# The coronavirus – A literary approach

by Carmen Müntzenberg

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Seit Anfang des Jahres 2020 beschäftigt das Coronavirus die ganze Welt und beein-flusst zahlreiche Lebensbereiche. Durch die zeitweise Schließung der Schulen und die Veränderungen in der Unterrichtsgestaltung waren auch Schülerinnen und Schüler von den Auswirkungen des Virus betroffen. In dieser Unterrichtseinheit setzen sich die Lernenden mit dem Phänomen „Corona" auf vielfältige Weise auseinander. Der Fokus liegt hierbei auf der literarischen Annäherung an das Thema mithilfe von Gedichten, Bezügen zu Romanen und einer Kurzgeschichte. Dabei schulen die Lernenden insbe-sondere ihre Lese-, Schreib- und Medienkompetenzen.

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## Competences and skills:

By working with the material, students enhance various competences and skills. As they are dealing with such a current topic as the coronavirus, students especially practise their **research skills**. They also train their **reading comprehension** competence by working with fictional as well as non-fictional texts. Furthermore, students develop their **writing skills** by writing summaries and producing creative texts. Students also engage in discussions and, thus, improve their **speaking skills**. By working with several songs, their **listening comprehension** competence is trained.

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## Overview:

**List of abbreviations:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **A** Analysis | **CT** Creative Task | **D** Discussion/debate |
| **G** Group work | **LC** Listening comprehension | |
| **M** Mind map/visualising | **P** Working with a picture/cartoon | |
| **R** Research | **RC** Reading comprehension | **T** Working with a text |
| **VI** Working with a video | **W** Writing | |

| Topic | Material | Methods/Skills |
|---|---|---|
| 1: Facts about the coronavirus | M1–M2 | A, CT, M, R, T, W |
| 2: How to cure patients | M3–M5 | CT, D, G, P, R, RC, T, VI, W |
| 3: Surveillance as a means of protection? | M6–M7 | A, D, G, P, R, RC, T, W |
| 4: What will a future with the coronavirus be like? | M8–M10 | CT, P, RC, T, W |
| 5: Viruses in science fiction and music | M11–M15 | A, CT, D, LC, T |

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## Topic 1: Facts about the coronavirus

## M1  Poems about pandemics

### Philip Freneau:[1] *Pestilence*[2] (1793)

Hot, dry winds forever blowing,

Dead men to the grave-yards going:

Constant hearses,

Funeral verses;

5  Oh! what plagues – there is no knowing!

Priests retreating from their pulpits![4] –

Some in hot, and some in cold fits

In bad temper,

Off they scamper,[5]

10  Leaving us – unhappy culprits![6]

*Source: https://interestingliterature.com/2020/04/poems-plague-pandemic-lockdown/*

*[last access: 11/09/2020]*

### Shalom Freedman: *There Is So Much Else In Life Besides The Coronavirus* (2020)

There is so much else in life beside the coronavirus

Why do I give it so much time and thought?

Because it keeps me inside

Because it has changed my life and everyone's life

5  Because it threatens us

Because new cases are still coming in large numbers

Because unless we can stop it

We cannot go back to do the ordinary things we sometimes love to do

Still I don't want to think about so much anymore

10  And if I had better powers of escape, I might be happier

Let the coronavirus disappear as quickly as possible

And let us all kept back

To being fully alive.

*Source: https://raabe.click/en_um_poem_shalom_freedman [last access: 07/08/2020]*

**Annotations**

1 **Philip Morin Freneau**: 1752–1832; American poet, polemicist, sea captain and newspaper editor; has been dubbed "The Poet of the American Revolution"; this poem, however, is about the plague: specifically, the "pestilence" of yellow fever which killed 5,000 citizens of Philadelphia in 1793. – 2 **pestilence**: epidemic disease like the plague – 3 **hearse**: funeral carriage – 4 **pulpit**: place from which the priest usually speaks his sermon – 5 **to scamper**: to rush – 6 **culprits**: sinners

8. Most of Geoff Ryman's sentences are very short. Describe his style and explain why he chooses it for the opening of his novel.

## Working with the video

9. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel *The Scarlet Letter* every woman who committed adultery had to wear a red letter "A" on her clothes for everyone to see.
   a) Watch the summary of the novel:
      *https://raabe.click/en_um_scarlet_letter* [last access: 11/09/2020].
      Describe the function and effect of this form of branding a person.
   b) Discuss whether publicly marking infected or even recovered people offers a way of curing and fighting the coronavirus.

## Working with the cartoon

10. Analyse the cartoon and its suggestions on how to control the coronavirus by keeping social distance.



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## Further activity
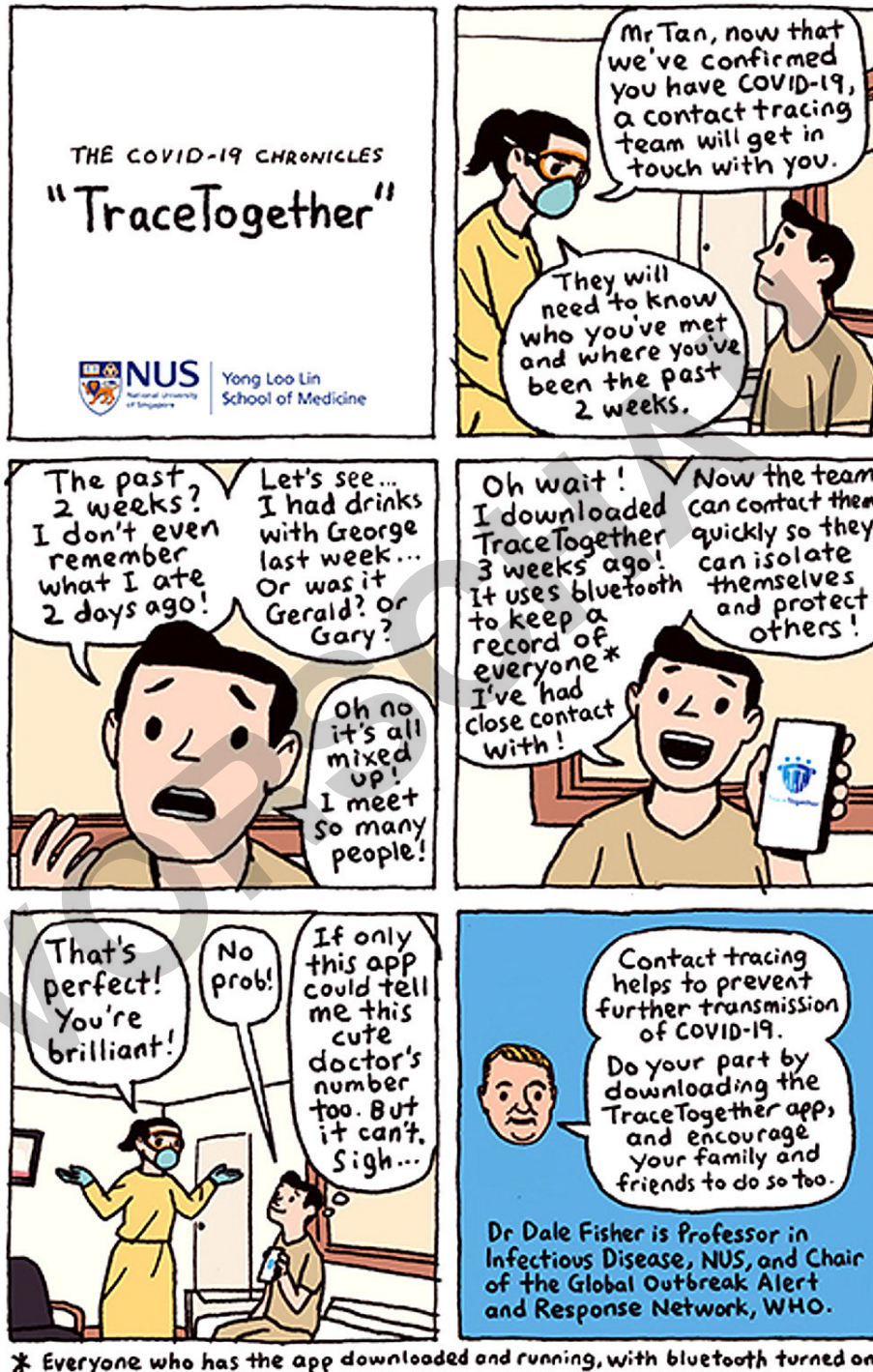
11. Write an email to a friend in another country in which you discuss the measures taken against the spread of the coronavirus in your country.

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## Topic 3: Surveillance as a means of protection?
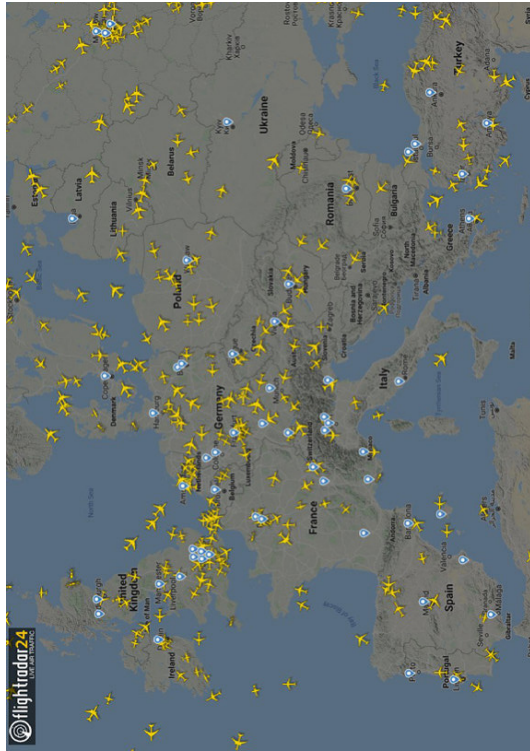
### M6 *TraceTogether*

*Source: National University of Singapore, The COVID-19 Chronicles, #31: TraceTogether*
*09 April 2020 https://medicine.nus.edu.sg/the-covid-19-chronicles/ [last access: 07/08/2020]*
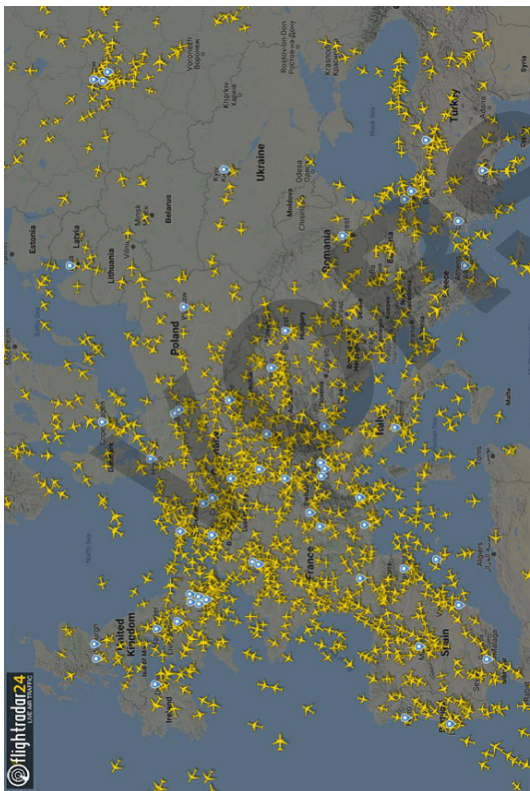
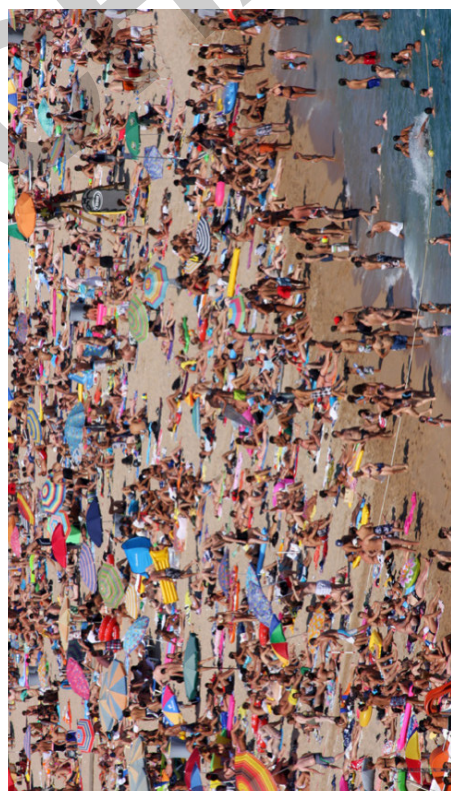**zur Vollversion**

Picture B.2



Picture C.2



Picture B.1



Picture C.1

*Sources: Pictures B.1/B.2: Screenshot: Flightradar24 found at https://www.severe-weather.eu/recent-events/significant-decline-global-air-traffic-mk/; Picture C.1: ©Boggy/Adobe Stock; Picture C.2: Nuova Neon Group 2 found at https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/panorama/id_87708524/coronavirus-italienisches-unternehmen-entwirft-modell-fuer-plexiglaskaesten-am-strand.html*

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