

The COVID-19 pandemic

2020 | Grade 8 · Analyze & connect

Teacher note: this topic includes loss, violence, discrimination, or criminal allegations. Preview and choose a suitable reading together. No reenactment of harm is needed.

Words to know

community — people connected by a place or something they share

care — attention and help for someone or something

change — become different

Look closely



Modern topic illustration created for Massachusetts History Explorers. It is not a historical artifact.

Read the story

COVID-19 changed daily life in Massachusetts. Schools and workplaces changed routines. People became sick, families faced loss, and many workers cared for others. Communities found ways to stay connected.

A Boston Biogen conference became an important early transmission event. The pandemic also revealed differences in risk, resources, and access. This reading is historical; current health guidance belongs to public-health professionals.

A scientific or engineering milestone is part of a longer process. A patent, experiment, public demonstration, and widely used product are different events. Investigate the work of teams as well as famous individuals. Ask what the evidence demonstrates, who could benefit, and what limitations remained. A later success does not mean people could predict it at the time.

Think, talk, and show evidence

1. Write an objective summary. Separate the event from the writer's interpretation of its importance.
2. Explain a cause, consequence, or continuity supported by the text. Identify a connection that would need more evidence.
3. Open the research source. Identify its creator or institution and purpose. Is it a contemporary source, a later account, or both?
4. Evaluate the image's date and purpose. Explain one useful detail and one limitation without treating an illustration as eyewitness evidence.

Follow-up reading: A net-zero climate law

2021

Massachusetts enacted a climate law setting a goal of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. A goal describes something people aim to achieve. Reaching it requires plans, action, and evidence.

The major net-zero roadmap law was enacted in 2021, not 2019. Distinguish passing a target from achieving it. Study how agencies measure emissions and how decisions affect different communities.

Write a paragraph comparing these events. Use evidence from both passages, distinguish chronology from causation, and identify a perspective missing from the readings.

Teacher guide & source trail

Original classroom adaptation. Suggested reading levels are instructional choices, not standardized readability certifications. Use professional judgment and learner feedback.

ELA practice: RI.8.1: cite evidence; RI.8.2: objective summary; RI.8.6: analyze purpose and viewpoint; RH.6–8.1–2: evidence and summary in history; W.8.2: explanatory writing.

These tasks support selected skills in the [Massachusetts 2017 ELA framework](#); they do not establish mastery of an entire standard.

Answer guidance

Factual anchor: COVID-19 changed daily life in Massachusetts. Schools and workplaces changed routines. People became sick, families faced loss, and many workers cared for others. Communities found ways to stay connected. A Boston Biogen conference became an important early transmission event. The pandemic also revealed differences in risk, resources, and access. This reading is historical; current health guidance belongs to public-health professionals.

Accept accurate main ideas and explanations supported by the text. Vocabulary meanings are in the opening word bank. For picture questions, use the caption and credit below; distinguish what is visible from what is inferred. For comparison, accept a specific connection supported by both readings. Do not require personal accounts of trauma.

Continue the inquiry

[Research source for this event ↗](#)

[Research source for follow-up ↗](#)

[Event page, accessible HTML reading, and vocabulary game ↗](#)

Image: Original site illustration.

[Image source and rights record ↗](#)

The PDF contains selectable English text and embedded fonts. For adjustable text and browser reading tools, use the event's [HTML page](#). External sources may need adult guidance.