

# Reporting on the Spanish Flu in Conwy, Labrador

In this activity, students will step into the shoes of an historian by analyzing data and writing a popular news article about the impact of the Spanish Flu on a remote community in 1918.

**Length** 📄 30 minutes - 1 hour and 30 minutes (Small Problem)

**Prerequisites** Proportions, Measures of Centre, Basic Excel

**Concepts** Proportions, Measures of Centre

**Theme** Health

**Discipline** History



## Scenario

As an historian with an expertise in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Canadian history, you have spent many years studying the devastating Spanish influenza of 1918-1919. Known as the “Spanish Flu,” this pandemic killed somewhere between 20 and 40 million people worldwide (more than the First World War!). In your own research you have been particularly interested in trying to understand the impact of the pandemic on remote communities in Canada. After years of painstaking research gathering newspaper clippings, oral histories, and other pieces of evidence, you have built a picture of the devastation brought on by the Flu in the remote community of Conwy, Labrador.\* You know that within a few weeks almost the entire community was wiped out by the Flu in late 1918, and that freezing temperatures added to the horrific experience of those who survived as it became impossible to bury the dead. Through your research you have managed to share the stories of this community, but you have never managed to find a complete record of exactly how many and who in particular were affected. Your picture has for so long been incomplete... **until now!**

Just last week while sifting through a local archive, you stumbled upon a recently acquired community ledger from the winter of 1918. To your surprise, the ledger happened to include a comprehensive list of all those who were living in Conwy at the time the Flu struck in November and December of 1918, including indications of how many people contracted the Flu, how many survived it and how many died from it, as well as the age and sex of every community member.

## What you need to produce

A brief news story (~100 words) about the impact of the Spanish Flu on Conwy, Labrador.



## Evaluation grid

Understanding & Interpretation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Impact of the Flu on Conwy is explained using well-chosen proportions and measures of centre that are clearly introduced and interpreted</li> </ul>	/5
Writing & Style	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing is formal in tone, and explains data points in clear language</li> </ul>	/2
Requirements	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Text includes correctly computed proportions and measures of centre</li> <li>Text meets required length (~100 words)</li> </ul>	/3
<b>Total</b>	<b>/10</b>

## Breakdown of the problem

As it is now one hundred years since the Spanish Flu struck, *The Globe and Mail* newspaper has recently been in touch with you to request that you write a short news story about your research on the impact of the influenza on remote Canadian communities. Now that you have found the community ledger, you will be able to include specific information about the impact of the Flu on Conwy in your article. You want your news story to answer the following questions.

**How did the Flu impact Conwy? Were some affected more than others?**

Using the data from the ledger (in corresponding Excel file), **write a short paragraph (~100 words) describing the impact of the Spanish Flu on Conwy** for your upcoming *Globe and Mail* news article. **Be sure to use relevant proportions and measures of centre** in order to describe the effects of the Flu on Conwy in a precise manner, and **be sure to also explain these measures** using language that people without a quantitative methods background will be able to understand (as in this case you are writing about your research for a popular news source).



## References

1. Higgins, J. (2007). The 1918 Spanish Flu. *Heritage Newfoundland and Labrador*. Retrieved from <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/articles/politics/1918-spanish-flu.php>
2. Noymer, A., & Garenne, M. (2000). The 1918 Influenza Epidemic's Effects on Sex Differentials in Mortality in the United States. *Population and Development Review*, 26(3), 565-581. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2740912/>

