



“Welcome to Covidia!”

A Puppet Show for Talking to Elementary School-Aged Kids About Dealing with Online School and other Challenges of the 2020 Pandemic

Discussion Guide & Suggested Companion Activities

The 5 episodes of this puppet show are designed to be used as a teaching tool in elementary school classrooms, or in smaller group settings where that is feasible. Although each of the episodes may very well provide some insights and encouragement to students merely upon being viewed, our greater hope is that each of the videos can be used as a catalyst for the students to open up and share with one another and the adults in the room about their own challenges and frustrations with life and school in a world of pandemic-related restrictions.

This Discussion Guide contains *suggested* questions that a teacher, guidance counselor, social worker, or other helping professional can use to engage the students about what they saw and maybe learned or were encouraged to think about in each episode. We would encourage the use of these questions as a *starting place*, but also want helping professionals to feel the freedom to depart from these questions, or substitute their own. What is most important is meeting the students wherever they are—whether it is similar to or different than what The Kids in the puppet show are experiencing. Whatever reaction they have can become a great jumping off place for a good discussion, so we’d encourage the use of active listening skills to help guide the conversation go wherever their little hearts and minds want to go.

We would suggest asking open ended questions first, to assess what the kids remembered or liked or even disliked about each episode. Once they are engaged and talking or laughing about the things the characters did or said, we hope that will pave the way for a more purposeful conversation what the students themselves are feeling and experiencing. Our intent in developing the program is that the drawing out of their expression of feelings and thoughts should be prioritized over and above the communication or imparting of any specific guidance or wisdom.

Following the discussion guide is a list of **Suggested Companion Activities** to consider using as well, if time and resources are available. We’d love to know which of these resources you find most helpful, so please send us any suggestions for additional activities, or any other responses or feedback on the discussion guide as a whole, by email to chris@reeltimecle.com.



Discussion Guide for Episode 1: “Everything is Changing”

1. What has happened to the kids in the video (Marcia, David, and Tina, or “the Kids”) that has changed their lives?
2. What kinds of things do The Kids have to do differently now? How are they feeling about these changes?
3. What is hard about not being able to play with your friends in person? How is talking with them and “seeing” them on a webcam or computer the same, and how is it different? Which way would you choose, if you had the choice?
4. It sounds like Tina sometimes likes to make silly rhymes when she is nervous or frustrated? What is something that you do when you are nervous or frustrated?
5. What kinds of changes have you experienced because of the Covid-19 virus? What kinds of new rules do you have to follow now because of the virus?
6. How are you feeling about all of these changes and new rules?



Discussion Guide for Episode 2: “Special Guests in Social Studies” --Whom Should We Listen To?

1. What do you think about the special guests who visit The Kids in Social Studies class?
 - a. What are some ways they are they the same.
 - b. Name some ways that they are different.
2. What are some helpful things that the Kids learned from Dr. Locklear?
 - a. About masks?
 - b. About social distancing?
 - c. About handwashing?
3. What is hard about following the rules that Dr. Locklear describes? Why is it important to do these things, even though it is hard?
4. What do you think about the Wizard? Would you like to make the Covid-19 virus go away with a magic spell? Do you think that is possible?
5. Are you sometimes told different things by different people? How do you decide which of them is right?
6. How do you feel when adults are telling you lots of rules to follow, and telling you how important they are, but then you see other adults or other kids not following the rules?
7. Do you have someone to talk to when you don't understand what is going on? If your parents or other relatives are not available sometimes, who else can you talk to?



Discussion Guide for Episode 3: Dealing with Loneliness and Isolation

1. As this scene starts, what is Tina sad about?
2. What kinds of things have you not been able to do because of Covid-19 rules (i.e. birthday parties, family celebrations, dance class, hugging etc.). How do you feel about missing out on those things?
3. Is it hard to be by yourself? Who are the people that you miss spending time with the most?
4. David says he like spending time by himself. Is there anybody here who likes spending time by yourself? What do you like to do when you are by yourself?
5. What does Mr. Stendenko say are some things you can do when you are feeling alone or bored? Which of them can you stil do now, even with the Covid-19 rules and stuff?
6. What are some things that you or your family have been doing to try to have some fun during these crazy times?
7. What are your favorite things to do, with your friends or your family? When do you do them?
8. Do you think it would be helpful to make a list of fun things you can do? Let's start a list now...!



Discussion Guide for Episode 4: Dealing with Stress

1. What kinds of things are hard or frustrating for The Kids? Do any of them sound familiar to you?
2. Do you ever get angry or frustrated about your schoolwork, Zoom, computers, or Covid-19? Or things that your family or friends do or don't do?
3. Marcia said that one day she got so frustrated that she mashed all the keys on her keyboard at the same time, and it messed up her computer. What do you usually do when you are angry or frustrated? ****Name some good things, and maybe even some not-so-good things (*because all of us sometimes do things that make things worse!*)**
4. Does your brain ever get “scramble-dy” like David’s? What other ways would you describe being stressed out?
5. Does anybody sometimes get distracted, like Tina?
6. What does Tina’s grandma like to do when she is feeling frustrated? What were some of her other suggestions for ways to help yourself feel better on a bad day?
7. What kinds of things help you feel better when you are having a bad day? (It can be things you do, or think about, ore remember, or listen to, or read, or say out loud to yourself.)
8. Who do you talk to when you are having a bad day?
9. What pets do you have at home? Or in your neighborhood? Does anyone have a peacock?
10. What are some things that make you happy?
11. Name three things that you are thankful for, and write them down.



Discussion Guide for Episode 5: Anxiety, Fear, Grief & Loss

1. Mr. Stedenko seems to understand what it is like to be stressed out and worried. What does he say is hard for him?
2. Do your teachers (or other adults) sometimes seem to be having a hard time, too? How can you tell?
3. How do you feel when adults like your parents or older brother or sister are stressed? What do you do when that happens?
4. What kinds of things does Mr. Stedenko say are helpful when he is feeling frustrated?
5. Here comes that crazy Wizard again! What do the kids tell him that they have learned about how to help themselves feel better when they are stressed, or alone?
6. Have you ever tried “deep breathing” when you are stressed, worried or afraid? Let’s try the 4 x 4 x 4 breathing that Mr. S. taught the Kids.
7. Do you worry that someone you love will get Covid? What do you do that helps you feel less worried?
8. Have you felt sad during Covid? What helps you when you are sad?
9. Who do you talk to when you are sad?
10. What was your favorite thing about the “Welcome to Covidia!” puppet show?
11. What is just ONE THING that you learned and might try to do next time you feel sad, or lonely, or frustrated?



SUGGESTED COMPANION ACTIVITIES (to go with any episode)

- Have the students draw a picture about what they saw or heard in the puppet show.
- Have the students make up their own “handwashing songs,” like Dr. Locklear’s, either themselves or in small groups
- Have the students act out parts of the puppet show (just from what they remember). (They can do this with puppets, if you have them available, or just act them out, like a skit.)
- Have students draw a picture of themselves going to school online (if they are doing that).
- Have students draw a picture of themselves when they are any of the following: sad, afraid, lonely, nervous, or angry/frustrated. Then have them draw a picture of something that helps them feel more happy or grateful at the same time.
- Have students make a list of all the things that make them happy or grateful—either on lists to hang in the room, or privately, in their own journals or notebooks
- If you have the facilities and the resources (and can do so safely!) have the students all bake something simple together. Talk about the stirring and the measuring and the smells as you lead them through the various steps.
- Try some deep breathing, or very simple stretching together
- Have students each write a letter or an email to one of the characters in the puppet show, either telling them thanks, or saying what they liked, or telling them how the student has felt similar or relates to what they said. Or write the wizard and tell him something he might want to think about or learn. *(And feel free to mail or email them to us, and we will try to reply, in character! 😊)*
- Have the students work together (as a class or in small groups) to make up a poem, a song, or even a rap that helps them remember the helpful things to do to take care of themselves and deal with their difficult emotions (And if you happen to record them doing anything like this and want to, email us a link or a copy: chris@reeltimecle.com)