News coverage of the novel coronavirus pandemic provides abundant information: everything from infection data by zip code to Vietnam’s success story of containment. But beyond the data, how do we make sense of this experience? In January our tutorial group will use art--largely creative nonfiction prose, but other forms as well--as a tool to explore the seismic shifts that are happening underneath and within our daily lives. We’ll engage with pandemic stories, including tales of Florentines quarantining from the bubonic plague in the 14 century, contemporary commentary, short fiction from the New York Times’ Decameron Project, podcasts set in Israel and Ireland, photos essays, murals, illustrations, and protest art. By the end of our intensive three-week course, each of us will have produced a piece of art—a polished essay, a set of comics, or perhaps a musical composition—to help us make sense of this historic experience. Publication will be encouraged, though not required.

Katie Quirk is the author of A Girl Called Problem, a Kirkus-starred middle-grade novel set in post-independence Tanzania. Her essays and articles have appeared in publications including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Orion, and The Los Angeles Times. Wondering if this is the right tutorial for you? Email Katie: kathleen.quirk@maine.edu