COVID-19:  
(represents the people whose pets were killed by the Chinese government during COVID-19)

While I was in quarantine, I lost my favorite family member.  
I hadn't had a chance to say goodbye to her, and she might be even wagging her tail at her  
charger before she was killed.  
She is always cute and friendly.  
She loves to wag her tail at people.  
She didn’t know what was happening.  
Before she was killed.  
Yes,  
even though I don't even have COVID-19,  
even though science says that pets don’t carry COVID,

she was killed.

Like a random object that just got thrown away.,  
She was killed.  
A family member who had been with me for several years was suddenly killed by the  
government.  
Just because she "may have had the slim potential to carry the virus. "

Yan

(uses the lowercase format of Karen Hesse)

stuck at home  
blinds closed shrouded in darkness.  
the bright lights hitting my face  
as a zoom meeting is in progress  
no one there beside the teacher’s face  
and the innumerable amount of blacked out ones.  
no friends to talk to  
just the deafening silence of muted mics.  
what the heck am i doing here.  
this all felt good in the beginning  
but now i am by myself  
in my room.  
no friends,  
all alone.

Franklin

Friday morning felt dark and warm, like a never-ending summer just waiting to turn into  
the cold autumn weather.  
I had woken up with no plan or explanation as to why I had even woken up. The days  
keep getting longer.  
My mental capacity can no longer take it. This is the third month on lockdown, and it  
feels like it can go on forever. At first, it seemed like a dream. Just staying inside, playing  
video games, eating McDonalds, and being the laziest I can be.  
Now I want it to end. Oh, how I’ve never been so wrong. You would think Fridays would  
be fun, but I was wrong.

Stefano

My experience during Covid 19 was painful to say the least.  
I lost the experience of graduating high school and transitioning into college.  
However, the most painful was losing so many of my family members and I had to watch  
as my momma lived in pain with the death of her loved ones while she was sick with the illness  
as well and this was before the vaccine.

I was afraid my mom was going to become one of the numbers in the death statistics.  
Thankfully, my mom slowly got better and we learned how to move forward.  
I gained many things because of Covid 19.  
I gained knowledge on how to take care of myself and my loved ones.  
I raised a brand new puppy and trained her well.  
I even learned how to drive a car which gave me so much anxiety at first.  
Although painful, Covid 19 taught me to be stronger than I was when the world first shut  
down.

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down.

Daniela

How can we be so foolish? Such stupid sheep.

Follow the science, but only our science.

Do not gather in numbers, but our gatherings are okay.

You are not free to speak your mind, only read and hear what we tell you to think.

There is no longer objective truth, there is my truth, your truth, and our truth.

What is the truth when questions asked are silenced, discredited, or attacked?

Yet we are not allowed to discredit them, or we are enemies of the state, domestic terrorists,

traitors working against the common good.

The poison injected into the psyche of the people is far worse than any injected in the arm.

How do we so easily surrender control, when is the greater good bad for the common good?

Good for who exactly?

We want wants best for you they say, but how dare you say that?

Where is the evidence, where are the studies, can I please just see the data?

How much more will we give up in the name of safety and security?

Do we not see the slippery slope, how easily the pendulum can swing the other way? Is this

what my brothers and sisters-in-arms died for? A people who are the first of their kind in this

new form of slavery. What comes next? The next big crisis? Is it real or manufactured?

How many more lies can be spoon-fed to people?

Where can we put our trust...is such trust an illusion?

As I look at all the people around me, getting their boosters, staying indoors, and obeying, I

realize, I am more alone now than I have ever been in my life.

Justin

Online classes as a chemistry major were a disaster, covid hit the area I lived in towards the

middle of the spring semester and we were forced to move everything online. My lab classes

became strange because we couldn’t physically do the experiment, try making observations of

test tubes from low quality images... yeah no my eyes hurt from zooming into pixels trying to

see what’s going on, but it helped me realized that maybe chemistry wasn’t cut out for me to

begin with. The pandemic forced me to stay inside with my thoughts wandering and heck as a

homebody staying at home was awesome, but I got a little too used to it that I failed to stay

connected with friends. Welp there goes my social life but it's fine, things will go back to normal

once the pandemic gets better. Hahaha yeah no I’ve been affected by the pandemic in the way that

it’s made my social anxiety far worse, and I don’t think I’ll ever go back to being the outgoing

person I once forced myself to be. This is fine, right?

Victoria

Why is this complicated?

I can finally see my dad again and take care of him like I was supposed to.

But she's making it hard on me.

She tried to sit me down and act like she knew more about what was happening.

When we know the same thing, or really, I know more than she knows.

She's ignorant that I am my father's legal caretaker. He's been alone for a while now and I can

finally see him now.

I rush to him every day to see him. I didn't realize this would be the last few times I'll ever see

him, before he leaves to someone who can really take care of him.

Blast her for making it harder on me. She doesn't care about anything but herself.

Soon, I won't know then, but soon, I'll leave her house to go back home to him. I miss him.

I'm grateful for the time I was stuck in that woman's house. Because it showed me, I missed my

dad more.

Why bother starting a family with her when she has no respect for my father.

Alice

I ate a potato chip. And then another. And another. Until the bag was empty.

It didn’t matter! I was going to work out and have a banging body because surely, this pandemic

is going to end soon and I want to make sure I look prim and proper when my high school senior

friends greet me with their new hairstyles, shaved brows, and perhaps a new bull piercing. But a

month passed. Then another. And then I was just a few days from graduating this virtual prison

called Zoom.

I kept rotting in my bed for hours on end, watching the most mindless TikTok videos

until I craved another bag of chips. Another month passed and I began to be addicted to online

games. My eyes were glued to a screen and my fingers were tapping the keyboard so extensively

that I felt my fingers sweat and lose weight. This was my COVID-19 workout. Until I knew it, I

never saw my friends again. Just maybe their names on a rectangular black box through Zoom.

At least put a profile picture.

Adora

(uses the lowercase style of Karen Hesse)

i remember the day that we heard about the virus

during one of those CNN 10 youtube clips

my Gov and Econ teacher played for us at the beginning of every class.

i remember the day that they told us we were taking 2 weeks off of school

and i was walking around during my free period

listening to the plans other seniors were making

of going to the snow during the break.

our break got extended and my worries

were how we were going to finish up the yearbook

as i was an editor that had no more events to edit about

and no more students to interview.

and no more events to go to;

not even graduation,

that ended up being like a takeout drive through

when we were handed our diploma

before driving off.

it didn’t start to hit me

until the people close to me found themselves stuck in other countries,

unable to get back to their families;

not until the death rate was skyrocketing

and my neighbors were worried sick

about their grandparents,

or their baby brother,

fresh into the world.

even when other friends of mine,

across the state for college,

were finally getting back out there

trying to get out of their depressed state that COVID had manifested,

i stayed in my home,

day in and day out,

stressed about the spike returning.

Alexa

My birthday was on Thursday, and the world shut down on Friday

Was this my fault?

Not sure, I wish I would’ve wished for something better instead

As time passed, I realized this wasn’t something with a clear end

COVID-19 caused everyone to think deeper and reflect on what mattered most to them

At that moment it was clear to me, family and faith

I missed seeing my grandparents, and I missed being in the house of the Lord

I couldn't be with my grandmother in her final moments

We had to say good-bye to her virtually as nurses held the phone towards her

Tubes in her mouth and the sound of beeping machines made it hard to hear her faint voice

I couldn't bare this heavy pain

Yet in that same moment I felt God near

When everything else felt far away his presence was with me

I could feel peace through all the pain

And joy in the midst of this grief

Veronica

(uses the lowercase style of Karen Hesse)

i remember the moment so clearly

being told that school

would be going on spring break early

i had been in my fifth period class

my friend telling me about

the birthday letter i had written

for him

as our "spring break" dwindled

we soon realized school

was a thing of the past

and our screens were all we had

it was riveting to be able to stay home

but i was a child

and all i cared about were my friends

who i talked to everyday, all day

i could see the stress it had

on both my parents

but i didn't know how to mention it

so i pretended like i never saw it

to begin with

as the year dragged on

(the years)

i felt suffocated by the new learning

unable to focus, and unable to retain

any info without being present

slowly, it began to sink in

how much i was losing

i never got a prom.

and i hardly got a graduation.

from today, looking back,

i realize there was much i gained

i gained new friends.

i gained people whom i loved.

and i made memories

i will continue to cherish

and are colored in love.

Hannah

(perspective of Business owners)

At the first floor

I stay with my wife

Waiting for the door to hit the bell and make a sound sweeter than honey.

*Please, let there be motion*, my wife keeps repeating day after day.

The flow of food and money stood still at every eatery

On stand-by awaiting orders,

Desperately like a dog on a leash.

Food beginning to rot

The plates gathering dust

And the calcium buildup covering the faucets,

The restaurant began to feel like a graveyard

With me and my wife

Wondering when, and if, our turn

To rot

Will come.

The masks meant to protect us

Sealed our mouths

Both to protest and to eat.

Eros

2 months have passed by

2 weeks would have been a luxury.

what a different world we live in now,

Where the litter on the ground consists of gloves and masks.

My mom works in the hospital,

She doesn’t get a break.

She stresses at work, she stresses at home.

It’s a bad day every day as the numbers rise,

But there’s a glimpse of hope with talks of a vaccine.

I sit, I wait, I worry, I sanitize.

My family is divided,

And even going to see my dad and brother is a risk.

I grow impatient, only to become complacent in this new reality.

I think about how life will be when this is all over

Will it ever be over?

My mom is a chronic worrier

she wears her paranoia like a badge,

And she has passed down that badge to me.

Kristen

It was funny how me and the girl became friends.

We both didn’t know much about each other

until we were both forced to spend all our time together.

After all, we were both only 17 turning 18

and had virtually no clue about anything.

People said this pandemic

would diminish our ability to harness

social relationships,

and while that was true,

I didn’t know of a more perfect time

to get to know the girl in the mirror.

Ashley

I am working towards light and away from this darkness.

I know the more time spent outside the classroom,

the harder it would be to return.

Working at Eric’s Pizza was not a job anyone truly wanted,

but there was money to be made and tuition to be paid.

The dim and flickering lights in the kitchen

make me feel as if I must choose

between living in light or in the dark.

No tips from dine-in equals

no new clothes for the new school year.

Summer had always been a shiny,

And a bright time to look forward to.

Now I wait for days to go by quicker,

begging for the end, I so desperately wanted to start.

Stockton’s crime is worsening daily,

and friends are turning quickly into foes.

My home had already been a wasteland full of nothing

but different options of violence to turn to

With everyone trapped, the violence erupts in even greater amounts

Forcing more shadows in the night

The days without sun and days without bright positivity will end soon

The pandemic will leave, and so will I.

I will say goodbye to Erics Pizza.

I will say goodbye to Stockton.

I will say goodbye to closed doors.

As my future begins to shine

brighter and brighter,

the light in Stockton keeps dimming

darker and darker.

San Jose will be my sun.

Jaden

I remember my brain before the chaos.

Free and imaginative and wild.

Then the chaos erupted.

And my brain wasn’t as free.

It wasn’t as wild.

It wasn’t the same kind of imaginative it used to be.

The chaos abated.

But my brain has stood. Just stood.

Evelyn

I did not know what to do. Should I buy toilet paper like everyone else? Should I wear a mask

everywhere I go? Should I be scared of dying? Suddenly, many people died. My family, who

was in a different country, started to share only bad news. Family members were dying, people

we know and we do not know were dying. What to do? I decided not to have any contact with

people and only work online; yet, that was not enough money to live so I spent most of my

savings during the pandemic. When I got sick, it was very scary and painful; luckily, I did not

have to go to the hospital. Covid 19 took away so many wonderful people that it is sad to even

remember this episode of life. What did it teach me? To value our everyday, going to the

supermarket without a mask, seeing a friend for coffee, hugging the people I love, traveling to

my country without being afraid of dying; Covid taught me that one can love friends but being by yourself can be also wonderful and productive. Sadly, Covid has also taught me that people, after the pandemic, think more about not seeing friends and being isolated for two years than about all the people that died and did not deserve that end.

Carola

Uncertainty came and persisted

We were told not to gather

To stay

Inside

Away from friends and family

Outside we are to be six feet apart

From everyone

and

Cover our mouths

Silas

A little lonely, but not too bad  
My only concern was for my older sister who was immunocompromised.  
I can’t image my life without my sister.  
Even the thought of it scares me now.  
For someone who has spent their whole life worrying about me, I now found myself worrying  
about her.  
Don’t forget to wear you mask! Don’t forget to sanitize your hands! I would tell her.  
Those ridiculous life size plastic bubbles people were wearing at the start of pandemic didn’t  
seem so bad now.  
But what kind of life is that?  
A life behind a mask?  
A life without seeing my sister?  
I guess that’s just our lives now.

Zuleica

I remember planning my summer out ahead of time. There was excitement for multiple

occasions everywhere. My sister was going to graduate, my boyfriend was accepted to work at

Stanford hospital, and I was working up the courage to finally tell my mom and dad that I had

intentions of moving out after I had enough money. I was also invited for a family vacation with

my boyfriend’s family which elated me. So much happiness was going to spread!

The only thing that spread that summer was my time watching show after show after

show. The couch consumed me and absorbed all of my thoughts and feelings. It’s no wonder we

later got rid of that couch. I would watch my sister stress over her classes being moved online.

From my spot on the couch, I could watch her move restlessly as she developed insomnia from

her hectic school schedule and stress of losing sleep. I remember calling my boyfriend from that

couch, hearing his voice break as he told me he was let go from his new coveted job. It took him

months to come to terms with the depression that latched onto him and even longer to overcome

it. From my phone I watched my savings drain away. There was barely enough money left in my

account for my rent, let alone a deposit for a new apartment.

It made me wonder why this would be happening to us. We promised this was the year it

was supposed to get better. We were supposed to get better. So why did we feel worse? How

could being stuck in a room with people I couldn’t wait to leave make me feel hopeful for what

was to come? When would it end? Would it ever end? Even now I wonder how long the effects

of the Pandemic will last.

I still give sideways glances to the person that coughs at the corner of the room. There

has to be a hand sanitizer in each one of my bags when I go out. I take my vaccinations more

seriously out of fear of catching anything. But on the bright side, I learned how to manage my

money better

Thalia

“Twilight Zone” – that’s the phrase that

for me marked specifically those early

months after March 9, 2020

I see myself at 5:30 a.m. during Spring Break

--in the parking lot at Safeway

in line Who would've thought that a reclusive lifestyle would be forced upon everyone in the world at

barely a moment's notice. It feels as though my life has been halted, and a year is going straight

down the with other “senior citizens” for

the rationed items like toilet paper and Clorox wipes.

I remember loneliness… loneliness of only

being at Mass via livestream

loneliness because my best friend was dying of

lung cancer – he and others were in the “bubble”

inside the larger bubble of isolation

I was so relieved to get vaccinated – the

first time in February 2021

But so many were “anti-vax”

so many criticized the CDC, refusing to

help stop the spread….

People have little choice facing cancer and

other terminal diseases

Those who refused vaccinations and died,

simply made me angry and sad.

Dr. Warner

drain. Am I expected to be attentive in class when outside life has been temporarily

forced inside? "How am I supposed to focus when all of my distractions are at the tips of my

fingers?" I thought. I had suddenly been sentenced to solitary confinement but should it be this

fun? No, probably not, but hell, what could I do? The only worry on my mind was, "Damn, when

can I go out and see my friends"? I knew people were dying, I knew the world was in a state of

emergency but, this emergency hadn't personally affected me. Then it hit me. I still remember the

feeling of dread as my father weakly and feebly muttered through the phone "I don't think I'm

gonna make it". I wanted to shrivel up and immediately buy a ticket to fly over to New Jersey

just to see him. I was lucky that I didn't have to attend a funeral. Nothing like a little near death

experience to get me to change my perspective.

Patrick

Hearing that my mom was sick in bed and not being able to function properly due to a massive

migraine was disheartening to hear. My mom has always been a tough woman, one that would

always say, “It's just a cold, and I have too much to do today.” A week goes by and my father

starts to feel similar symptoms as well, feeling lightheaded and nausea, waking up with a

headache and wanting to instantly go back to sleep due to the light being too painful for his eyes.

They both tested for COVID-19 and to our surprise they had the virus. The thoughts ran through

my head: How could they have gotten it? We’ve been careful and cautious this whole time? We

even had just gotten our first vaccination shot a week prior. My younger sister and I did the best

we could, cleaning around the house, making breakfast and dinner, lysoling everything, and

always remembering to put hand sanitizer on before and after touching anything. I felt as though

the siblings had ruled over the house. Until my little sister started feeling a headache as well, and

she developed a cough.

I felt guilty. I didn’t have these ill feeling symptoms, the

lightheadedness, the headaches or even a cough. I felt perfectly fine and yet my family was

suffering with these symptoms that held them captive to their beds. I decided to take charge and

be the one to take care of them all. Walking back and forth from the hallway to the kitchen, to

make breakfast, lunch, and dinner for my family. I felt motivated and honored that I could help

them, yet I also felt the reality of COVID-19, how this deadly virus had killed many others and

the rarity of being asymptomatic.

Cynthia

My Graduation: Freshman year, I wondered what my graduation would look like.

Celebrating with all the friends and acquaintances I’ve sat alongside everyday

over my four years? Now in my senior year I do, it is a Frankenstein of a

graduation. Torn apart by the dastardly hands of Covid, and stitched together by

the desperate school administration. March 13th, 2020 that was the last time I ever

saw those I knew for years. If I knew that’d be the last time, that day would’ve

been very different. Why? The finale for my four years of high school was akin to a

busy McDonald’s drive through. I was robbed, class of 2020, a cursed bunch.

Ken

I know we were supposed to be isolated from the outside world

But the silence on the 880 called my name

I know we were supposed to be kept apart

But I missed my youth

Driving to SF from Oakland when the whole world was shut away

Life looked cinematic

Life felt cinematic

The city of fog became the backdrop to my movie

Driving north on 880, it was really me against the world

under the steel beam of the Bay Bridge,

I waved at Karl

I waved towards my friends across the bay

I waved away normalcy

Nam

I sit here sniffling with my head hurting.

Not being able to go out into nature can be

very isolating.

I lay in bed wishing I wouldn't feel like death.

Hoping and praying this will be over soon

but alas, I stay sick.

Isolated from the world with nothing to do;

why must the world feel cruel like this?

When can I go out again? I don’t even know.

It was such a privilege to go out and have fun.

A privilege we did not even know was a privilege.

How I wish things went back to how they were. How

were things back then?

I don’t even remember.

Alisha

I didn’t think much of it when I lost my sense of taste.

It wasn’t until my whole body began to ache

That I thought of getting tested.  
I was HOT, and then cold,  
and again hot, and cold.  
The actual ‘sick’ part of it only lasted about 3 days  
3 days of pain,  
taking the blanket on and off dozens of times,  
but never missing virtual programming;  
the kids always lifted my spirit.  
2 weeks of staying in

bored as hell

but that’s what Netflix, Hulu, YouTube, and Movies are for.

2 weeks of wasting hella money on Doordash

2 weeks of eating healthy food because I couldn’t taste it anyway.

I loved being lazy

but not lonely

Eli