyone will have to stay alert and will have to follow certain rules of social distancing.

Notes on the material

This teaching unit offers a view on the corona pandemic from a new perspective. It reflects literary works that have dealt with the subject of viruses, and the challenges humans have had to face during such a crisis.

Topic 1 focuses on the facts of the coronavirus and informs students about past pandemics. It also includes poems which emphasise the effects of pandemics in the past, and at present time. Students are asked to do online researches on background information first. Then they are required to analyse poetry, and to include their own experiences during the lockdown by writing a blog entry.

Topic 2 is supposed to develop awareness of what is being done to find cures for the virus or at least to limit its spread. Students first answer a questionnaire to formulate their opinion. In a second step, they talk to their classmates about their results in order to find out which aspects they agree on and on which they have a different point of view. In a next step, they do an online research to determine what measures are being taken worldwide to fight the coronavirus. After they have discussed the effects of these actions, they read an excerpt from *The Child Garden* by Geoff Ryman and find out about measures taken in the novel. One option of how to deal with the spread of the virus has been a certificate of health that may be required by states; consequently, students find out about *The Scarlet Letter* and discuss whether such a certificate might be an option in the fight against the virus or represent a discriminatory tactic. As another option is keeping social distance, students work with cartoons that offer solutions to the problem of how to keep that social distance.

Topic 3 focuses on surveillance and how monitoring people might help to limit the spread of the virus. At first, students work with an ad presenting a tracking app, then they discuss the pros and cons of these means of tracking people constantly. At home, they read a short story called *The Perfect Match* which portrays a society in which everyone is permanently watched and guided by a tracking device. In school, students do a group discussion on whether the main character of the story should work for the company providing these tracking devices.

Topic 4 concentrates on notions of the world with or after the coronavirus. Pictures depict changes caused by the virus, e.g. the decline of air traffic or the behaviour during vacations. Students also read an excerpt from H.G. Well's *A Modern Utopia* which describes the world after a pandemic. To conclude the topic, students are required to write their own utopian description of a future society after the coronavirus.

Topic 5 focuses on viruses in science fiction and music. Students read reviews of the film *The Outbreak* and Stephen King's *The Stand* and provide analysis on them. Moreover, they are required to add background music to the content they read about. Afterwards, they move from one station to the next to listen (on their mobile phone or tablets) to music produced during the coronavirus and work on several tasks. Depending on their creativity, they finish the project with their own song writing about the coronavirus.

Topic 1: Facts about the coronavirus

M1   Poems about pandemics

Philip Freneau:[1] *Pestilence*[2] **(1793)**

Hot, dry winds forever blowing,

Dead men to the grave-yards going:

Constant hearses,

Funeral verses;

5   Oh! what plagues – there is no knowing!

Priests retreating from their pulpits![4] –

Some in hot, and some in cold fits

In bad temper,

Off they scamper,[5]

10   Leaving us – unhappy culprits![6]

Source: https://interestingliterature.com/2020/04/poems-plague-pandemic-lockdown/

[last access: 11/09/2020]

Shalom Freedman: *There Is So Much Else In Life Besides The Coronavirus* **(2020)**

There is so much else in life beside the coronavirus

Why do I give it so much time and thought?

Because it keeps me inside

Because it has changed my life and everyone's life

5   Because it threatens us

Because new cases are still coming in large numbers

Because unless we can stop it

We cannot go back to do the ordinary things we sometimes love to do

Still I don't want to think about so much anymore

10   And if I had better powers of escape, I might be happier

Let the coronavirus disappear as quickly as possible

And let us all kept back

To being fully alive.

Source: https://raabe.click/en_um_poem_shalom_freedman [last access: 07/08/2020]

Annotations

1 **Philip Morin Freneau**: 1752–1832; American poet, polemicist, sea captain and newspaper editor; has been dubbed "The Poet of the American Revolution"; this poem, however, is about the plague: specifically, the "pestilence" of yellow fever which killed 5,000 citizens of Philadelphia in 1793. – 2 **pestilence**: epidemic disease like the plague – 3 **hearse**: funeral carriage – 4 **pulpit**: place from which the priest usually speaks his sermon – 5 **to scamper**: to rush – 6 **culprits**: sinners

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