



Vicenza Elementary  
School

Vicenza, Italy

2020

## Welcome to Mrs. Tramm's Virtual Classroom

Dear Readers,

Each day during online instruction I updated my virtual classroom to include daily assignments, community information, a calendar, and parent news. This virtual classroom will serve as a Reader's Guide for *100 Days Smart: A Kindergarten Teacher Shares Lessons on Life, Learning, and Community During the COVID-19 Outbreak in Bella Italia* by Karin Tramm, published by Elva Resa Publishing. I hope to spark some thoughtful reflection, positive conversations, and new insight into your own personal accounts. Although the pandemic experience was universal, everyone's realities were particular to time and place. Everyone's story is valid, unique, and deserves to be respected.

### Social Studies

- Many people experienced isolation and anxiety during the lockdown. Karin and Gene participated in Navy Happy Hour every Saturday to help maintain their sense of community. How did social networking help you nurture connections during the pandemic? Do any of these social networks still exist in your life today?
- Karin and Gene missed her parents' 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, birthdays, funerals, and later, Will's graduation. What was your perspective about missing significant family events? How did you support these occasions when the lockdown occurred?
- Karin needed routine and predictability and felt strained when she was forced to change her plans. What plan changes did COVID-19 impose upon you? What changes did you find most difficult? What challenges turned into opportunities for growth?

## Vocabulary Quiz

- What one word best describes your feelings at the onset of the pandemic and why? Did your word change as events unfolded?
- What one word reflects your thoughts today? Why?



## Geography



- Karin and Gene began 2020 in Italy, with Will in Miami and Ian in Thailand. When their sons needed to come home, neither of them could legally travel to Italy. What geographical boundaries were a challenge for you during the pandemic? How did you cope with and overcome the complications?
- Family values and respect for the elderly helped Italians quickly fall in line with the strict requirements imposed during the lockdown. What cultural dynamics affected your pandemic experience? Did cultural differences strengthen or strain your situation?
- Living overseas promotes a deeper understanding of cultural similarities and differences. What impact has overseas life or travel had on you? What kind of experiences changed your perspective and made you more of a world citizen?

## Technology Challenge!

- DoDEA facilitated online training for their teachers to help with the switch from face-to-face to virtual instruction. Some teachers found the shift easy while others struggled. Did you need to overcome technology challenges for your work? If so, what kind of training did you receive or were you on your own? Did you continue to use new technology strategies after returning to the workplace?
- When schools shut down, students of all ages were required to use computers as primary instructional tools. Karin shares some feelings about using computers in a kindergarten classroom. How do you feel about young children using computers at school? How do you feel about young children using tablets and phones at home?

## Writer's Workshop

- Ian wrote the poem *exodus pandemia*, and Will wrote the song *Too Fast, Too Slow*. Journaling helped Karin process what was going on in her life, both personally and professionally. What writing genre would you use to best encapsulate your pandemic experience and why?
- When has writing helped you bring healing and closure to a traumatic event?

## Homework

- Karin taught kindergarten at home in her kitchen for the remainder of the school year. Did you work remotely during the pandemic? If so, how did it change the way you felt about your job? How did you feel upon return? Were there permanent changes to your job that came about as a result of the pandemic?
- Many essential workers were on duty during the lockdown. Did your job require you to report to your workplace in person? If so, what were your feelings about working face to face during the lockdown? Did you feel safe and supported in your work environment?



## Library News

- Do any circumstances in *100 Days Smart* parallel your own personal experiences? How were your experiences unique? How has this story enabled you to process your own story?
- Karin tried to keep things in perspective by looking for a silver lining. From your perspective, were there any silver linings during the pandemic? Do you think humor can be an appropriate and effective way to keep the situation in perspective?
- Reading can be a stress reliever and an escape from reality. Did your reading habits change during the lockdown? Did you read more or less? Why?
- Have you read other books about the pandemic? How do they compare to your own personal experiences?

## Lunch

- When lockdown conditions began to ease, Karin and Gene were both excited and nervous to go to lunch with their friends. How did you feel about going out after the lockdown? Did you have concerns about health repercussions and if so, how did you manage them?

## Parents

- Karin writes about the importance of predictability and routine. What impact did the lockdown have on your family routines during and after the pandemic? Were your changes temporary or permanent? What negative changes turned out to have positive outcomes?
- Not only did routines change, many families also changed parameters regarding food, screentime, and other set rules. How did your parental choices change during the pandemic? In retrospect, what changes would have been different knowing what you know today?
- Karin and her sister Barbara were concerned for the safety of their almost eighty-year-old parents. When Karin asked her parents not to go to church and said, "I wish I could just tell you what to do!" her father replied, "It sounds like you just did." Their mom said she felt like she had two mothers trying to watch over her. Did you experience any role shifts with family members? How did the role shifts change over time?

## Counselor's Corner

- Ian was swiftly evacuated from Thailand with very short notice and nowhere to go. Will's college advised all students to go home but he was unable to travel to Italy. Were you separated from family members during the onset of the pandemic? How did you feel about not being there to help them during this crisis? What were some strategies you used to cope with these feelings? How did you help your family members cope?
- Karin and Gene were able to take daily walks down their long driveway for exercise and escape. How were you able to effectively deal with the stress and isolation of lockdown? What outlets, both physical and mental, helped you persevere?
- Karin recounts an experience, when returning to her classroom over a year later, that triggered an unexpected emotional response. Have you noticed any lingering triggers that call up certain events or memories? Have your feelings about those events changed over time?

## Grazie Mille!

I hope this guide has inspired you to recognize and reflect on lessons learned about life and community. We all have a story to tell and I hope that my story has helped lend perspective to your own story. Thanks for reading!

Share this book: <https://elvaresa.com/book/100-days-smart/>