

A Seamstress During the Pandemic

There Have Been Many Changes

Alida Madzou

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. The word seamstress comes from the old English word “seamster,” a tailor or person who sews seams. The suffix “ess” makes it feminine. (Other examples: waitress or actress.)
2. How do you think a seamstress’s work would be affected by the pandemic?

I started to work as a seamstress at American Roots two years ago, in 2018. American Roots is a company that makes jackets, hoodies, t-shirts, and many other types of clothing. Before the coronavi-



Alida Madzou at her workstation.

rus, everything was working smoothly. For example, I worked a regular schedule, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and I sewed clothing. Since the outbreak of the coronavirus, there have been many changes in my workplace.

First, the biggest change is that we don’t sew clothing anymore. Now we sew only masks for nurses, medical workers, and doctors. For me, it is good that the company decided to use our skills to help other people.

The company is using its resources to take care of other people, not just to make clothing to sell.

Another change is that management changed our workspace. We have plastic walls that divide the seam-

stresses into three groups. Now we cannot see the others who are right next to us. We are working in isolation and without talking. It is lonely because before the pandemic we used to have an open room where we could hear and see each other.

Also, we now have fewer exits and entrances at work. Before the pandemic, there were three doors for exiting and entering the workroom. Now, we have just one door that we use to exit and enter. We have to do this for many reasons. We need to put a distance of six feet between the seamstresses as we enter our workspace. Only one person at a time comes in.

Finally, there is one more big change. Before work, everyone has their temperature checked, and they need to get clean gloves and put them on before they enter the workplace. I think it is good that they are checking everyone because some-

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times I worry about going to work. I have a small son, and I don't want him to get sick.

Although there are a lot of changes at my workplace, the changes are not too bad. And there is one good part. People who work now make more money because they work more hours, and they work more overtime hours. I wasn't sure in the beginning if I was going to have work, so I am happy to have a job making masks for people who need them.

Alida Madzou is a student at Portland Adult Education in Portland, ME. She lives and works in Westbrook, Maine. She is from Congo Brazzaville (what many people call Small Congo). She has been living in Maine since 2016. She has one son. Her dream is to learn more so she can be a dress designer someday.

AFTER YOU READ: Look back over the essay. How does the author organize her thoughts? Make an outline that shows the structure of this essay.



Alida Madzou hopes to become a dress designer someday.



Plastic sheets divide the workspace at American Roots.

What Is Different about Your Workplace?

Write your own essay about what is different in your workplace. Follow these steps:

1. Brainstorm a list of things that are different in your workplace.
2. Organize the items on your list so that similar items are in a group.
3. Write an outline.
4. Write a first draft and get feedback.
5. Write a second draft and get more feedback.

If you aren't working, write about what is different in a workplace that you know about.