

# Covid-19 reading tasks

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/15/epidemiologist-britain-herd-immunity-coronavirus-covid-19>

## Text A

### **I'm an epidemiologist. When I heard about Britain's 'herd immunity' coronavirus plan, I thought it was satire**

*William Hanage*



*Patients in a temporary overflow building at Brescia hospital, Italy. 'In Italy, the choices of whom to save and whom to allow to die are real.'*  
Photograph: Miguel Medina/AFP via Getty Images

### **Vulnerable people should not be exposed to Covid-19 right now in the service of a hypothetical future**

Your house is on fire, and the people whom you have trusted with your care are not trying to put it out. Even though they knew it was coming, and could see what happened to the neighbours as they were overwhelmed with terrifying speed, the UK government has inexplicably chosen to encourage the flames, in the misguided notion that somehow they will be able to control them.

When I first heard about this, I could not believe it. I research and teach the evolution and epidemiology of infectious disease at Harvard's Chan School of Public Health. My colleagues here in the US, even as they are reeling from the [stumbling response](#) of the Donald Trump administration to the crisis, assumed that reports of the UK policy were satire – an example of the wry humour for which the country is famed. But they are all too real.

We talk about vaccines generating herd immunity, so why is this different? Because this is not a vaccine. This is an actual pandemic that will make a very large number of people sick, and some of them will die. Even though the mortality rate is likely quite low, a small fraction of a very large number is still a large number. And the mortality rate will climb when the NHS is overwhelmed. This would be expected to happen, even if we make the generous assumption that the government were entirely successful in restricting the virus to the low-risk population, at the peak of the outbreak the numbers requiring critical care would be greater than the number of beds available. This is made worse by the fact that people who are badly ill tend to remain so for a long time, which increases the burden.

And of course, you can't restrict it to this age group. Think of all the people aged between 20 and 40 who work in healthcare, or old people's homes. You don't need many introductions into settings like these for what we might coyly call "severe outcomes". In Washington State, nearly all the

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deaths reported so far have been associated with nursing homes. Is everyone in a high-risk group supposed to withdraw themselves from society for six months until they can emerge once the (so far entirely imaginary) second wave has been averted?

About that second wave: let me be clear. Second waves are real things, and we have seen them in flu pandemics. This is not a flu pandemic. Flu rules do not apply. There might well be a second wave, I honestly don't know. But vulnerable people should not be exposed to a virus right now in the service of a hypothetical future.

Keeping people safe means self-isolation if you develop symptoms, but the official advice here is also misleading. While it is of paramount importance that sick people stay at home to avoid infecting others, it is increasingly clear that transmission can occur before symptoms develop. We know this is true from modelling and observational studies. I have seen it happen myself. We do not know how often it occurs or how important it is in epidemiology, but it definitely does happen.

The UK should not be trying to create herd immunity, that will take care of itself. Policy should be directed at slowing the outbreak to a (more) manageable rate. What this looks like is strong social distancing. Anyone who can work from home, should. People who do not yet work from home should be encouraged to do so. Employers should guarantee sick pay, including for contacts of known cases, and do everything they can to discourage the practice of "presenteeism". You should not shake hands. Not with anyone. You should wash your hands for 20 seconds several times a day and whenever you enter your home (or someone else's home). Call a halt to large gatherings. Educate people about masks and how they should be reserved for the medical professionals who need them. All this and more **should** have started weeks ago.

Deciding whether to close schools is hard; they do so much more than just education. But this is a pandemic, and so you should expect they will be shut sooner or later. In Hong Kong, they have been shut for weeks. If you hear any talking head on TV explain that kids don't get sick, remember that doesn't mean kids cannot be infected and transmitted. It's probably a good idea to hold off on visits to Nana and Grandpa.

The most fundamental function of a government is to keep its people safe. It is from this that it derives its authority, the confidence of the people and its legitimacy. Nobody should be under the illusion that this is something that can be dodged through somehow manipulating a virus that we are only beginning to understand. This will not pass you by: this is not a tornado; it is a hurricane.

Don't panic, but **do** prepare. If your government won't help you, do it yourself.

- ***Dr William Hanage is a professor of the evolution and epidemiology of infectious disease at Harvard.***

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Source: COVID-19: guidance for employees, employers and businesses (poster)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19>

Text B



## Employers and businesses guidance

Common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19)



new and continuous cough

or



high temperature

If **you have symptoms** of coronavirus, you need to **self-isolate for 7 days**

If **you live with someone who has symptoms**, you need to **self-isolate for 14 days** from the day their symptoms started

Only use **NHS 111** if your symptoms get worse or are no better after home isolation

### Stop the spread of coronavirus





**Wash your hands more often and for 20 seconds**

Use soap and water or a hand sanitiser when you:

- Get home or into work
- Blow your nose, sneeze or cough
- Eat or handle food





Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze and throw the tissue away straight away



**Businesses and workplaces should encourage their employees to work at home, wherever possible**



Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using your standard cleaning products



**Employees will need your support** to adhere to the recommendation to stay at home to reduce the spread of coronavirus to others

Those who follow advice to stay at home will be eligible for **statutory sick pay (SSP) from the first day** of their absence from work

**Employers should use their discretion** concerning the need for medical evidence for certification for employees who are unwell. This will allow GPs to focus on their patients

If someone becomes unwell in the workplace with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, **they should be sent home**

Employees from **defined vulnerable** groups should be strongly advised and supported to stay at home and work from there if possible

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## Questions – Text A

1. Give 3 examples of opinions presented as facts.

1.	
2.	
3.	

2. How does the text show bias? Give examples from the text.

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3. Find three different language techniques in the text and give an example.

Language Technique	Example from text
1.	
2.	
3.	

4. What is meant by the phrase “This will not pass you by: this is not a tornado; it is a hurricane”?

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5. Name two layout features of the text that show that it is an article.


6. What is the purpose of the text?

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7. Give examples of three things the professor says you should not do during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.
2.
3.

8. According to the text, why will the mortality rate climb?

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## Questions – Text B

9. Give examples of 3 facts from the text.

1.
2.
3.

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10. Give 2 examples of what you must do to stop the spread of coronavirus.

1.
2.

11. What is the purpose of the text? (Pick 2 options)

To inform		To describe		To advise	
To persuade		To advertise		To entertain	

12. State two things an employer should do according to the text?

1.
2.

13. Explain how the way the text is set out helps readers to understand the information.

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## Questions – both texts

14. Find similarities between text A and text B. Give examples from the text.

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15. You want to take precautions on Covid-19. Which text would you follow and why?

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