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Fall 2024

2024-2025 Book-in-Common Teaching Guide

Collin College

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Book-in-Common Teaching Guide

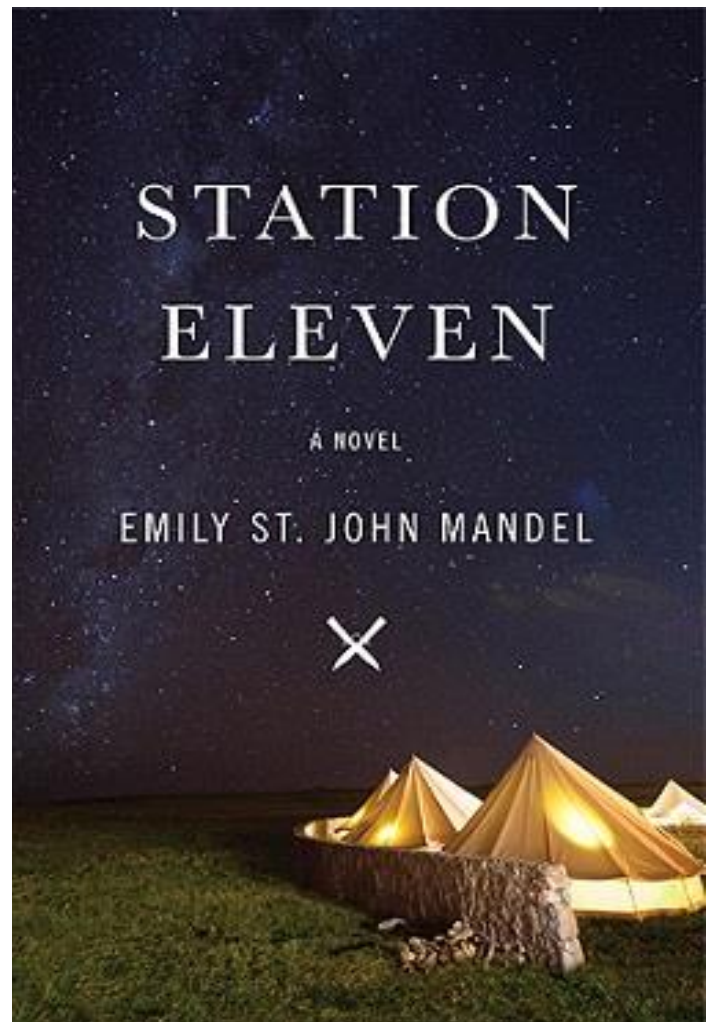
AUTHOR VISITS SPRING 2025

March 25 & March 26

Bring your classes!

2024 – 2025

Collin College Book-in-Common Committee

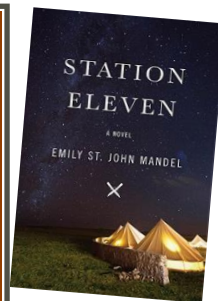


AUTHOR VISIT – SPRING 2025

SAVE
the
DATE

Tuesday, March 25 at 7pm
McKinney Conference Center
(Author Presentation and Book Signing)

Wednesday, March 26 at 10am
Frisco Conference Center
(Writer's Workshop and Book Signing)



“A novel that miraculously reads like equal parts page-turner and poem. One of her great feats is that the story feels spun rather than plotted, with seamless shifts in time and characters. ... “Because survival is insufficient,” reads a line taken from Star Trek spray-painted on the Traveling Symphony's lead wagon. The genius of Mandel’s fourth novel ... is that she lives up to those words. This is not a story of crisis and survival. It’s one of art and family and memory and community and the awful courage it takes to look upon the world with fresh and hopeful eyes.” —Karen Valby, *Entertainment Weekly*

TEACHING GUIDE EDITOR

Melissa Johnson

BOOK-IN-COMMON CONTACTS

For more information about the Book-in-Common Program please see the [website](#) or contact one of our coordinators:

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INTRODUCING THIS YEAR’S BOOK-IN-COMMON

“A superb novel . . . [that] leaves us not fearful for the end of the word but appreciative of the grace of everyday existence.”—*Anthony Domestico, San Francisco Chronicle*

EDITOR’S INTRODUCTION

As always, the 2024 - 2025 Teaching Guide exemplifies the Collin College Book-in Common Committee’s commitment to the goal of a year-long, college-wide engagement with an important book and its author. This dystopian novel discusses themes of art, culture, survival, relationships, health, and memory. Highlights of this year’s Guide include:

- **New for 2024 – 2025**
 - Fall 2024 Assessment-aligned activities for COAT Core Objective Personal Responsibility
 - Review the [interactive teaching strategies](#) and access [scaffolding activities](#)
- Responses to the text including explorations of the major themes in *Station Eleven*, reflection prompts, subject assignments, and connections to art, biology, and social science concepts.
- Links to videos on book themes and interviews with the author.
- Classroom activities organized by discipline.
- Support for a variety of teaching modalities including class discussion, journaling and reflection, extended student research, essay and research paper assignments, and creative assignments.
- The novel *Station Eleven*, which was a finalist for the National Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner Award, won the 2015 Arthur C. Clarke Award, the Toronto Book Award, and the Morning News Tournament of Books.

The materials contained here will deepen our thinking and strengthen our teaching.

It is my great honor to follow Marta Moore (retired) as the editor of the Teaching Guide. You will note that I have maintained Marta’s wonderfully useful and collaborative guide in its original layout and design. Thanks, Marta!

Melissa Johnson
Professor of History
iCollin Campus

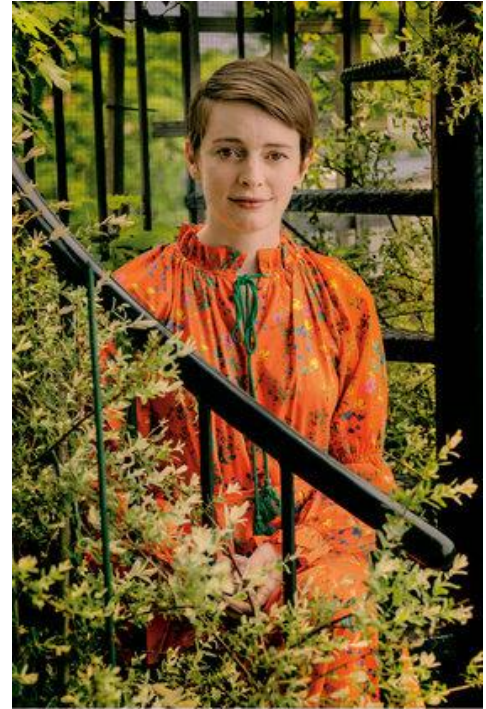
Please join me in thanking the contributors who have generously made this year’s Guide a reality:

Khimen Cooper	Deborah Cardenas	Dulce de Castro	Gary Wilson	Seema Endley
Ryan Fletcher	Stephen Whitley	John Williams	Catie Brooks	Michael Latham
Toni McMillen				

FROM THE PUBLISHER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

EMILY ST. JOHN MANDEL's five previous novels include *The Glass Hotel*, which has been translated into twenty-five languages, and *Station Eleven*, which was a finalist for a National Book Award and the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, was the basis of a limited series on HBO Max, and has been translated into thirty-seven languages. She lives in New York City and Los Angeles.



Emily St John Mandel
PHOTO CREDIT: Sarah Shatz

BOOK SUMMARY

An audacious, darkly glittering novel set in the eerie days of civilization's collapse—the spellbinding story of a Hollywood star, his would-be savior, and a nomadic group of actors roaming the scattered outposts of the Great Lakes region, risking everything for art and humanity. Now an original series on HBO Max. More than 1.5 million copies sold!

Kirsten Raymonde will never forget the night Arthur Leander, the famous Hollywood actor, had a heart attack on stage during a production of *King Lear*. That was the night when a devastating flu pandemic arrived in the city, and within weeks, civilization as we know it came to an end.

Twenty years later, Kirsten moves between the settlements of the altered world with a small troupe of actors and musicians. They call themselves The Traveling Symphony, and they have dedicated themselves to keeping the remnants of art and humanity alive. But when they arrive in St. Deborah by the Water, they encounter a violent prophet who will threaten the tiny band's existence. And as the story takes off, moving back and forth in time, and vividly depicting life before and after the pandemic, the strange twist of fate that connects them all will be revealed.

REFLECTIONS AND RESPONSES

“Station Eleven is so compelling, so fearlessly imagined, that I wouldn’t have put it down for anything.”—Ann Patchett



*Impressionist “dystopic” vision in watercolor
Original artwork by Gary Wilson, Professor of English – Frisco Campus*

Art

The Value of Art – Khimen Cooper

Professor of English, Spring Creek Campus

In the post-pandemic world of *Station Eleven*, The Traveling Symphony learns early on something that "was startling, what no one would have anticipated, [which] was that audiences seemed to prefer Shakespeare to their other theatrical offerings" (Mandel 38). This is likely startling due to how seemingly unpopular Shakespeare is to the average person before the pandemic. Nonetheless, it's what the community members always request. We also learn that individuals have their own version of 'preferred' art. Kirsten always "searched for celebrity-gossip magazines," looking for any remaining information about Arthur, while August looked for old TV Guides (Mandel 38). In response to the unexpected art that survivors wish for, Dieter points out, "People want what was best about the world" (Mandel 38).

- What piece/s of art do you think would/should still be celebrated in a post-pandemic world and why? Remember that 'art' is a flexible term. To August, TV Guides were art.

Biology

Biology-Themed Essay Prompts – Deborah Cardenas

Professor of Biology, Wylie Campus

- **Disease and Collapse:** How does the Georgia Flu impact both human society and the environment in *Station Eleven*?
- **Ecological Recovery:** Analyze the process of ecological succession in the post-apocalyptic world. How do plants and animals repopulate abandoned areas?
- **Resource Management:** Discuss the challenges of resource management in a post-apocalyptic society. How do survivors cope with limited food, water, and other essentials?
- **Human Adaptation:** How do humans physically and behaviorally adapt to the post-apocalyptic environment in *Station Eleven*?
- **Medical Challenges:** Discuss the role of medicine and healthcare in the post-apocalyptic world. How do survivors access care and treat illnesses?
- **Microbiome Impact:** Explore the significance of the human microbiome in a post-apocalyptic context. How does its disruption affect health and well-being?
- **Georgia Flu Symbolism:** Analyze the symbolism of the Georgia Flu in *Station Eleven*. What does it represent about human life and nature?
- **Animal Roles:** Discuss the role of animals in the post-apocalyptic world. How do they contribute to the ecosystem and human survival?
- **Biodiversity Loss:** Explore the concept of biodiversity in *Station Eleven*. How does its loss affect the ecosystem and humanity's future?
- **Disease Outbreaks:** Compare and contrast the terms "epidemic," "pandemic," and "endemic." Define each term clearly. Explore the factors that contribute to the spread and severity of each type of disease outbreak. Additionally, discuss the public health implications and challenges associated with each.

English

General Prompts and Personal Reflections – Khimen Cooper

Professor of English, Plano Campus

- **Significance of Literature** What is the significance of literature to humanity? Please use a direct quote to reference a scene from *Station Eleven* to make your argument.
 - For this response, I'd like you to first, Watch/Listen to [David Foster Wallace's speech, "This is Water"](#). In *Station Eleven*, before the pandemic, Clark interviews a woman named Dahlia who talks about sleepwalking through life. She talks about "the people who've ended up in one life instead of another and [a]re just so disappointed... They've done what's expected of them. They want to do something different but it's impossible now, there's a mortgage, kids, whatever, they're trapped" (Mandel 163). Describing a bland day in a bland life in a bland break room, which Clarke identifies strongly with, she says, "the days turn into yet another day, and you go on like that, looking forward to five o'clock, and then the weekend... day in day out and that's what happens to your life... that's what passes for a life... for happiness, for most people... they're like sleepwalkers. And nothing ever jolts them awake" (Mandel 163-164). This resonates with Clark- it actually kinda kicks him in the soul.

- **Sleep-Walking Fiction** offers us opportunities to reflect more deeply on reality. While Mandel's post-pandemic world is fiction, it wasn't too long ago that we were in our own (very real) pandemic and Mandel's fictional future had every potential to be our future reality. Reflect on both Dahlia's/Mandel's and Wallace's arguments about day-in day-out life. Using real life (Wallace) and a fictional almost-end-of-humanity world (Mandel/Dahlia) present your own thoughts about this.
- **Parallel Universe** On page 200, in *Station Eleven*, August talks about a parallel universe where “there had been a pandemic but the virus had had a subtly different genetic structure, some minuscule variance that rendered it survivable” - that’s basically our universe 🧐 So, in the *Station Eleven* parallel universe, if you had survived (alone- everyone you know now is gone) who do you imagine you would have ended up becoming based on what we’ve seen of the survivor options in the novel? Please use a direct reference to the novel to help make your point (directly reference an aspect of the life-after that helps you determine your parallel universe story).
- **King Lear**
 - [King Lear Script](#)
 - [King Lear Summary \(Act 1 Scene 1\)](#) First I want you to take a few moments to check out Scene One of *King Lear*... you can also watch one of the many YouTube options out there. I've included a link to one here as well. Who do you think represents Cordelia in *Station Eleven*? Who do you think might represent *King Lear*? Use direct quotes from the novel to help explain why.

Personal Reflections

- **Saving Culture** In *Station Eleven*, 20 years after the flu, many people try to bring back certain aspects of previous civilization based on their individual skillsets and interests. The Traveling Symphony, the Museum of Civilization, even the small ‘newspaper.’ What aspect of civilization would you try to bring back with your own particular skills, experience, and interests? Don’t just talk about what the thing is- also explain how your skill set/experience qualifies you to be the one to bring it back to civilization!
- **Survival is Insufficient** “Because Survival is Insufficient.” This quote, originally from Star Trek: Voyager, is one that the Traveling Symphony uses in *Station Eleven*. First, explain how that statement acts as a mission statement for The Traveling Symphony. Second, discuss how the quote could be motivationally applicable to your own life currently.
- **What’s an Internet?** In *Station Eleven*, the children in Concourse C, are “told about the internet, how it was everywhere, and connected everything. How it was us” (262). These were children who were born after the pandemic, so the internet has always just been a fantastical piece of history to them. Try to describe the internet in your own way to a hypothetical post-pandemic baby who has (likely) never even experienced electricity.
- **Mundane to Museum** After the pandemic, Clark’s (previously boring) reports become interesting historical artifacts for the museum. Choose something similarly mundane from your own life (for instance, a grocery list) and imagine how it might be implemented as something intriguing in a future Museum of Civilization.
- **The Little Things** On page 191, Jeevan remembers making snow ice cream with Frank and their mom. On 231, Clark recalls the last time he “danced in a club” and “saw a moving bus.” What is something seemingly insignificant that you would miss dearly if we were in *Station Eleven*’s post pandemic world? Don’t just say friends/family- that is not insignificant. Consider specific moments or activities that you

engage in and potentially overlook (take for granted) with those friends/family. *Bonus: Include a photo that represents, what it is and why you'd miss it **Double Bonus: How would you explain it to a post-pandemic baby who has only ever known a world without such experiences/moments?

- **Dear V...** Chapter 25 is the chapter of Dear V letters. Hand write a 1-2 page letter to an anonymous person in your life. Upload an image/pdf of the letter. *I KNOW. Handwriting is wild. But, we're kickin' it old school. You got this!

Questions to Consider – Dulce de Castro

Professor of Foreign Languages, Plano Campus

- Which three novels would you choose for preservation in the Museum of Civilization for post-apocalyptic generations? Why would you select those novels? Which works of art, music, objects, or technology would you preserve, and why?
- Why do you think Mandel set much of the novel's action 15 and then 20 years after the flu pandemic instead of immediately after it?
- In an NPR interview, Mandel states that the Traveling Symphony's motto, "survival is insufficient" (a line she borrowed from Star Trek: Voyager), "became almost the thesis statement of the entire novel." How is this reflected in *Station Eleven*?
- The novel moves back and forth between pre-pandemic times and the post-apocalyptic world. Why do you think Mandel chose this narrative structure for her novel? Does this nonlinear narrative structure underscore the main themes of the novel, or does it detract from them?
- What function does the comic *Station Eleven* serve in the novel? What is its thematic significance?
- [Station Eleven book club questions](#)
 - Thought-provoking questions about Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*, to get your book club discussion started.

Discussion Guide – John Williams

Professor of History, McKinney Campus

- Synopsis:
 - The novel *Station Eleven* depicts a post-apocalyptic world in which a cast of characters, a famous actor, a graphic novel artist, a paparazzo, and members of a traveling Shakespearean troupe come to terms with a power flu virus that rips across the globe. The novel's main characters, twenty years removed from having survived a pandemic, are trying to adjust to a pre-industrial life and, in the process, balance powerful forces from their past. The author depicts this search under the guise of a quest for the human spirit to be found out of chaos, heartbreak, and despair in a post-pandemic world. This novel underscores the theme that art celebrates humanity by celebrating humanity's drive to create for future generations.
- Discussion Questions:
 - Explain how the themes of tremendous grief and loss are death, as experienced by the main characters, Kirsten, Arthur, and the prophet.
 - Discuss why the author selected Shakespeare's play *King Lear* and the death of the lead actor to open the novel.
 - Discuss how a reader of this novel may or may not relate to the main character's efforts to find meaning through service, art, and love depicted in the story.

- The aftermath of the pandemic carries most of Kristen’s battle to deal with a new world after the old world is usurped throughout the novel. Discuss how someone who survived the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic could somehow relate to this effort.
- Explain the symphony’s motto that “survival is insufficient” and correlate it to the main character’s efforts throughout the book.
- One of the main concepts driving the narrative of this book is the conflict between Tyler’s efforts to achieve power, status, and exceptionality and Kirsten’s seek to embody Arthur’s search for a love of art and beauty. Explain the importance of these competing and divergent themes in the novel.
- The book concludes with a violent confrontation between Kirsten and the prophet. Explain this confrontation between these two main characters. Be sure to identify who won, who lost, and why.
- Discuss how the reader of this novel may conclude that the author was trying to convey a profound message across generations and beyond death.

Foreign Languages

Use of Foreign Language in *Station Eleven* – Dulce de Castro

Professor of Foreign Languages, Plano Campus

- On page 252, the narrator states, “By Day Eighty, most of the people who had arrived without English were learning it in informal groups, while the English speakers were studying one or more of the languages brought by Lufthansa, Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific, and Air France.” How might the efforts of pandemic survivors to learn different languages reflect a broader theme of resilience and survival in the face of a catastrophic event? How does the process of learning a new language serve as a tool for connection and adaptation in the context of societal collapse? What does this suggest about the importance of language in building community?
- The narrator states, “Clark was learning French from Annette, who’d been a Lufthansa flight attendant. He whispered phrases to himself as he went about the chores of daily existence: the hauling of water, washing of clothes in the sink, learning to skin a deer, building bonfires, cleaning. Je m’appelle Clark. J’habite dans l’aéroport. Tu me manques [I miss you]. Tu me manques. Tu me manques” (page 252). How does Clark’s practice of learning French amidst the mundane tasks of survival underscore his emotional state and desire for connection? In what ways does language serve as a bridge between his past and present experiences? What significance does the repetition of the phrase “Tu me manques” [I miss you] have for his emotional well-being, and how does it reflect the role of language in expressing feelings of longing and connection to others?
- On page 29, we learn that Miranda, now an executive at a shipping company who travels extensively, has been learning Spanish for several months. She has made great progress in understanding the language and is able to comprehend most of the conversation between two people speaking Spanish in a hotel on the South Coast of Malaysia, where she is on a business trip. In what ways does Miranda’s journey to learn Spanish reflect her personal growth and adaptability as an executive? Reflecting on Miranda’s experience with learning Spanish, how has your own journey in learning a foreign language helped you connect with others or navigate new environments? Can you share a specific instance where language played a crucial role in your interactions?

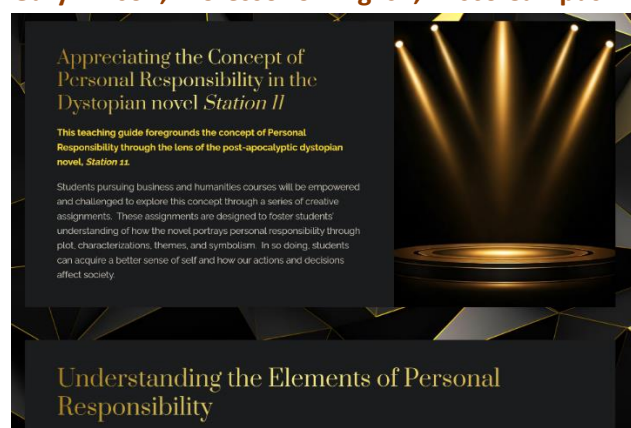
- On page 266, Viola tells François Diallo that after a harrowing experience she had, she started “whispering French to herself because all the horror in her life had transpired in English and she thought switching languages might save her, wandering into a town through which the Symphony passed five years later.” How would you answer the following questions that address the passage above?
 - How does Viola's decision to speak French to herself, rather than English, serve as a protective mechanism against the memories of her traumatic experience? Why does this shift in language help her cope?
 - How could language choice affect emotional processing? In what ways might switching languages provide her with a sense of safety or distance from her past experiences?
 - How might speaking French help Viola to reframe her traumatic memories? Are there studies or scientific evidence suggesting that processing trauma, negative experiences, or difficult emotions in a foreign language can lead to better coping strategies?
 - Read the articles [“When your heart is in your mouth: the effect of second language use on negative emotions”](#) and [“Processing negative autobiographical memories in a foreign language”](#) and report on the findings of the studies described in these articles.
 - Have you ever used a foreign language to express or process difficult emotions? What was the experience like, and how did the language choice affect your feelings or understanding of the situation?

TEACHING GUIDES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Assessment Aligned Activities

Personal Responsibility Interactive Experience

Gary Wilson, Professor of English, Frisco Campus



This interactive guide includes activities to foster accountability for decisions & actions, self-awareness, integrity & code of values, and resilience & persistence.

History 1301 and 1302 Scaffolding Activities for Personal Responsibility

COAT Assessment for Personal Responsibility

Fall 2024

ENG 2333

HIST 1301

GOVT 2306

Spring 2025

ENG 2311

PHIL 1304

PHIL 2307

PHIL 2321

Core Objective Assessment Team
Personal Responsibility Rubric

Art

“Because Survival is Insufficient”: Art at the End of the World (Lesson Plan)

From [Purdue University’s Big Read Program](#)

This lesson is designed for students to consider the role of art within postapocalyptic fiction. Students will be asked to locate the different types of art present in the novel and discuss how these various art forms inform various characters’ perspectives. In doing so, students will determine what, exactly, is considered art and how we value art in times of crisis. This lesson is designed to follow an introduction to the dystopian and post-apocalyptic genres and is best suited for the second half of the unit.

Economics

Economic Questions for *Station Eleven* – Michael Latham

Professor of Economics, Plano Campus

- **Economic Impact of the Collapse:** Analyze how the economic collapse affected a specific character’s life. Apply the concepts of scarcity, resource allocation, and trade-offs they had to make.
- **Opportunity Cost Analysis:** Examine the choices made by characters like Jeevan or Kirsten. Discuss what they sacrificed and what opportunities were lost or gained. Use a Production Possibilities Frontier Model to illustrate the trade-offs of two of these choices. Use the model to explain the concepts of scarcity and opportunity costs.
- **Comparison of Economic Systems:** Define an economic system. What types of economic systems exist before and after the “collapse”. Fully explain using the characteristics of each system. Compare each system and analyze the productive capabilities, efficiency, and inequality.
- **Role of Institutions:** Define an economic system. Consider the role of organizations, such as the Traveling Symphony, after the “collapse” How do these institutions function as or influence economic systems?
- **Market Structures:** Identify the different market structures that exist after the “collapse”. Focus on one good or service that is provided. Discuss the characteristics of the organization(s) that provide the good or service and identify whether it is a monopoly, oligopoly, monopolistic competition, or perfectly competitive market. Who holds power and how do they exert it? Discuss the impact on allocative efficiency, productive efficiency, and fairness.

Analyzing Markets in *Station Eleven*

[The application of supply and demand principles in the context of the post-apocalyptic world](#)

- In this writing assignment, students will reflect on the overall impact of supply and demand principles on the characters and the society depicted in the novel, discussing the potential impact of the issues/events on different stakeholders.

English

Introducing the Post-Apocalyptic Genre (Lesson Plan)

From [Purdue University's Big Read Program](#)

This lesson is designed to introduce students to *Station Eleven*, the dystopian genre, and how post-apocalyptic fiction relates to and differs from the dystopian genre. This lesson focuses on information from the first twelve chapters of the novel. For this reason, this lesson is best suited for the first day of teaching *Station Eleven*. The Introduction to Genre Fiction portion of this lesson is adapted from the "Introduction to Genre Fiction" exercise included in Diana Fuss and William A. Gleason's *The Pocket Instructor, Literature: 101 exercises for the college classroom* (Fuss and Gleason 199-201).

30 of the best dystopian novels of all time

From [Pan MacMillen Publishers](#)

From classic authors such as George Orwell and H. G. Wells to contemporary fiction, these are the best dystopian novels of all time. Dystopian novels fascinate us because they draw on aspects of our own world. Mirroring elements of society, the environment, religion, politics or technology, the best dystopian books present a world that, though eerily familiar, is much more frightening than our own.

Create Your Own Book Club – Stephen Whitley

Professor of English, Plano Campus

- Book Club Reading of *Station 11*
 - I would put my students in groups and have them read certain sections of the book as if they were in a book club. You could either assign different sections of the book to different "clubs" or assign the same sections to all the clubs and have them discuss it, then present their discussion to the class.
- Study or Short Essay question
 - What do you think the author thought when the 2020/Covid 19 pandemic began and changed our world for a year? How alike to the Flu in *Station 11* was/is Covid 19? You could tailor this to History/Biology/Economics/Business classes as well.
- Helping Students Prepare Questions for the Author
 - What questions would you ask the author when she visits in the Spring. Write at least two questions you would like to ask her.

Creative Writing Prompts – Dulce de Castro

Professor of Foreign Languages, Plano Campus

1. Write an alternative title for the novel that follows one of these guidelines: (a) a quote from the novel; (b) a single-word title; or (c) a thematic title.
2. Write a blurb for *Station Eleven*.
3. Write a plot summary of a sequel to *Station Eleven*.
4. Adapt *Station Eleven* into a six-word story. What is the relationship between your six-word story and *Station Eleven*?

A Comparison of Vanishing Things in *Station Eleven* and in the Short Story “Apocalypse”

Chapter 6 of *Station Eleven* is a partial list of what disappears due to the pandemic. In his short story “Apocalypse” (*Apocalipsis*), Argentine writer Marco Denevi (1922-1998) describes the extinction of humans in the 32nd century and provides a list of things that disappear along with people: tables, chairs, roses, records of Beethoven's nine symphonies, antique shops, Bordeaux wines, swallows, Flemish tapestries, all of Verdi, chess, telescopes, Gothic cathedrals, football stadiums, Michelangelo's Pietà, the maps of the ruins of Trajan's Forum, cars, rice, giant sequoias, and the Parthenon. There were only machines left. You can read the short story in Spanish [here](#). If you do not know Spanish, you can use AI to get an English translation.

After reading both lists of vanishing things, answer the following questions:

1. “Apocalypse” emphasizes the loss of cultural and artistic heritage and the loss of natural elements, while *Station Eleven* underscores the disappearance of modern comforts, technological advances, the internet, and social media. How do the items listed in “Apocalypse” and *Station Eleven* reflect the cultural values of their respective societies?
2. Consider your own experiences and the world around you: What cultural artifacts (such as music, art, or traditions), natural elements, and technologies do you believe are at risk of disappearing from contemporary society? How does their loss relate to themes of cultural, technological, and environmental loss presented in both “Apocalypse” and *Station Eleven*? What are the implications of their loss, and what is the significance of these vanishing elements in your life?
3. “Apocalypse” concludes with a world filled only with machines. How does this contrast with the remnants of technology in *Station Eleven*? What views on technological advances and human innovation do these outcomes suggest?
4. What reactions or emotional responses does the list of vanishing things in “Apocalypse” and *Station Eleven* elicit in you as a reader?
5. Rewrite Chapter 6 (“An Incomplete List”) in *Station Eleven*. What items would be included in your list of things that have disappeared from contemporary society? How would your list compare to “An Incomplete List”?

Lab Activity Assignment for *Station Eleven* – Toni McMillen

Professor of English, McKinney Campus

Lab Activity: This selection is for use with 1301/1302 Labs to be assigned during the year. This activity is intertwining Lab activities to promote reading, writing, and critical thinking.

Shakespeare-focused approach with questions – Ryan Fletcher

Professor of English, Plano Campus

Why Shakespeare?

Throughout *Station Eleven*, Emily St. John Mandel mentions William Shakespeare several times. More specifically, some of the characters perform lines from *King Lear* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*; see chapters 1 and 7-10. Many have argued of Shakespeare's relevance and permanence in society. What can his plays teach us about life in a dystopian world, though?

- After reading/selecting one of the articles below, discuss how the claims apply to *Station Eleven* in one, well-developed paragraph.
 - [Why is Shakespeare more popular than ever?](#)
 - [Why Is Shakespeare Still Important?](#)

-
- Why Shakespeare still matters
 - *King Lear* introduces themes, like authority, order, nothingness, madness, family, chaos, and blindness. Choose a theme and explain its significance in *Station Eleven*. As part of your answer, make sure to use examples from the novel for support.
 - Likewise, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* illuminates themes of marriage, love, order/disorder, and reality versus appearance. Choose one of these themes and explain its significance in *Station Eleven*. As part of your answer, make sure to use examples from the novel for support.
 - Interestingly, Emily St. John Mandel has a character named Miranda, which is also the name of a character in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Miranda is the only female character in *The Tempest* and begins as a young, naïve woman, controlled by men. What is the connection between the Miranda in *The Tempest* and the Miranda in *Station Eleven*? Please explain in a brief paragraph with examples.
 - The use of themes, such as colonization and the hunger for power, resonates within many of Shakespeare's plays. What role does power play in *Station Eleven*? Please explain in one paragraph with examples for support.
 - The characters are often performing Shakespeare plays. Why? What do you think the author is suggesting not only about Shakespeare, but the importance of literature and the arts?



Dystopic-like watercolor in Shakespearian motif
Original artwork by Gary Wilson, Professor of English – Frisco Campus

History & Government

Alternatives for Post-Apocalyptic Governance?

From [Western Virginia University's Campus Read Program](#)

As the book draws to a close, a glow on the horizon at dusk suggests the possibility of city lights. Because the traveling performers have encountered little more than subsistence in the communities along their route from the north, this possibility entices them southward into new territory.

- Considering the authoritarian, anarchic, and rudimentary community governments depicted in the book, what type of governance has emerged where they have managed to light up the city?

For Crown or Colony: Survival and Community During the American Revolution

[Scaffolding Activity for HIST 1301 Personal Responsibility COAT Assessment](#)

Melissa Johnson, Professor of History, iCollin Campus

- In this discussion activity, students will deepen their understanding of personal responsibility and ethical decision-making by examining the characters in *Station Eleven* alongside prominent Loyalists and Patriots of the American Revolution.

Pandemic and Civic Virtue: The American Red Cross & the Flu Pandemic of 1918

[A Discussion for History 1302 and *Station Eleven* – Personal Responsibility](#)

Melissa Johnson, Professor of History, iCollin Campus

- In this discussion activity, students will compare the theme of personal responsibility in the novel *Station Eleven* with the historical context of the 1918 Spanish Flu. They will examine primary sources from the American Red Cross to understand how civic virtue and individual sacrifices arose during this crisis. This reflection will help students think about how past lessons can shape our understanding of civic responsibility today. Through discussion and analysis, they will connect personal choices to the broader impact on society during challenging times.

History and Memory – Dulce de Castro

Professor of Foreign Languages, Plano Campus

- In his interview with Kirsten on page 114, François Diallo states, “The more we know about the former world, the better we’ll understand what happened when it fell,” and he adds that he believes in the importance of understanding history. On page 195 of the same interview, Kirsten says, “The people who struggle the most with it [the post-pandemic losses] are the people who remember the old world clearly,” and she adds, “The more you remember, the more you have lost.” What role do you think memory and history should play in the aftermath of a catastrophic event such as the Georgia flu pandemic? Do you side more with Diallo’s perspective on the importance of understanding history, or with Kirsten’s view that greater memory leads to deeper loss? Why?

Inter-Disciplinary Ideas for Discussion

Food for Thought on Technology and Society in a Post-Apocalyptic World – Seema Endley

Professor of Biology, McKinney Campus

- How has the author, Emily St John Mandel explored the idea that when social contract breaks down, it becomes very difficult to create the right conditions to rebuild sophisticated infrastructure?
- Some might argue that in twenty years since the human race almost got wiped out, how come it never occurred to the survivors to go to a library, and try to figure out how to rebuild? After all, the pandemic didn't destroy books and manuscripts - repositories of all the information needed to rebuild civilization. Do you think this is a cogent argument? Why or why not?
- In the last few pages of the novel, someone manages to set up electricity for an entire town. What are the challenges people of that town would have had to face to rebuild, in terms of safety and survival?
- A famous essay by Leonard Read, "I, Pencil" describes that even something as simple as a pencil cannot be made by one person alone. It is created by the collaborative effort of millions of people, including those who mine the graphite, chop wood, manufacture paint, iron, and rubber.... so that we can have a pencil. What parallels can you draw between that essay and the circumstances mentioned in the book *Station Eleven*.
- At the end of the book, Clark shows Kirsten his amazing discovery revealed through the telescope. What did he see a glimpse of, and what, in your opinion, is the most surprising part of this discovery?
- In your opinion, in what way was the experience of people surviving the plague in the 1500's, Shakespeare's time, different from those who survived the pandemic in 2013 as far as the way of life, and dependence on technology is concerned?
- There are millions of people, in fact, entire tribes of humans, living off the grid even now. In what ways do you think they would have a selective advantage over those beholden to technology in the event of a catastrophic pandemic?
- One of the aspects of dystopian/speculative fiction is that some readers are unable to suspend disbelief enough to fully enjoy the novel. Did you have this experience? Were there any aspects of the narrative that you found unrealistic, or which gave you any "shake your head" moments?
- In this novel, what does the Symphony represent?
- Jeevan, before the pandemic was a neurotic paramedic fearful of doomsday. How do you see him 20 years later after he has survived the pandemic and civilization's collapse?
- What is the significance of Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*, in this book?
- It is safe to assume that in the book *Station Eleven*, many if not all survivors suffer from some degree of PTSD, which may have impacted their ability to plan and think rationally. In what way could better, and more practical decisions have been made, if they had managed to circumvent the trauma ensuing the pandemic? Give examples.
- The post-apocalyptic genre often describes the breakdown of social and technological infrastructure. Is this a realistic scenario? If a 90% mortality did happen post a deadly pandemic, would fact mimic fiction, or would the survivors quickly adapt and be capable of continuing civilization with its current technologies?
- *Station Eleven* is by no means a survivalist manual, but more of a theoretical exploration of human interaction. However, if you had to prep for doomsday, what would your check-list look like?

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- If you were to prepare for civilizational collapse, what are the books you would want in your own personal library?

Sociology

In-Class Interactive Activities – Catie Brooks

Professor of Sociology, McKinney Campus

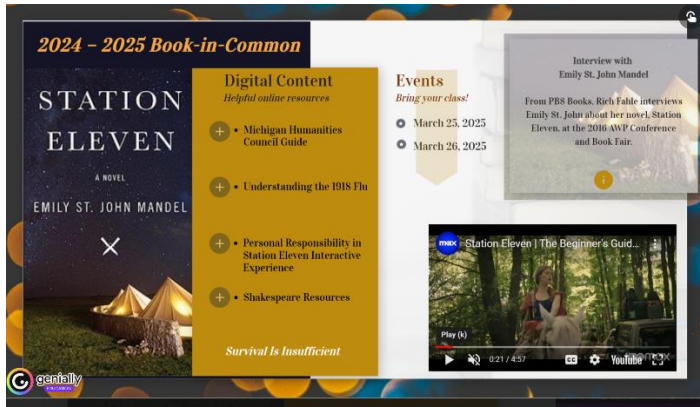
- Post-Apocalyptic Scenarios movie tie-in – I showed some clips from films about post-apocalyptic scenarios – some have zombies, some don't – and encouraged students to watch one of them on their own for a discussion related to *Station Eleven*:
 - *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) – humorous
 - *28 Days Later* (2002) – horror **28 Years Later* is coming soon!
 - *The Book of Eli* (2010) – road trip/religion
 - *The Road* (2009) – dark, based on book from great author who died last year
 - The series *The Leftovers* is also great, *The Walking Dead* and its spinoffs, *How I Live Now* is about young people, etc...
- Discussion: What Do We Preserve??
 - We will talk about the movies and book and how we determine what is important to preserve – is it culture and what parts, is it infrastructure, how to dyads, triads and larger groups function in a pandemic situation (primary and secondary groups, reference groups, etc...) – and this links to the in-class group activity we will do – I am going to show my students this short [gymnastics video](#) – then talk about how it is what I would choose to “save” (gymnastics) if we lost most of the world or what I would choose to send into space to represent to space aliens what humanity is!
- Political Alignment Class Discussion and Quiz
 - Students complete the Pew Research "quiz" about political alignment. Then the class would talk about whether they were part of the "stressed sideliner" group or "ambivalent right", etc... and then they would talk about why and what influenced them - what economic class did they grow up in, was their family religious, what part of the world/country were they from, how did race, gender, age and other factors influence what was important to them and how they saw government?

MEDIA RESOURCES

Digital Content

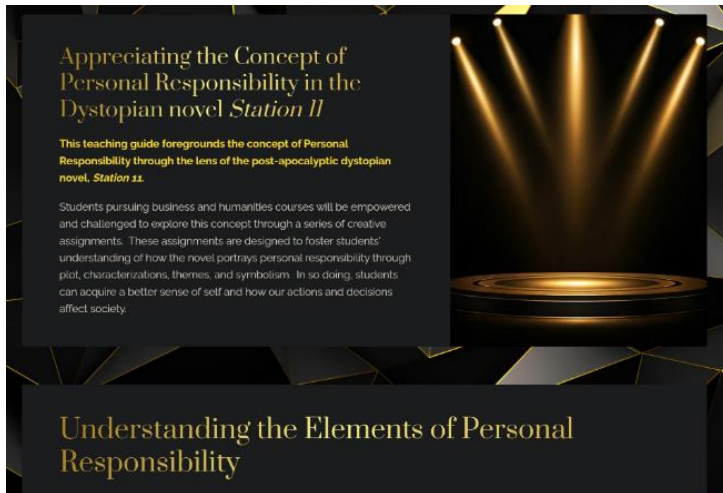
Interactive Experience – Melissa Johnson

Professor of History, iCollin Campus



Appreciating the Concept of Personal Responsibility – Gary Wilson

Professor of English, Frisco Campus



Author Interviews and Online Reviews – Dulce de Castro

Professor of Foreign Languages, Plano Campus

- [Station Eleven review – Emily St John Mandel's gripping apocalypse drama](#)
- [Survival Is Insufficient: 'Station Eleven' Preserves Art After The Apocalypse](#)
- [Station Eleven, 10 Years Later](#)
- [Finding Joy Through Art at the End of the World in 'Station Eleven'](#)
- [An Interview with Emily St. John Mandel](#)
- [Book Club newsletter: Emily St. John Mandel on books, pandemic cooking and 'Station Eleven' tattoos](#)
- [Video: Emily St. John Mandel discusses Station Eleven](#)

HBO/MAX Mini-Series Content

Reflection on the Mini-series Adaptation and the Novel – Khimen Cooper

Professor of English, Spring Creek Campus

- **Character Remixing** In the film adaptation of *Station Eleven*, the writers chose to remix Jeevan and Kirsten's brother. Was it a good or bad choice? Why? Use specific examples directly from the book and the television show to discuss your personal thoughts about that choice.
- **Character Adaptations** Choose a scene from *Episode Seven*, "Goodbye My Damaged Home," to help you argue for how a specific character represents one of the characters from Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*. Can the same be said for that character's depiction in the novel? Compare and contrast. *You can find free PDFs of *King Lear* online along with many YouTube videos
- **What's the Argument?** At the end of Episode Eight, "Who's There," Frank looks at *Station Eleven*, the graphic novel within the narrative, and asks Kirsten what she thinks the book argues- not what the author thinks but what she thinks. Well, what do YOU think the actual book, *Station Eleven*, argues? Not what the author thinks, but you. Why?



October 4, 2024