

An Old Enemy Becomes New - World War I's Deadliest Killer

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Group Exhibit

Student Composed Words: 500

Process Paper: 483 words

Process Paper

We decided to undertake an exhibit about the Influenza Pandemic of 1918 based on our interest in medical topics. This influenza killed millions before doctors could explore a cure; moreover, it ravaged the world partly because of World War I, creating a lethal pandemic.

Our research started with books from the library, which helped us with a basic understanding of the event. The Vermont Historical Society and Stanford University websites explained how the government reacted to the large number of deaths caused by influenza. Helpful primary sources included three letters from that era, an interview, newspapers, articles, and one diary entry, which revealed to us how people felt, the knowledge the medical community had, and what measures were taken to control the spread of influenza in 1918, 1919, and 1920.

After looking at pictures of previous History Day exhibits, we made multiple layout plans. Later, we secured our board and bought necessary materials from Officemax and Michaels and then pasted black paper to use as the background color. Having made a decision on the sizes of our pictures and text boxes, we proceeded to back them. Finally, we laid everything out on the real board and then used painter's tape to attach the pieces to the board.

Following the state competition, we improved the exhibit based on the judges' comments, teachers' feedback, and additional research. We changed our color schemes, added and removed pictures, and rearranged the board multiple times until we had a more fluid story, which meant we had to reback everything and recut all the

new pictures and text. Using new resources we had located, we also created a short video and display of the virus for our board.

The Influenza Pandemic of 1918 fits the theme in multiple ways. The mutated virus that was encountered in 1918 was completely new to civilization. Although scientists and researchers explored a cure for the new virus, they weren't able to produce one that was effective. Because of this, the exchange of the killer flu had a more devastating impact on society.

The exchange was related to the virus's contagion. During the war, filthy living conditions in war zones, the transportation of infected soldiers overseas, and the booming trade business helped influenza spread faster. Society was greatly affected as public places closed and other useless preventive measures were taken.

The encounter with this influenza virus affected humanity worldwide, physically and emotionally, even after all cases disappeared. Children were left without parents, because the 1918 flu affected and killed mostly young adults. Many families were reduced to poverty and acute distress. Widespread havoc reached all parts of the U.S., poor and wealthy. Also, it educated the world about personal hygiene. As a result, new laws were put into place, and we have better sanitation, though many scientists think that if a similar disaster were to occur, it would still be a great threat.