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## Growing and Learning as a Student, Teacher, and Artist

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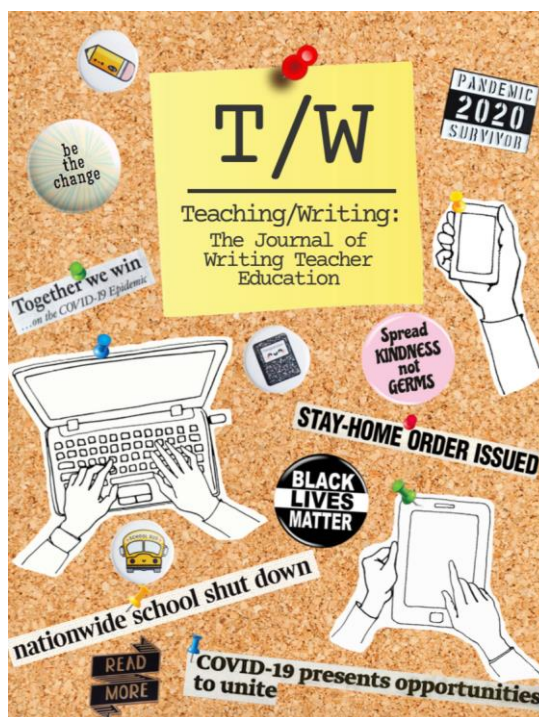
The first book, which I drew the most quotes from, is Albert Camus' 1947 work entitled *The Plague*. My introduction to Camus came from my twelfth grade College English class; we read *The Myth of Sisyphus* followed by *The Stranger* as we were learning the concepts of

existentialism and absurdity. Ever since then, perhaps due to the coupling of two of my favorite subjects, mythology and true crime, along with an instant love for Camus' writing style, I haven't been able to stop putting his books in my shopping cart. Despite the overall weight of the fear, tragedy, and destruction described in Camus' *The Plague*, I was able to find words and phrases to represent the resilience of the human race in the face of global illness, such as "people linked together by friendship," "hope in a vaccine," and "hope in a better future." Not only was I able to weed out relevant words and phrases to the pandemic, but I found several quotes to reflect the issues of social injustice in our country at the moment, such as "we've got to make a stand," "protesting," "persistence," as well as a phrase that I feel is the most powerful: "short of breath."

After finishing *The Plague*, I needed to explore disease outbreak from a different point of view, which led me to Michael Crichton's 1969 science fiction novel, *The Andromeda Strain*. Most of the background text is from this book, as I have always been intrigued by the physiology of the human body and Crichton goes into detail about the relationships between cells, enzymes, antibodies, etc. when a deadly, and in this case extraterrestrial, entity is introduced to the body. Despite using quotes from *Plague* more often than *Andromeda*, I titled this design *Strain* because not only does it allude to a strain of virus, but also the strain we face in our lives, especially as teachers or aspiring ones during this time.

As for the second design I've created, *Visions*, I was inspired by the concept of a vision board. Influenced by my constant use of Pinterest, my experience as an amateur artist, and my habit of collecting little things I draw inspiration from, I wanted to create a digital representation of what one of these boards might look like as we adapt to changes in our everyday life brought on by the health crisis and the exposure of systemic injustices in our society. I clipped quotes from newspapers and pinned them as one might do with a physical corkboard, and added some buttons for a little old-fashioned flair.

I didn't want the newspaper headlines to simply reflect what's happening, so I chose two additional ones specifically to convey the strength and comfort we can find within each other and the community during our shared COVID experience, even from six feet away. I wanted *Visions* to have a more disconnected feeling; the pins and cutouts do not overlap, and there are no students present in this design — just devices. The remaining space on the corkboard symbolizes the opportunity for growth we've all been given in this quarantine situation. There's room to adjust our goals



and how we reach them, to find new inspirations and resources, and to simply create a more positive vision of the future in a time where it feels like there's just too much standing in the way of change.

Growing up, I was fortunate enough to return home after school to a loving family and a safe space where all of my needs were taken care of; not every student has this privilege, and the COVID-19 pandemic has opened my eyes to the value of classroom time, teacher-student interactions, extracurriculars, providing meals, and all of the other things our schools do to give students the things they need and aren't getting at home. I'm inspired by the amazing people in the education community who continue to give so much their time, their love, and their care to their students despite the challenges that Coronavirus has presented them with. I can't wait to join them and continue to learn from them in a classroom of my own one day, even if it's a virtual one.