



9/11 Instructional Unit IX

Grades 6-8



This unit is designed to increase understanding about September 11, 2001 among middle school students, grades 6-8. This Guide includes ancillary social studies lessons, learning activities and background for teachers. From basic facts about America's darkest day to the different experiences had by survivors and first responders of the day, this unit will give students a strong foundational understanding of 9/11.

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To the Teacher

This unit is designed for teaching the events of September 11, 2001 to grades 6-8. This Guide lays out an approach for students to acquire a deeper understanding of the heroism displayed by real people on 9/11, the perseverance of people following the attacks, as well as the impact that 9/11 continues to have on people today.

In addition, this unit approach encompasses best of practice regarding pedagogy and application of Learning Standards. Each section of the Guide is replete with guiding questions.

Unit Adaptation/Differentiation

To facilitate learning and tasks for English Language Learners (ELL) and students with special needs (SPED), modifications may have to be made. For example, more time may be needed in reviewing vocabulary and explaining who people are and the situations they find themselves in. Also, adjustments like closed captions may need to be made for hearing impaired students when watching videos.

Unit Implementation Schedule

It is recommended that unit implementation take place at any time during the school year, especially on or near September 11.

Unit Description

This unit is designed to increase understanding about September 11, 2001 among middle school students, grades 6-8. This Guide includes ancillary social studies lessons, learning activities and background for teachers. From basic facts about America's darkest day to the different experiences had by survivors and first responders of the day, this unit will give students a strong foundational understanding of 9/11.

Unit Objectives

All students will:

- Complete learning tasks to better understand the events of 9/11 as they unfolded around the country.
- Understand the importance of remembering 9/11 heroes.
- Sense the emotional impact 9/11 had on the nation.
- Understand the impact that 9/11 continues to have on people today.
- Perceive a personal need to remember 9/11 to honor the fallen.

THE UNIT TEACHING/LEARNING PROCESSES
SUPPORT LEARNING STANDARDS.

Instructional Focus

- Answering questions based on information gained from primary sources.
- Make arguments to support claims.
- Generating questions from multiple sources to pursue further inquiry.

9/11 Background Information

For the Teacher

The sole purpose of this 9/11 background information is to provide you, the teacher, with a snapshot of what happened on that day.

On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked with a series of airline hijackings committed by 19 militants associated with the Islamic extremist group al-Qaeda. These were the deadliest terrorist attacks on American soil in U.S. history. In New York City 2,753 people were killed, at the Pentagon 184, and in Pennsylvania, where one of the hijacked planes crashed after the passengers attempted to retake control of the plane, 40 died. All of the terrorists died in what were suicide attacks. Firefighters, police and paramedics in New York City were especially impacted as hundreds rushed to the scene of the attacks. More than 400 were killed; 343 were members of the Fire Department of New York City (FDNY).

Most of the hijackers were from Saudi Arabia, and many were in the U.S. prior to the attacks. They traveled in small groups while some received flight training in the United States just prior to the attacks. On September 11, 2001, groups of attackers boarded four domestic aircrafts at three East Coast airports. Soon after takeoff they disabled the flight crews using box cutters as weapons. They took control of the aircrafts, which were headed for the West Coast with full loads of fuel.

At 8:46 a.m. American Airlines flight 11, which left from Boston, was flown into the North Tower of the World Trade Center's (WTC) Twin Towers. Initially, most people thought this was an accident. Seventeen minutes later, at 9:03 a.m., United Airlines flight 175 from Boston struck the South Tower. Then, the U.S. knew it was under attack. The Twin Towers were badly damaged and in flames, with workers trapped above the points of contact. Rather than face death in the infernos that were raging, some chose to leap to their deaths.

At 9:37 a.m. the third plane, American Airlines flight 77, which left Dulles International Airport near Washington, D.C. earlier, struck the southwest side of the Pentagon, which is just outside of the city, touching off a dangerous fire. Minutes later the Federal Aviation Authority ordered a nationwide ground stop for all aircraft for the first time in history.

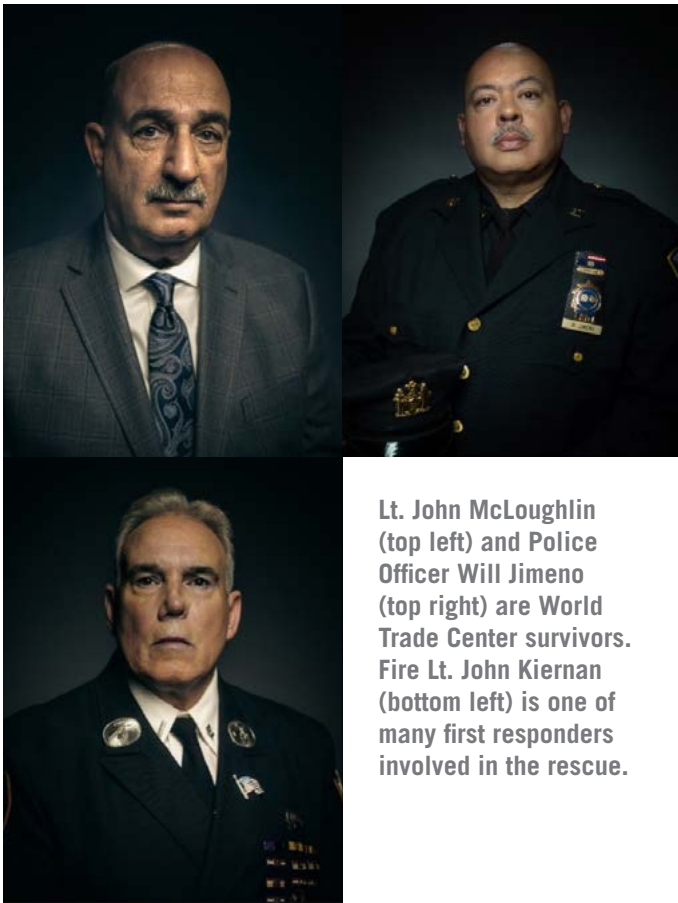
At 9:59 a.m., people around the world watched in disbelief as the South Tower of the WTC collapsed. At 10:03 a.m. the fourth aircraft, United Airlines flight 93, which left from Newark, NJ, crashed near Shanksville, PA, countryside after its passengers attempted to overpower the terrorists. The passengers on this flight were aware of what was happening in New York and at the Pentagon through their cellular phones and decided to take matters into their own hands to spare another building or landmark from being hit. At 10:28 a.m., the North Tower of the WTC collapsed just 102 minutes after being struck.

After the attacks, authorities quickly learned that Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda organization were solely responsible. Osama bin Laden made a declaration of holy war against the U.S. 9/11 was the darkest day in America's history, as it was the deadliest terror attack to ever take place on U.S. soil.

Lesson 1: Rescue from Ground Zero

Background for the Teacher

Video Summary



Lt. John McLoughlin (top left) and Police Officer Will Jimeno (top right) are World Trade Center survivors. Fire Lt. John Kiernan (bottom left) is one of many first responders involved in the rescue.

Lieutenant John McLoughlin from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department (PAPD), Police Officer Will Jimeno from the PAPD and Lieutenant John Kiernan from the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) discuss their experiences on September 11, 2001. Lieutenant McLoughlin recounts the morning of September 11, 2001, when he was

Sergeant in the PAPD. Upon learning there was a problem at the World Trade Center (WTC) all units were called back to their desks to mobilize and go down to the WTC to assist. Lieutenant McLoughlin asked for volunteers who knew how to use SCOTT air packs to go into the building. Officer Jimeno and other officers volunteered. They gathered safety equipment and headed across the WTC concourse to Tower 1, also known as the North Tower of the Twin Towers. While they were in the concourse between Tower 1 and Tower 2, which was the South Tower of the Twin Towers, Lieutenant McLoughlin looked into the lobby of Tower 2 and could see it rolling towards them. Officer Jimeno saw a large fireball from Tower 2 and looked up to see everything shaking. The men did not know the building was collapsing, and Lieutenant McLoughlin ordered his crew to run towards a freight elevator lobby, hopeful that the huge debris field would keep rolling past them and they could seek shelter from the walls of the elevator lobby. Officer Jimeno grabbed his PAPD radio and started yelling into it, "Officers down." Three of the men were able to make the turn into the freight elevator lobby and were alive, but trapped, when the building came down. Lieutenant McLoughlin was unable to hear or see immediately after the collapse, but then when his senses came back, he asked everyone to sound off, or say their names aloud, to see what their situations were. The only officers who answered were Officer Jimeno and Officer Dominick Pezzulo. Officer Pezzulo was trapped, but able to free himself. The men still did not know that the entire building had collapsed on them. Lieutenant McLoughlin asked Officer Pezzulo to try and dig Officer Jimeno out first, then dig him out, however Officer Jimeno was trapped under concrete and Officer Pezzulo was unable to free him. When Tower 1 collapsed they heard another loud roar and debris started falling into the area where they were trapped. A piece of debris fatally hit Officer Pezzulo. Lieutenant McLoughlin became even more trapped, with debris crushing his bones.

Fireballs were coming through the area, burning Officer Jimeno's arm, but he was able to throw dirt on the fires to put them out. Officer Pezzulo's gun started to discharge, and bullets started firing in the area where Officer Jimeno and Lieutenant McLoughlin were trapped. After hours had passed Officer Jimeno heard someone and yelled to them. Two men from the Emergency Service Unit (ESU) and a former paramedic managed to work their way to Officer Jimeno with the help of many other first responders. They removed debris and crawled into the hole to rescue Officer Jimeno. Officer Jimeno asked them to rescue his Sergeant, but the men thought he was talking about Officer Pezzulo, who was deceased, so they covered Officer Pezzulo's body and told Officer Jimeno they had to get him out first. The men were told to leave Officer Jimeno behind, because the conditions were very dangerous, but they refused the orders. After working for hours, they were able to free Officer Jimeno, and they realized that Lieutenant McLoughlin was buried beneath him. Lieutenant Kiernan and other rescuers made their way to the area where Officer Jimeno was extricated, and Lieutenant McLoughlin was buried deeper. Lieutenant Kiernan along with the group of responders began digging with their hands and crawling through the hole to try and reach Lieutenant McLoughlin, who was trapped several feet below Officer Jimeno. The space was small so Lieutenant Kiernan and the responders could not use any equipment or safety gear. They crawled through the hole with fires and smoke around them until they made a passageway to Lieutenant McLoughlin. Once they were able to free Lieutenant McLoughlin up to his armpit, they were able to bring in a paramedic to give him an IV and help slow the crush syndrome that was setting in and beginning to shut down Lieutenant McLoughlin's organs. After working for hours and rotating crews of people under the supervision of the Rescue Units, they were able to free Lieutenant McLoughlin. When Lieutenant

McLoughlin was extricated and moved to a hospital, he was put in a medically induced coma for six weeks. He was in a wheelchair for two years and had occupational and physical therapy for three years to learn to walk again. Altogether, he has had 34 operations and he still has open wounds that doctors have been unable to close. He also has health issues with his sinuses, lungs and stomach from the debris that was pushed into his body. Officer Jimeno uses a leg brace to walk and has many scars, but he is grateful for all the people who risked their lives to help them.

The movie, *World Trade Center*, directed by American film director and screenwriter Oliver Stone, tells the heroic tale of Lieutenant John McLoughlin and Police Officer Will Jimeno. During the film's production, Oliver Stone called upon many of the brave rescuers to give details about their experiences and help make the movie as authentic as possible. After many conversations on set about the technique and skill used to rescue Officer Jimeno and Lieutenant McLoughlin, many of the rescuers played themselves in the movie's rescue scene, rescuing Lieutenant McLoughlin, who was played by actor Nicholas Cage.

1. Begin With an Essential Question

What was the experience of someone who lived through September 11, 2001?

(The Essential Question is not designed to be answered directly. It is the overarching or big question. Its answer is contained within student responses to the guided questions.)

2. Introduce the Lesson

Teacher reads the overarching question of the lesson.

Teacher asks students to share if they have prior knowledge of the 9/11 attacks.

Teacher explains, “On September 11, 2001, America was attacked in multiple cities. Four planes were hijacked, or unlawfully taken, and crashed into multiple locations. Two planes were crashed into the Twin Towers, two of the world’s tallest buildings at the time, located in New York City. One plane was crashed into the Pentagon, which is headquarters for the U.S. Department of Defense. Passengers on board the fourth plane fought against the people who had hijacked their plane and the plane was brought down in an empty field near Shanksville, PA, about 20 minutes flying time from Washington D.C. According to the 9/11 Commission Report it is believed that the target for that plane was likely the White House or the U.S. Capitol. Today we are going to be focusing on the attack in New York City at the Twin Towers. The Twin Towers were two buildings that were part of a group of buildings that made up the World Trade Center. When the buildings were struck by planes hundreds of emergency personnel were called to help evacuate the area and contain the damage that was caused. With civilians and emergency personnel trapped inside, the Twin Towers collapsed. 2,753 people lost their lives in New York City on September 11, 2001. There were only a few people who were alive and rescued from ground zero, the area in NYC where both buildings collapsed. Today we are going to watch a video that shows the experience of the last two men who were rescued after being buried under the ruins of the World Trade Center and one of the many rescuers who worked tirelessly to help get them out.”

3. Introduce the Video

Teacher says, “We are going to watch a video where two Port Authority Police Department Officers, Lieutenant John McLoughlin, who was a Sergeant at the time, and Officer Will Jimeno recount their morning and the hours they spent trapped in the rubble on September 11, 2001. We will also see Lieutenant John Kiernan from the Fire Department of the City of New York discuss what the rescue of Lieutenant McLoughlin was like. As we watch, let’s

focus on the different experiences that each of them had, despite being a part of the same tragic event in American history.”

Teacher then plays the video of Rescue from Ground Zero located [here](https://www.t2t.org/lesson-rescue-from-ground-zero/) [T2T.org/lesson-rescue-from-ground-zero].

4. Students’ Task

After viewing the video, students should answer the following questions.

1. What were the conditions like when Lieutenant McLoughlin and Officer Jimeno were first trapped? How did those conditions change after the second Tower fell?
(Responses may vary, but the officers were trapped between concrete and debris. Lieutenant McLoughlin and Officer Jimeno were unable to move most of their bodies and it was very painful. Officer Dominick Pezzulo was able to free himself and tried to free Officer Jimeno but was unable to. When the second Tower fell, debris fell in the area where they were trapped, fatally injuring Officer Pezzulo, and crushing Lieutenant McLoughlin further. The conditions became extremely painful for Lieutenant McLoughlin and Officer Jimeno. As time went on, fire was burning Officer Jimeno and bullets were discharging from Officer Pezzulo’s gun.)
2. When Lieutenant Kiernan and the other responders began digging to reach Lieutenant McLoughlin, what challenges did they face?
(Responses may vary, but Lieutenant Kiernan and the other responders had to crawl through the debris without any gear or equipment to reach Lieutenant McLoughlin. There was fire and smoke and they needed to move the debris without any tools, because the space was too small to fit the machinery they would typically use. The rescue took hours, so the crews of

people working painstakingly to free Lieutenant McLoughlin had to be rotated.)

3. What challenges did Lieutenant McLoughlin and Officer Jimeno face when they were finally rescued from Ground Zero?

(Responses may vary, but Lieutenant McLoughlin suffered from crush syndrome and his lungs and kidneys started shutting down. Luckily, a paramedic was able to give him an IV, while trapped, to help suppress it until he could reach a hospital for more medical help. When Lieutenant McLoughlin was extricated and moved to a hospital, he was put in a medically induced coma for six weeks, he was in a wheelchair for two years and had occupational and physical therapy for three years to learn to walk again. Altogether, he has had 34 operations and he still has open wounds that doctors have been unable to close. He also has health issues with his sinuses, lungs and stomach from the debris that was pushed into his body. Officer Jimeno uses a leg brace to walk and has many scars.)

Teacher should go over the answers to the questions and allow the students time to share their answers with the class.

Lesson 2: The Pentagon – Marilyn Wills

Background for the Teacher

Video Summary



Marilyn Wills recounts September 11, 2001, when she was the Congressional Liaison Officer for the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in the U.S. Army. Marilyn was sitting in a meeting when the plane penetrated the Pentagon. During the meeting, the Colonel reached Marilyn Wills and it was her time to share her information, but suddenly the lights went off and the room became warm. When she came to, she had been thrown on the other side of the table. She crawled out of the room, and someone grabbed the back of her belt. The woman was named Lois and Marilyn told her to hold on to her and follow her. They began their crawl from the E ring to the C ring of the Pentagon. They crawled in and out of cubicles,

unable to see, because the building was so dark. Lois felt like she could not go on, and Marilyn told her to get on her back and she would carry her. When she did this Marilyn realized there were six other people following behind her. Marilyn kept Lois on her back and crawled until they reached a window, and she realized her Colonel was also behind her. Marilyn and her Colonel banged on the window and the window frame until finally it budged a small amount and smoke began to billow out. They pushed it so that it would open outward, and they could see the people below them on A-E Drive telling them to jump, they would catch them. Marilyn Wills received a Purple Heart for the injuries she sustained on September 11, 2001. She has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), she suffered burns, and she had a frozen shoulder which left her unable to use her right arm for years.

1. Begin With an Essential Question

What was the experience of someone who lived through September 11, 2001?

(The Essential Question is not designed to be answered directly. It is the overarching or big question. Its answer is contained within student responses to the guided questions.)

2. Introduce the Lesson

Teacher reads the overarching question of the lesson.

Teacher says, “Yesterday we discussed what happened on September 11, 2001. We learned about the experience of Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department (PAPD) Lieutenant John McLoughlin and PAPD Police Officer Will Jimeno, who were trapped beneath the rubble of ground zero in New York City. Today we will learn about the experience of Marilyn Wills who survived the attack at the Pentagon.”

3. Introduce the Pentagon Photographs

Teacher hands out or displays the sheet, Pentagon Photographs, located in the Appendix of Unit Materials, for students to view while they discuss background information. The teacher should point out the parts of the photographs as they discuss them.

Pointing to the first picture, teacher says, “This is the Pentagon. You’ll notice it is in the shape of a pentagon, which is how it got its name. The building is made up of five separate rings that are connected. As we said yesterday, the Pentagon is headquarters for the United States Department of Defense. This means it is a United States government building that provides military forces needed to protect the United States of America. The U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force have headquarters there. Can someone tell us what it means to say they have headquarters there?”

(Headquarters means they have offices in the building and command or control their units from there.)

Pointing to the second picture, teacher says, “On September 11, 2001 the plane crashed into the west side of the Pentagon and penetrated three of the five rings. The building was being renovated, and luckily where the plane crashed there were many offices not in use at the time, which saved lives.”

4. Introduce the Video

Teacher says, “We will now watch a video from a survivor of the attack on the Pentagon. This is Marilyn Wills’ heroic story.”

Teacher then plays the video of Marilyn Wills, located [here](https://www.t2t.org/lesson-marilyn-wills) [T2T.org/lesson-marilyn-wills].

5. Students’ Task

After viewing the video students should answer the following questions.

1. What words would you use to describe Marilyn Wills when she would not leave Lois behind?

(Answers may vary, but one could say they could describe Marilyn Wills as courageous, or brave, for not leaving Lois behind. She stayed with her and helped her even when Lois wanted to give up.)

2. How do you think they felt, when they reached the windows and finally were able to open one window?

(Answers may vary, but one could say they felt relief, hope, or joy when they reached the windows and finally opened one window, because they had crawled for so long to find it, and once they found it, they had to work very hard to open it.)

3. Why did Marilyn Wills receive a Purple Heart? *(Marilyn Wills received a Purple Heart for injuries sustained on September 11, 2001. She has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), she suffered burns, and she had a frozen shoulder which left her unable to use her right arm for years.)*

It should be explained to the students that an individual might suffer from PTSD if they have experienced a terrifying event. When a person lives through a terrifying event, they might have trouble adjusting afterwards, and this leads to PTSD. There can be many symptoms, but some symptoms are recurring memories or dreams of the event, or stressful reactions to situations that remind the individual of the event. An example is a soldier after they return from war might not be able to visit crowded or loud places, because it makes them feel a sense of danger, like they did when they were in combat.)

Teacher should go over the answers to the questions and allow the students time to share their answers with the class.

6. 9/11 Pentagon Memorial

Pointing to the third picture on the Pentagon Photographs sheet, teacher says, “184 people lost their lives at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. There have been memorials created around the country and the world to honor the victims of September 11, 2001. The bottom picture shows the memorial created at the Pentagon to honor the 184 lives that were lost there.”

7. Extension

As an extension, students can write an argumentative paragraph where they explain how Marilyn Wills’ actions on September 11, 2001 relate to the following quote by American actor and film director Christopher Reeve:

“A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles.”

Lesson 3: The Pentagon – Luticia Hook

Background for the Teacher

Video Summary



Luticia Hook worked at the Pentagon for 29 years and 8 months and was set to retire in December 2001. She was just made secretary by her bowling league and on the morning of September 11, 2001, she took her things and was on her way to the bank in the Pentagon to open an account when the plane penetrated the building. Luticia didn't know what was happening, but she remembered a lot of water. She yelled for help and a firefighter heard her and took her to the heliport. At the heliport they were told she

couldn't get on a plane, so the responders put her on a stretcher and took her through a tunnel to Pentagon City. Responders took her to the burn unit in Washington Center Hospital, where she stayed for three months and two weeks. Many of Luticia Hook's coworkers perished in the attacks, and had she not left her desk that morning, she believes she would not have survived. Luticia received second and third degree burns over 45 percent of her body, the fingers on her left hand needed to be amputated, she has trouble speaking, thinking and walking. Sometimes she asks, "Why me," but when she sees other survivors, who are often in worse condition, she is reminded how lucky she is.

1. Begin With an Essential Question

What was the experience of someone who lived through September 11, 2001?

(The Essential Question is not designed to be answered directly. It is the overarching or big question. Its answer is contained within student responses to the guided questions.)

2. Introduce the Lesson

Teacher reads the overarching question of the lesson.

Teacher says, "We have been learning about the 9/11 attacks. We learned the experiences of two individuals who survived the attacks at the World Trade Center (WTC) and the experience of one individual who survived the attack at the Pentagon. We are going to continue today by learning a different experience of someone who survived the attack at the Pentagon on September 11, 2001."

3. Introduce the Video

Teacher says, “We are going to watch a video of Luticia Hook. She worked in the Pentagon for over 29 years and was going to retire on December 31, 2001. She was working during the attack on September 11, 2001. Before we watch the video, I want to discuss what the scene was like after the plane penetrated the building. There was rubble and structural damage from the collision, but also a lot of jet fuel that is highly flammable. There were uncontrollable fires ablaze, and this is in fact what caused the most damage to the Pentagon, according to a historical study conducted by the Department of Defense and the Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense. When firefighters work to extinguish a jet fuel fire, they need to either use a tremendous amount of water, or they use a special foam to suffocate the fire. At the Pentagon, the fires burning were immense. Sprinklers and broken hoses gushed, while local fire departments used their hoses to spray the flames, hoping to tame them. This resulted in water pooling on the floor. In some cases, water reached six inches deep, knee-high in other areas. As we watch the video today you will notice that Luticia Hook mentions the pooled water that she was found in.”

Teacher then plays the video of Luticia Hook, located [here](https://www.t2t.org/lesson-luticia-hook) [T2T.org/lesson-luticia-hook].

Teacher can also note to the class when discussing the answer to this question, that sometimes when a person's body is severely damaged it causes a life-threatening risk to the rest of their body. Doctors may need to amputate, or surgically take off, that area, to save the rest of the body, as was the case with Luticia Hook.)

2. It is often easy for people to lose confidence or feel angry about problems they face in their lives. What does Luticia Hook do when she feels upset about the injuries she continues to suffer with?

(When Luticia Hook feels upset about her injuries, she thinks of others who have survived the attack and their serious injuries and remembers that she is blessed with what she still has.

It should be noted to the students that this is a good outlook on life, no matter what situation we find ourselves in. Although we may find ourselves in times of struggle, look at the positive things we still have in our lives.)

Teacher should go over the answers to the questions and allow the students time to share their answers with the class.

4. Students' Task

After viewing the video students should answer the following questions.

1. What injuries did Luticia Hook suffer on September 11, 2001, and how do those injuries continue to impact her today?
(Luticia Hook received second and third degree burns over 45 percent of her body, the fingers on her left hand had to be amputated, she has trouble walking and trouble with her thought process and speech.

Lesson 4: The World Trade Center – Donna Spera

Background for the Teacher

Video Summary



Donna Spera worked at AON Financial Services as an administrative assistant. She worked on the 100th floor of Tower 2, known as the South Tower of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers. Donna Spera would always get to work early to prepare for her day before her boss arrived. On the morning of September 11, 2001, there were not that many people in the office. She recalls hearing a loud explosion, so she and her coworkers ran to her boss' window, where they saw smoke coming from Tower 1, the North Tower of the Twin Towers. Donna Spera could feel the building shake and heat coming from the windows. One

of Donna's best friends worked in Tower 1, but when she tried to call there was no answer. She and her coworkers decided to walk down the stairs to exit the building. When they reached a floor in the 70's an announcement came on the loudspeaker saying that the building was safe and for everyone to go back to their desks. Donna and her coworkers agreed to walk back up to the 78th floor, which was the sky lobby, and take an elevator down the rest of the way so they wouldn't have to walk. They reached the 78th floor and within seconds the plane penetrated their building. She remembers dropping her pocketbook, her watch burned her wrist and fell off, and she was thrown across the room onto the floor. It was dark, and she proceeded to crawl on the floor. She found a coworker who was crawling across the floor as well. They saw a light, and a figure saying, "Down here, this is steps, there's a staircase, come this way." Donna and her coworker followed the light to the stairs. She was one of 12 on that floor that survived that day, out of 200. She had first, second, and third-degree burns, gashes, a broken hand, and the left side of her body was black and blue. For years she suffered with survivor's guilt, trying to understand why she survived and her friends didn't, even though they were all standing together.

1. Begin With an Essential Question

What was the experience of someone who lived through September 11, 2001?

(The Essential Question is not designed to be answered directly. It is the overarching or big question. Its answer is contained within student responses to the guided questions.)

2. Introduce the Lesson

Teacher reads the overarching question of the lesson.

Teacher says, “We’ve learned many different experiences of individuals who survived the 9/11 attacks. Today we are going to focus on the Twin Towers in New York City. We previously learned that the Twin Towers were two of the tallest buildings in the world on September 11, 2001, located in New York City. They were part of a group of buildings, known as the World Trade Center. The Twin Towers were comprised of Tower 1, also referred to as the North Tower, and Tower 2, which was referred to as the South Tower. Both buildings held offices for hundreds of different companies and thousands of workers. On September 11, 2001, more than 2,000 World Trade Center workers lost their lives, but it is estimated that tens of thousands were able to evacuate.”

3. Introduce the Video

Teacher says, “We are going to watch a video of Donna Spera who worked in the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Donna Spera was standing on the 78th floor when United Airlines flight 175 crashed through floors 77-85 of the building. Let’s watch Donna’s story of survival.”

Teacher then plays the video of Donna Spera, located [here](https://www.t2t.org/lesson-donna-spera) [T2T.org/lesson-donna-spera].

4. Introduce the Transcript Excerpt

After viewing the video students should read Donna Spera Transcript Excerpt, located in the Appendix of Unit Materials.

Teacher says, “We’ve just watched part of Donna Spera’s interview. This is an excerpt from Donna Spera’s full interview. Can someone tell us what an excerpt is?”

(An excerpt is a short part of a text.)

Teacher continues, “This excerpt from Donna Spera’s interview shows the impact September 11,

2001, continues to have on her life.”

Students may read the excerpt independently or the excerpt may be read aloud to the class.

Before moving on, teacher should ask students, “In the excerpt from Donna Spera’s interview she says she suffers from PTSD. Can anyone remind the class what it means to have PTSD, and what someone might experience if they have PTSD?”

(An individual might suffer from PTSD if they have experienced a terrifying event. When a person lives through a terrifying event, they might have trouble adjusting afterwards, and this leads to PTSD. There can be many symptoms, but some symptoms are recurring memories or dreams of the event, or stressful reactions to situations that remind the individual of the event. An example is a soldier after they return from war might not be able to visit crowded or loud places, because it makes them feel a sense of danger, like they did when they were in combat.)

5. Students’ Task

After viewing Donna Spera’s video and reading her transcript, students should answer the following question.

1. How did Donna Spera persevere, or show determination, during and after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center?
(Answers may vary, but Donna Spera showed perseverance during and after the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, because although she was badly hurt during the impact of the plane, she fought to get up, and make her way down 78 floors to evacuate. After spending two weeks in the hospital, she endured multiple surgeries, and worked through physical therapy sessions to help her recuperate and heal. She also continues to struggle mentally, but that has not stopped

her from focusing on the positive and she keeps moving forward with her life every day.)

6. Extension

Students should write a letter to Donna Spera, or any 9/11 survivor. The letter can include how the student feels about the attacks on 9/11, words of gratitude or encouragement, or questions that they may have about what that day or the aftermath of that day was like for the survivor.

Any letters that teachers or students wish to share can be sent by mail to:

Attn: Tunnel to Towers 9/11 Institute
2361 Hylan Boulevard
Staten Island, New York 10306

Letters can also be sent by email to education.info@T2T.org

Lesson 5: Assembly – 9/11 In Their Own Words

Background for the Teacher

Video Summary



The assembly video, “9/11 In Their Own Words” is an in-depth, first-person account of the events of September 11, 2001, told by survivors of America’s darkest day. Students will learn key details from first responders, survivors and others who witnessed the greatest horror they could imagine, while simultaneously witnessing the

greatest show of love and American spirit that makes our country so special. Students will learn how 9/11 isn’t only a day that took 2,977 lives, but rather, a day that continues to take lives, due to 9/11-related illnesses.

1. Begin With an Essential Question

What was the experience of someone who lived through September 11, 2001?

(The Essential Question is not designed to be answered directly. It is the overarching or big question. Its answer is contained within student responses to the guided questions.)

2. Introduce the Lesson

Teacher reads the overarching question of the lesson.

Teacher says, “We’ve spent this week learning about the experiences of individuals who survived the 9/11 attacks. Today we will be able to listen to more voices as they share their experiences from this tragic day in American history.”

3. Introduce the Video

Teacher says, “We are going to watch a video that details the events of September 11, 2001. It is told by individuals who lived through that day, in their own words.”

Teacher then plays the video, 9/11 In Their Own Words, located [here](https://www.t2t.org/lesson-911-in-their-own-words) [T2T.org/lesson-911-in-their-own-words].

4. Students’ Task

After viewing the video students should complete the 9/11 In Their Own Words Worksheet, located in the Appendix of Unit Materials.

5. Extension

As an extension, students can answer the following question.

What is one lesson from the discussions of September 11, 2001, that you can apply towards your everyday life?

(Answers may vary, but some may say that a lesson they have learned from the discussions about September 11, 2001 that they can apply towards their everyday life is the importance of persevering after a challenging time. Many survivors of the 9/11 attacks fought to stay alive during the attack, and worked hard to overcome any obstacles they faced in the days, months and years that followed.)

Appendix

Unit Materials

- Pentagon Photographs
- Donna Spera Transcript Excerpt
- 9/11 In Their Own Words Worksheet
- 9/11 In Their Own Words Worksheet Answer Key

Pentagon Photographs

Name: _____

Date: _____



Photo credit: U.S. Department of Defense

The Pentagon is made up of five separate rings that are connected to form a building in the shape of a pentagon. The Pentagon is headquarters for the United States Department of Defense.



Photo credit: U.S. Department of Defense

On September 11, 2001, American Airlines flight 77 crashed into the west side of the Pentagon and penetrated three of its five rings.



Photo credit: U.S. Department of Defense

At the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial, every victim has a memorial unit with their name inscribed. There are 184 memorial units.

Donna Spera Transcript Excerpt

Donna Spera: "So after I came home from the hospital, the two weeks I was in the hospital, I came home and now it was time for the physical healing from my burns. I went through several plastic surgeries. I had to go for physical therapy for my hand, even physical therapy just for walking because I was so badly bruised on one side of my body. Mentally, I still suffer mentally...I was going for therapy for years. Suffer from PTSD. It's almost 21 years later and I still suffer from it. I don't think that'll ever go away...My perspective on life has changed dramatically. I am not the same person I was before September 11th. I treasure life. I try and live day-by-day, take day-by-day, step-by-step. My friends, my family were very big support. My husband, biggest supporter. You live day-by-day, but in the back of your head it's there. It doesn't go away."

9/11 In Their Own Words Worksheet

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Answer the following questions.

1. Despite the tragic loss suffered on September 11, 2001, how did people show their strength and ability to overcome obstacles?

2. What part of the video impacted you most? Why?

9/11 In Their Own Words Worksheet Answer Key

Name: _____

Date: _____

Directions: Answer the following questions.

1. Despite the tragic loss suffered on September 11, 2001, how did people show their strength and ability to overcome obstacles?

(Answers may vary. Despite the tragic loss suffered, people showed their strength and ability to overcome obstacles when they sent help to New York City or when they volunteered or traveled from other states to help after the Towers fell. People were united as a country.)

2. What part of the video impacted you most? Why?

(Answers may vary.)

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