

Directions for your two page spread in your Reader’s Notebook:

1. Read and jot on one page in your Reader’s Notebook. Keep track of thinking as you read.
Non-fiction jot ideas:

*key ideas	*quotes	*questions	*key vocab	*important people	*sketches
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2. Write a full page response to ONE of the prompts at the end of the article or an idea of your choice on the next page in your reader’s notebook. This is your chance to communicate your thinking about one idea.

Remote Learning Is Hard. Losing Family Members is Worse.

I’m a low-income student in a crowded apartment, and my family is vulnerable to Covid-19. The benefits of returning to school are not worth our health.

By Isaac Lozano *The New York Times*. Mr. Lozano is a high school senior. Aug. 13, 2020

SAN DIEGO — Last month, I learned that my uncle died of Covid-19. Not long after, his mother passed away from the virus, too. Since my parents are essential workers, I’m starting my senior year of high school worrying whether they’re next.

I live in one of San Diego’s [most infected ZIP codes](#). And I’m a Latino in a county where Hispanics — 43 percent of Covid-19 victims yet only 34 percent of the population — bear the brunt of the pandemic.

When schools went remote earlier this year, low-income students like me, who have limited access to computers and the internet, [faced challenges](#) keeping up with schoolwork. Trying to study in cramped quarters and without reliable connectivity was frustrating. But as schools begin this fall, I’d much rather endure the troubles of distance learning than return to campus prematurely and sacrifice my own health or that of my family.

Throughout the pandemic, my five-member family has been huddled in a 920-square-foot, two-bedroom apartment, where I share a room with my two brothers. For my parents, social distancing isn’t an option. My father is a supervisor at a car distribution company, and my mother, in remission from cancer, recently resigned as a caregiver at a hospice facility. Cases in our county were rising, so she opted instead to take care of my autistic cousin through a respite care program. It’s not much, but in my mother’s words, the extra money will allow us to salir adelante, or get ahead.

In April, when my school started distance learning, I struggled to stay focused, bouncing from room to room in search of peace and quiet. In the morning, I settled in the kitchen table to attend online meetings while my family was asleep. By the afternoon, I fled to my parents’ room to finish schoolwork but only until my father came home from work and ordered me out.

Sometimes I ignored my parents or grimaced at them for no apparent reason.

“Are you mad at me?” my mother would ask.

“No, I just want to stay focused,” I’d retort.

In truth, I was angry that I lived in a coronavirus hot spot; that my immigrant parents could only provide me with so much; that my middle-class peers were ensconced in their own bedrooms while I remained confined to a skinny metal chair in my kitchen.

At school, I got straight A's and was praised by English teachers for my writing. I saw myself as the poor Mexican kid who could overcome financial barriers with enough determination.

But when my uncle died of the coronavirus, I realized that gumption wasn't enough to overcome the obstacles of a pandemic. We couldn't even say goodbye.

Black and Latino children already grapple with disproportionately high rates of Covid-19 and [face systemic barriers](#) to [testing](#) and [treatment](#). Many of us live in [multigenerational homes](#) and have parents who are essential workers. We are [less likely to have access to health care](#). And [low-income schools across the country are struggling](#) to afford the supplies and infrastructure required to reopen safely.

I'm lucky that my district is postponing school reopenings until at least October. But if I am ordered back to campus prematurely, I won't do it. As difficult as distance learning was, returning to the classroom now — as [cases in the U.S. break records](#) and experts [foresee the pandemic persisting until next year](#) — would put my home and the homes of millions of low-income kids of color at greater risk of infection.

I leave my apartment not knowing if my next-door neighbors — only three feet away from my front door — could have the virus. I fear for my mother's life every time we go to our local laundromat, a cramped space where visitors don't always wear masks. Though we wash our hands and disinfect items after arriving home, I'm always left with a tingle of uneasiness — like sensing a mosquito in a dark room.

I've lamented this to friends who, like me, live in tight quarters and have seen family members sickened: As much as we excel academically, [our ZIP codes still hold dominion over us and our families](#). Living in a noisy home with domestic responsibilities during a pandemic was already a challenge, but the death of a loved one sapped my hope for the future and brought closer the difference a few digits on my address can make.

But passing the cracked sidewalks of my apartment complex, I'm reminded that others have it worse: My family is financially independent, and we've settled in a tight-knit community.

I hear my mother's trailing words as we bring home baskets of laundry — and for a moment, I smile.

The pandemic poses unique challenges for kids like me. But if schools can offer us support — as my district is doing by providing free meals, internet hot spots and laptops to those in need — I know we can continue to learn remotely while staying safe. And with help from my teachers and hope that the quarantine subsidies, I'm applying to college this fall.

Keeping students at home gives us — and America — the best chance to salir adelante.

Possible Response Ideas (see the directions at the top of the article):

- What are your thoughts about the return to school? How is your family deciding what to do? Explain.
- Pick a word/line/passage from the article and respond to it.
- Discuss a writing technique or strategy used by the writer in this piece that you think is good/interesting. Explain.
- Respond to the article in your own way. Write a poem, a song, draw a cartoon?! You pick!

Isaac Lozano is a senior at Bonita Vista High School in Chula Vista, Calif. He is working on a children's book.