W6A-Lesson 3

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The Spanish Flu Pandemic

Today, Covid-19 took over the planet. Many people died. This reminds me of a famous historical event – *the Spanish Flu*. It started in 1918, in a small place called Camp Funston, Kansas in the United States. The symptoms included fever and headache. In the summer, it spread quickly to the Europe. It infected almost one-third of the population all over the world. About 30 to 50 million people died. It also appeared in China in June. This was only the first wave.

The second wave started in August. On a boat from South Africa to the UK, almost 75 percent of the crew were infected. It also appeared in the Boston wharf around the same time. It was reported that there was an outbreak in France. By November, the Spanish flu took over both the US and Europe, and the rest of the world. Unlike an ordinary flu, the mortality was extremely high, especially among young population. October was the darkest month in the American history. 20 million people died in that month alone. It was not the end. A third wave started in the winter of 1919 in many parts of the world. By the winter of 1920, it disappeared mysteriously.

Why would people call it *the Spanish Flu*? It started during World War I. Many governments kept the outbreak as top secrets due to the war. Spain was a neutral country. The pandemic was first reported in the news there. So people assumed that it started in Spain. Trump called Covid-19 the Chinese virus or Wuhan virus. Scientists found Covid-19 virus in the waste water system in Italy back in 2019. Perhaps the virus co-existed with human beings for a long time, and it became more infectious in Wuhan last December. I hope that in the future, scientists can tell us where the virus really came from and how.

Why is the virus so dangerous, and what can we do to protect ourselves? As early as in 2015, during the Ebola outbreak, Bill Gates predicted that in the decade or two, an epidemic will present a huge challenge to human beings. We paid a lot of attention to nuclear wars, but very little to building a system to prevent epidemic outbreak. In fact, Bill Gates said that we didn’t even have a working system at all.

Today, it is a small world after all. Comparing with 1918, we have much advanced medicines and technology. I am confident that this will end soon and we can go back to normal lives. Governments should work together to fight the outbreak rather than pointing fingers. People should better protect themselves and others by wearing facial masks and stop big gathering. Scientists in different countries must work closely with each other to develop vaccine as soon as possible.