

A Good Response to Coronavirus Fears? Read More History

The new coronavirus (N-COV 2019) has already caused terrible suffering in China, and it looks set to wreak havoc on life abroad and in the United States, as well (see this piece in *The Atlantic* on why infection is likely) It's likely to overwhelm hospitals, contribute to shortages, and disrupt the financial markets.

I've been spending a lot of time in the past few days thinking about how I might prepare and respond.

I can prep by buying food and water (already partly done). I can plan to relocate to a safer place to ride out the storm. I can buy protective gear. I can let my friends and family know to prepare.

These are all measures I'm taking to look into a (darker) future. But it's also been good just to read about the past.

I'm currently listening to an audiobook version of *All the Light We Cannot See*, and while it isn't history, this historical fiction work does a fine job of painting the desperation of the people of France in the lead-up to the German invasion of 1940 and in the years of occupation to follow. Millions of people had to experience the terror of being uprooted from their homes, losing their possessions, or dying by the sword.

This was only 80 years ago. Many disasters came before. Many disasters have come since. And somehow humans have lived through them all, found meaning in them all, and risen to the challenges of their time.

Read about the survivors of World War 2, the experience of life during the Black Plague, the lives of people under the Taliban. There's something to learn from them – and it's not just how to survive. They show us that we aren't alone. They show us that crisis is normal, and important for human life.

Every generation has its crisis: coronavirus may just be ours.

Originally published at JamesWalpole.com.