Back in 1918 when the world endured our last pandemic, Portland struggled with the same things we're struggling with in 2020. The similarities are striking: human suffering and loss, school closures, dire economic impacts, isolation, protests about shutdowns and masks, misinformation, uncertainty.

Just as now, kids back then helped get the word out to parents and their communities about ways to fight the pandemic. Today the phrase “Stay home, Stay Safe” sums up what the newspaper was trying to convey at the peak of the 1918-1919 influenza outbreak.

We like that line: *Sleep well. Eat Well. Play well. And Don’t worry!*
Activity Suggestions & Curiosities

1. An artist we know is making sketches every day of the things she sees, hears and thinks related to the experience of the pandemic. What drawings, art music or other expressions capture your experience of these weeks of shutdown? It’s not too late to follow your creativity where it leads you.

2. Indulge your inner photographer by capturing photos of things unusual to these times, like tethered horses wearing masks! We’ve been photographing “closed” signs on local businesses, which tell a poignant and often poetic tale.

3. Have you noticed what the pandemic sounds like (or doesn’t sound like)? The 7:00 p.m. cheer is consistently amazing. Are you participating? What’s that been like? Is your dog as scared as ours is each night at 7:00?


5. Assemble a time capsule to contain a few things you make, write, find or clip to pass along to the future. Label it and tuck it away for another day, maybe in a good hiding place in your house.

6. Here’s a great lecture from OSU History Professor Christopher McKnight Nichols about what we can learn from the pandemic of 1918-1919:
   https://ohs.org/events/what-we-can-learn-from-the-influenza-pandemic.cfm

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Home History School is a collection of activities for kids of all ages to experience and connect with neighborhood history in Northeast Portland, Oregon. This is one of a dozen “lesson plans” on a variety of local topics. The collection—which we’re adding to each Monday this spring—can be found at www.alamedahistory.org. For more information or other ideas, contact Doug Decker, doug@alamedahistory.org / 503-901-5510.