



The future will find us looking back on the pandemic of 2020. Articles in newspapers will be archived. Children will grow up with school cancellation tales. Each individual will have a similar, yet a distinctive story about the coronavirus. The days of COVID-19 will be transcribed in history books.

I grew up inside of books. Escaping between the front and the back covers brought solace from external and internal chaos. Traveling faraway, but still staying home was possible within the pages. Each person is a story and each person has a story. Whether fiction or nonfiction, stories R US.

From the beginning of the beginning, humans lived and then told narratives about tragedy and triumph. Themes of birthing and themes of dying - foundation of humanity. Themes of relationship and religion. Themes of love and lust, faithfulness and infidelity, fulfilled hearts and broken hearts. Themes of what was lost and themes of what was found. Good vs. evil. Right vs wrong. Rich vs poor. Tales of acceptance and tales of betrayal. Anecdotes about sex, kids, money; three salient aspects of daily living - full of drama. And chronicles of plagues, epidemics, and pandemics. Science fiction thrillers about diseases that devour humankind get made into movies. Fantasy, reality, or both?

Did the high school years of reading Harlequin Romance paperbacks insult my cerebral cortex? Probably. A masculine hero always rescued the fragile female. Girls were often portrayed as

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Written by By Melissa Martin Guest Columnist
Friday, 17 April 2020 04:57

feisty, frigid, or frumpy. Love was the sickness in these mindless books - but also the medicine.

I grew up inside of an ink pen. With millions of words dancing inside my head, I tried to empty them out onto paper. Swirling-twirling words full of adolescent angst. Using poetry to alleviate the confusion and problems brought on by puberty. Journaling the day's events into a pastel-colored diary with a key. Hiding it away from prying eyes of others. Years of writing for personal turned into writing for public. Through phases, stages, and ages, a writer writes. Because stories R US.

"Like many others who turned into writers, I disappeared into books when I was very young, disappeared into them like someone running into the woods. What surprised and still surprises me is that there was another side to the forest of stories and the solitude, that I came out that other side and met people there. Writers are solitaires by vocation and necessity. I sometimes think the test is not so much talent, which is not as rare as people think, but purpose or vocation, which manifests in part as the ability to endure a lot of solitude and keep working. Before writers are writers they are readers, living in books, through books, in the lives of others that are also the heads of others, in that act that is so intimate and yet so alone." – Rebecca Solnit, in her essay *Flight*, from *The Faraway Nearby*

A recent article in Forbes is telling how to author our story. "COVID-19 has many of us hunkering down in place and social distancing. If you are a writer, and have all your survival needs met (food, shelter, support), then it might be the opportunity you need to get your story written. Whether it is a memoir (and boy will some be coming out about these times), or a novel, as an author and widely published writing coach who teaches for Writer's Digest and NYU, I can share some tips on how to make the most of your story." www.forbes.com.

Writer Garrett Graff is seeking stories from a wide range of US residents to compile a portrait of a nation in the grip of Covid-19. "We are living history every hour right now, for better or for worse, with little sense of which it is...My goal with this oral history project will be to capture the messiness and uncertainty as this pandemic unfolds." Read more www.wired.com and email your stories to covid@wired.com.

One does not need to be a professional writer to compose her/his own account of the pandemic of 2020. Just follow the basics. A story needs to have a narrative arc (a beginning, middle, and end). The best character arc reveals an inner transformation, not just a change in circumstances.

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You are part of the pandemic story and so am I. Write your own story and send it to your newspaper's Letter to the Editor. Stories R US.

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