

September 11th in the Classroom

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Introduction

As time moves forward, events from the past become blurred in memory. People remember, honor, and learn from history. On September 11, 2001, the United States lost 2,983 civilian lives in a terrorist attack by al Qaeda. Since 2001, the United States government has made many decisions aimed at protecting those on United States soil. To commemorate the lives lost and to prevent an act of terror in the future, historians evaluate how to remember and learn from the events that occurred on September 11. Learning from the past prepares people for the future. To educate future generations, middle and high school teachers must provide students with valuable lesson plans about September 11. In the middle school and high school classrooms around the country, the process and content used to teach the terrorist attacks of September 11 has evolved over the past twenty years, from relying mostly on personal accounts to include academic articles, textbooks, online resources, and other materials to help students understand how and why September 11 happened the way it did.

Historiography

In 2003, Mary Dudziak, a professor of legal history and constitutional law at Emory University School of Law, published a collection of ten essays by a variety of authors titled, *September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment*. Marilyn Young, in a contribution titled, “Ground Zero: Enduring War,” called attention to the changes that took place after September 11, such as increased patriotism, stating, “the country became even more itself, almost to the

point of caricature.”¹ Throughout the book, multiple essays compared the terrorist attacks on September 11 to other historical events, such as the attack on Pearl Harbor and the Cold War. Various authors addressed the beginning of the Global War on Terror. Each essay memorialized September 11, focusing on public history, or how the public recognizes and remembers an event.

Finally, Dudziak looked back on the ways that the United States chose to remember September 11 on the one-year anniversary, concluding that, “the presence of change, the nature of change, of a historical moment so near, may be, for this generation, impossible to measure. And yet one thing, at least, is new and is enduring.”² After September 11, individuals memorialized the day by remembering the lives lost and displaying the strength of the country, by flying the American flag. The terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, had forever changed the course of history. Dudziak’s *September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment* provides teachers with a historical account of the public’s emotional response and reactions in the first two years after the terrorist attacks on September 11.

Published in 2004 by W.W. Norton and Company, the *9/11 Commission Report* provided a thorough investigation into the United States government and President George W. Bush’s administration and analyzed counterterrorism groups dedicated to finding and preventing future acts of terror. The bi-partisan group compiled massive amounts of information from a vast number of source materials. *The 9/11 Commission Report* shed light on the confidential information that the United States government had before the terrorist attacks on September 11. Written only three years after the terrorist attacks on September 11, this report provided crucial information for historians and the public, including a minute-by-minute timeline of the events on

¹ Dudziak, Mary J. *September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment?* Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2003. P.11

² Ibid. P.214

September 11. *The 9/11 Commission Report* relied on primary sources such as United States government documents as well as information acquired from in-flight recordings, messages sent to and from the pilots, phone calls made from the hijacked planes, and communication within air traffic control centers on September 11, to tell a complete story as was possible at that time after the terrorist attacks. However, because of its publication so soon after 2001, there was little information regarding the Global War on Terror and the Bush administration's invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. *The 9/11 Commission Report* provides teachers a place to begin for content knowledge required to teach cohesive lessons on September 11.

In 2004, Steven Strasser wrote and edited *The 9/11 Investigations*, a book including staff reports of the 9/11 Commission, excerpts from the House-Senate Joint Inquiry Report on 9/11, and testimony from fourteen key witnesses, including National Security Council counterterrorism coordinator, Richard Clarke, Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, and National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice. Strasser compiled information regarding the intelligence that the United States government had before September 11 on potential terrorist threats. *The 9/11 Investigations* provided in-depth information about the terrorists on September 11, counterterrorism efforts, and the United States government response to September 11. Primary sources, including presidential daily briefs and excerpts from personal testimonies, tell the story of September 11 from the top-secret side of the United States government. Strasser also provided a section titled, "Recommendations", where the committee members share their ideas for the United States government to prevent another act of terrorism. *The 9/11 Investigations* revealed key information directly from employees of the United States Government and can be used to evaluate the United States governments initial response to September 11.

Seth Jones wrote his book, *In the Graveyard of Empires*, in 2010, about the history of Afghanistan's long past through the American war in Afghanistan. At the time of publication, Jones had recently served as an advisor and plans officer for the Commanding General, U.S. Special Operations Forces, in Afghanistan. Beginning with a chronological timeline of the conflicts in Afghanistan from 1839 to December 2009, Jones analyzed the long and complex history of Afghanistan. In his introduction, Jones stated that his goal in Afghanistan was specific, "to understand the motivations of key actors and to assess what factors contributed to the rise of Afghanistan's insurgency."³ After the terrorist attacks on September 11, the United States invaded Afghanistan to remove the Taliban from power and find Osama Bin Laden, this military action was also known as, Operation Enduring Freedom. Jones wrote about the American war in Afghanistan to explain how and why the United States challenged the radical Islamic government that harbored terrorists. Throughout the book, Jones made connections between the conflict in Afghanistan and the terrorist attack on September 11. Jones concluded his book by correctly stating that the conflict in Afghanistan was far from over. *In the Graveyard of Empires* provided a detailed explanation of the history and conflicts in Afghanistan that will help students understand the Global War on Terror.

Terry H. Andersen, a Professor of History at Texas A&M University, published his book, *Bush's Wars*, in 2013. In the first section, Andersen provided background knowledge about the countries and conflicts of both the East and the West. In the Eastern part of the world, Andersen described the origins of the modern-day countries Iraq and Afghanistan. He analyzed the rise of the Islamic religion in Iraq. Andersen also notes the extensive conquests made to the region of

³ Jones, Seth. *In the Graveyard of Empires: American's War in Afghanistan*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 2009 P.91

Afghanistan throughout history. In the West, Andersen analyzed the relationship between the United States and Iran between the years 1970-2000. He wrote about Saddam Hussein, his rise to power, and relation with the United States government. Overall, this section focuses on the Bush administration and al Qaeda. The introduction of the East and the West provided necessary background information to understand the complex historical context leading to the terrorist attack on the United States by al Qaeda on September 11.

After the introductions, Andersen wrote about the Bush administration's decision to declare a Global War on Terror following the terrorist attacks on September 11. Andersen explained how the United States entered Afghanistan first through an air offensive, followed by the insertion of ground troops, to search for the terrorist group, al Qaeda. A year and a half later, President Bush changed the direction of the Global War on Terror by deciding to enter Iraq as well, claiming that President Saddam Hussein possessed and was producing weapons of mass destruction. Andersen criticized the Bush administration's decision to enter Iraq, revealing how little evidence the United States government had about the potential weapons of mass destruction. Andersen also called attention to the Bush administration's other motives, including the possibility of profiting off Iraq's oil reserves. *Bush's Wars* is helpful to gain content knowledge on the American wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 2019, Mitchell Zuckoff, a Professor of Narrative Studies at Boston University, published his book, *Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11*, using personal accounts to describe the events on September 11, 2001. Zuckoff wrote a minute-by-minute timeline of September 11 through the eyes of those who experienced it personally. The use of human accounts encouraged readers to imagine and attach themselves to, for instance, the voice behind the frantic phone calls to loved ones back home while aboard hijacked aircrafts or running from a collapsed World

Trade Center. Zuckoff told a deeper story of the people on September 11 by conveying the traumatic emotion. Historians sometimes focus on facts, dates, numbers, and details, instead of the emotion and feelings that accompany an event. As we move forward in time, personal stories will become more difficult to remember. Zuckoff's book memorialized the emotions attached to September 11 for the benefit of generations to come. As teachers rely less on personal accounts, some may find *Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11* helpful for conveying the public's emotions and personal feelings.

Initial Reactions

The morning of Tuesday, September 11, 2001, began like any other day, with clear blue skies in New York City. In the homes of millions of Americans across the East Coast and Midwest, alarms were sounding, signifying the beginning of a new day. Students headed into school, where they greeted their friends with high-fives. Teachers settled in their classrooms and prepared their lessons for the day. Many Americans walked, drove, or rode the subway into work with steaming cups of coffee. Some individuals stood in airport lines and boarded early morning flights. Among them, nineteen terrorist hijackers took their seats on airplanes they never planned to disembark.⁴

In New York City, people hustled along the streets to get to work. At The Chapin School for girls in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, students were beginning their day, when American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8:46am. The flight had departed from Boston just before 8:00am that morning in route to Los Angeles.⁵ Two

⁴ Norton & Co. *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. Norton & Co, 2004. P.4

⁵ Ibid.

hijackers from the terrorist group, al Qaeda, “most likely Wail al Shehri and Waleed al Shehri,” stabbed flight attendants with small box cutter knives, forcing their way into the cockpit. One terrorist, Mohamed Atta, had been designated to fly the plane and entered the cockpit, successfully hijacking American Airline Flight 11.⁶ One terrorist aboard each hijacked flight on September 11, “possessed FAA certificates as qualified pilots,” even receiving their flight training in the United States.⁷ While in control, Atta sent the following transmission from Flight 11, “We have some planes. Just stay quiet, and you’ll be okay. We are returning to the airport.”⁸ After Flight 11 crashed, this transmission signaled to air traffic controllers that there may have been multiple planes hijacked.

To understand the hijacking methods used by terrorists, historians have analyzed phone calls made by Betty Ong and Madeline “Amy” Sweeney, both flight attendants on American Airlines Flight 11.⁹ On an AT&T telephone, called an Airfone, located aboard Flight 11, Ong called for help, reaching a reservations agent with the airline’s Southeastern Reservations Office, where she said, “I think we’re being hijacked.”¹⁰ Ong described the scene on the plane, “Somebody’s stabbed in business class, and, um, I think there is Mace- that we can’t breathe. I don’t know, I think we’re getting hijacked.”¹¹ Both Betty Ong and Amy Sweeny narrated their experiences in flight as the plane was seized and turned toward New York City. Hijackers had chosen these planes specifically because they were, “early morning departures from east coast airports of large Boeing 757 and 767 aircrafts fueled for a transcontinental flight to maximize the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Strasser, Steven. *The 9/11 Investigations* PublicAffairs LLC, 2004. P.52

⁸ Norton. *The 9/11 Commission Report* P.19

⁹ Ibid. P.5

¹⁰ Zuckoff, Mitchell. *Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11* HarperCollins Publishing, 2019 P.61

¹¹ Ibid.

destructive power of the impact on their selected targets.”¹² Around 25 minutes after the flight was hijacked in air, the plane collided with the North Tower, killing hundreds on impact.¹³ Smoke poured from the North Tower, as chaos ensued in New York City. The American public was unsure about what had happened, but responders rushed to help immediately, unaware of the danger ahead.

To discover how teachers specifically handled September 11 on that day and in the weeks after, I interviewed a variety of teachers and administrators from The Chapin School for Girls. Due to the proximity to the World Trade Center, students and teachers at Chapin were personally affected by the terrorist attacks on September 11. Amanda Love, teaching at Chapin on September 11, described the initial reactions of teachers and students.¹⁴ After learning the first plane hit the World Trade Center, the school gathered grade levels together for an assembly to inform their students. Because the attack was a sensitive subject, the upper grade levels and lower grade levels received different information about the attack.¹⁵ Many students at Chapin had parents who worked in the World Trade Center or in the surrounding buildings, so Love remembers the administration speaking carefully to not upset any students.¹⁶ Ann Klotz, also a teacher and the head of the senior class at Chapin on September 11, remembered the administration explained to students there had been an “accident,” choosing not to use words like “terrorist” or “attack,” in an effort to keep their students calm.¹⁷ However, Klotz remembered a handful of students jumping up in fear knowing relatives or friends who were working in the

¹² Strasser, Steven. *The 9/11 Investigations* Public Affairs LLC, 2004. P.49

¹³ Norton. *The 9/11 Commission Report* P.32

¹⁴ Love, Amanda. Personal Interview by Alexis Opdycke. November 11, 2021.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Klotz, Ann. Personal Interview by Alexis Opdycke. December 10, 2021.

towers.¹⁸ Klotz and Love both sent students back to class in an effort to go about the day as normally as possible.

Less than twenty minutes after the first plane collided with the North Tower, the South Tower of the World Trade Center was hit by United Airlines Flight 175.¹⁹ The public was fearful now, no longer believing the first plane crash was accidental. Also departing from Boston, United Airlines Flight 175 resembled American Flight 11 with, “lots of empty seats, flying at about one-third capacity.”²⁰ In addition to the travelers, five terrorists took their seats, “in almost the exact pattern Mohamed Atta and his four collaborators used aboard American Flight 11.”²¹ Around thirty minutes after takeoff, Flight 175 was hijacked shortly before flying directly into the South Tower of the World Trade Center at 9:03am.²² New York City was under attack, and, “New York Center declared ‘ATC Zero’ - meaning that aircraft were not permitted to depart from, or arrive at, or travel through New York Center’s airspace until further notice.”²³ Aircraft were grounded as air traffic control centers worried that more hijacked planes could be out in airspace. Around the country, in homes and offices, people tuned into the major news networks to learn what had happened in New York City. In schools, panic set in as teachers, administrators, and parents realized the United States was under an attack. Schools were left with a decision: what do we tell our students? This question remains even today for teachers who are tasked with educating their students about this horrific day.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Norton. *The 9/11 Commission Report* P.32

²⁰ Zuckoff. *Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11* P.51

²¹ Ibid. P.58

²² Norton. *The 9/11 Commission Report* P.32

²³ Ibid. P.23

At Chapin School for Girls, teachers and administrators did not know more than anyone else about what was going on. Sarah Rutledge, teacher, and the 11th grade Dean at Chapin on September 11, heard news about the Twin Towers through panicked whispers from other teachers.²⁴ When she learned the second plane hit the South Tower of the World Trade Center, she realized it was an intentional attack.²⁵ Love was reminded of the terrorist attack that had taken place at the World Trade Center in 1993, but this attack was on a much bigger scale.²⁶ While concerned about their own friends and family members working in or around the World Trade Center, Love, Rutledge, and Klotz remembered worrying about their students more than anything.

However, the terror of September 11, 2001 only continued in other cities. American Airlines Flight 77, departing from Washington, D.C. at 8:20am, was hijacked.²⁷ Unfortunately, air traffic controllers could not warn airplanes fast enough to be aware of possible hijackings, because events were occurring minutes apart from one another. News did not travel fast enough to warn Flight 77. Hijackers executed almost an identical plan to gain access to the cockpit. Turning the flight back towards Washington, they crashed into the West side of the Pentagon at 9:37am.²⁸ Shortly after, “FAA national operations manager Ben Sliney had seen enough,” and required every aircraft flying over the United States to land at the nearest airport, immediately.²⁹ All but one airplane flying over the United States complied.³⁰

²⁴ Rutledge, Sarah. Personal interview by Alexis Opdycke. December 9, 2021.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Love, Personal Interview by Alexis Opdycke. 2021

²⁷ Norton. *The 9/11 Commission Report* P.32

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Zuckoff. *Fall and Rise: The Story of 9/11* P.148

³⁰ Ibid.

United Airlines Flight 93 departed late from Newark Airport, just four minutes before American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center.³¹ Because of the late take off, it may have been, “possible that if Flight 93 had been delayed a bit longer, it would have been caught in a ‘ground stop’ and would have never taken off at all.”³² Shortly after reaching altitude, calls were made to the pilots on Flight 93 asking them to watch for any possible signs of hijacking. However, these calls came too late. Events aboard Flight 93, “follows nearly the same script as the hijackers of Flights 11, 175, and 77.”³³ The cockpit voice recorder captured the struggle as hijackers forced their way inside, harming the pilot and one flight attendant. The passengers, “aboard Flight 93 recognized that their seatback Airfones could be lifelines to call for help and advice.”³⁴ As passengers reached their friends and family members, they learned about the other plans and the World Trade Center towers. Passengers decided to rally together and do something to stop the terrorists, ultimately preventing Flight 93 from reaching its target. Passengers stormed the cockpit of the aircraft, causing enough chaos that hijackers had no choice but to drive Flight 93 into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.³⁵

On September 11 and in the days following, the major news channels in America streamed videos and images of the World Trade Center collapse and the destruction at the Pentagon. Thousands of Americans were murdered on national television by terrorists. Possibly headed for the U.S. Capital building or The White House, Flight 93 ended its final flight in a Pennsylvania Field. One image of black smoke stained across the clear, blue skies represents the bravery of the passengers aboard Flight 93, and their willingness to fight back. This image,

³¹ Ibid. P.118

³² Ibid. P.119

³³ Ibid. P.151

³⁴ Ibid. P.158

³⁵ Ibid. P.180

captured by Valencia M. McClatchey³⁶ replaced the thousands that would have been broadcast, showing either a burning Capital Building or fallen White House (see Figure 1).³⁷

In the late morning and afternoon of September 11, Love remembered many parents coming to pick up their children from Chapin. However, because many parents had been working in downtown New York City, they came to retrieve their children still covered in ash and debris from the collapse of the towers. Chapin needed staff members to bring students outside to their parents, to protect all children from seeing their friends' parents from downtown. Students, teachers, faculty, and staff returned home on the eve of September 11, processing the events of the day. That evening, President Bush addressed the nation and gave a speech to both console the public and declare that the United States government was working to name the terrorist group responsible for the attacks. To his large audience, President Bush stated, "We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them."³⁸ President Bush declared that the United States would attack the terrorist group found responsible for the attacks on September 11 and the country they reside in.

On September 12, the front page of the *New York Times* read, "U.S. Attacked: Hijacked Jets Destroy Twin Towers and Hit Pentagon in Day of Terror" followed by a photo of the twin towers engulfed in flames.³⁹ Also on September 12, Chapin School cancelled classes, as teachers, students, and parents attempted to recover from the previous day. Across America, schools and businesses closed, and many stayed home and watched the news coverage. In Washington D.C., President Bush spoke to some of his staff and ordered, "I want you, as soon as

³⁶ Hamill, Sean D. "Picture Made on 9/11 Takes a Toll on Photographer" *The New York Times* Sept. 10, 2007.

³⁷ "The Story of 9/11 and United Flight 93" *Friends of Flight 93: National Memorial* Oct. 3, 2022.

³⁸ Anderson, Terry H. *Bush's Wars*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. P.71

³⁹ *The New York Times*. "U.S. Attacked: Hijacked Jets Destroy Twin Towers and Hit Pentagon in Day of Terror." *The New York Times*. September 12th, 2001. Accessed November 21, 2022.

you can, to go back over everything, everything. See if Saddam did this. See if he's linked in any way.”⁴⁰ However, Dick Clarke, the Counterterrorism Czar for the United States, responded to President Bush, and clearly stated, “But Mr. President, al Qaeda did this.”⁴¹ The Bush administration accepted that al Qaeda was responsible for September 11. Yet, many of them also believed there could be a link to Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi government.

In the days after the collapse of the World Trade Centers, safety personnel gathered at the sight of the collapse, attempting to find anyone who may have been buried beneath the rubble. The American public dubbed the sight of the collapse of the World Trade Center “Ground Zero.” Media outlets broadcast from Ground Zero and, “many went to great lengths to position themselves so that the smoldering ruins and/or rescue workers would be visible over their shoulder.”⁴² President Bush took the same approach and gave his famous bullhorn speech at Ground Zero, positioned atop crumbled concrete and surrounded by rescue workers. In his speech, he said in response to rescue workers, “I can hear you! The rest of the world hears you! And the people- and the people who knocked these down will hear all of us soon!”⁴³ President Bush made it clear that the United States would seek justice.

The American public united under a common agreement that someone should be held responsible for attacks of terror on September 11. A few days later, Congress voted to give President Bush, “‘all necessary and appropriate force’ to respond to the terrorist attacks.”⁴⁴ This was an unprecedented action given to the president in response to an act of terrorism. In the past,

⁴⁰ Anderson, *Bush's Wars*. 2011. P.71

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Monahan, Brian A. *The Shock of the News: Media Coverage and the Making of 9/11*. New York: New York University Press. 2010. P.97

⁴³ Bush, George W. “Bullhorn Address to Ground Zero Rescue Workers.” *American Rhetoric*. September 2001.

⁴⁴ Anderson, *Bush's Wars*. 2011. P.71

the United States had responded to terrorism by treating attacks like a crime, “and the perpetrators were treated as criminals.”⁴⁵ However, after September 11, President Bush declared a Global War on Terror, targeting any country found responsible for committing acts of terrorism or harboring terrorists.

Love remembered Chapin trying to get back to normal as soon as possible. When school reopened, Love recalled attempting to create an environment that served as an escape from the chaos of the world to take care of her students.⁴⁶ Mental health was not as commonly discussed in schools as it is now, but Klotz was concerned with each of her individual student’s needs, because each student was affected differently.⁴⁷ Rutledge stated that her students had vastly different experiences in the weeks after September 11, although they shared the same classroom.⁴⁸ Some had lost individuals close to them on September 11, while others had family members who narrowly escaped the terrorist attack. Some students were members of the Muslim community and felt the effects of Islamophobia. Teachers such as Klotz, Rutledge, and Love strived to make Chapin a safe place.

On September 20, 2001, the public learned the name of the terrorist group behind the attacks. In an address to the nation, President Bush stated, “The evidence we have gathered all points to a collective of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al Qaeda.”⁴⁹ President Bush also identified the leader of al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden.⁵⁰ The American public now had a common enemy to blame for the death of their friends, family members, and fellow citizens. The

⁴⁵ Dudziak, Mary J. *September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment?* Durham and London: Duke University Press. 2003. P.39

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Rutledge, Personal interview by Alexis Opdycke. 2021.

⁴⁹ Anderson, *Bush’s Wars*. 2011. P.72

⁵⁰ Ibid.

public was supportive of military action against al Qaeda. President Bush also stated, “Americans will, ‘pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism,’ he continued, ‘Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.’”⁵¹ With this statement, President Bush forced, “nations to be either our allies or our enemies.”⁵² In this speech, President Bush used the phrase “war on terror,” for the first time, declaring that the United States military was going to fight against any terrorist they encounter.⁵³

Osama Bin Laden was hiding somewhere in Afghanistan. After demanding that the Taliban, the radical Islamic government, hand over Osama Bin Laden with no success, President Bush ordered the United States military to act.⁵⁴ The United States targeted, “the Taliban’s air defense installations, defense military, electrical grids, and command centers, and hit the important cities of Kabul, Kandahar, and Mazar-i-Sharif.”⁵⁵ Operation Enduring Freedom was the name given to the invasion of Afghanistan, beginning on September 27, when the CIA’s first covert team, nicknamed, Jawbreaker, entered Afghanistan.⁵⁶ On October 7, the United States began bombing in Afghanistan, and, “the initial objective was to destroy the Taliban’s limited air-defense and communications infrastructure.”⁵⁷ Through bombings, bribing northern warlords, and using modern weaponry, the victory against the Taliban only took a few months.⁵⁸ The

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Dudziak, *September 11 in History* P.40

⁵³ Anderson, *Bush’s Wars*. 2011. P.73

⁵⁴ Ibid. 2011. P.82

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Jones, Seth. *In the Graveyard of Empires: American’s War in Afghanistan*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 2009. P.91

⁵⁸ Anderson, *Bush’s Wars*. 2011. P.84

Taliban Militia surrendered on December 6, 2001. However, the world still wondered, “Where was Osama Bin Laden?”⁵⁹

When it came to sharing information about the state of the country with her students, Love tried to answer her students' questions in the best way possible, without creating additional stress.⁶⁰ Overall, the news coverage was intense, and “news workers spent a great deal of attention and resources identifying and describing the most dramatic elements of the attacks and their aftermath.”⁶¹ News channels began using chyrons, the scrolling text at the bottom of the screen, to provide instant updates to their viewers. Chyrons have remained a normalized characteristic of television news coverage since the September 11 attacks, exemplifying the American public’s need for constant updates. When students entered the classroom concerned about the news they had seen or heard on television, Love and her colleagues tried to address their students’ needs and provide appropriate information.

With her students, Klotz remembered working to make sure they were not making assumptions about the Muslim community, because hate crimes targeting Muslims rose after September 11.⁶² Students had heard President George W. Bush identify Osama Bin Laden and al Qaeda, a radical Islamic terrorist organization, responsible for attacks. Across the country, individuals were angry that their cities had been attacked and civilians murdered. Some struggled to understanding why the terrorist attacks had occurred and blamed the Islamic religion and Muslims more generally. Teachers, like Klotz, worked with her students to teach them that Osama Bin Laden was part of a terrorist organization with extreme beliefs far outside of

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Love, Personal Interview by Alexis Opdycke. 2021.

⁶¹ Monahan, *The Shock of the News*, 2010. P.96

⁶² Klotz, Ann. Personal Interview by Alexis Opdycke. December 10, 2021.

mainstream Islam. She worried that her students misunderstood the Islamic religion, their Muslim classmates, and other members in their community.

After September 11, Klotz remembered New York City being eerily quiet, and people ached for a sense of community.⁶³ To help those in the surrounding areas, Chapin students and staff raised money for the local fire station to thank them for their bravery. Love recalled the fire crew coming to the Chapin for fire drills and often interacting with the students. On September 11, members of the fire crew were called to help at the World Trade Center, and unfortunately, many members of the fire crew lost their lives saving others. Love remembered this being most difficult for her staff members, who would often see the firemen and women in their school. Rutledge remembered inviting the surviving members from the firehouse to the Chapin, so students and teachers could applaud them.⁶⁴ While Love, Klotz, and Rutledge struggled to explain the reasons behind the terrorist attacks, they were able to find a way for their students at Chapin to give back and support their community.

Throughout the rest of the year, the staff at Chapin supported students by providing a safe environment for students to process September 11. Students and their teachers discussed the effects of September 11 on a regular basis. As news channels broadcast presidential speeches, updates from the United States military, and photos and videos of sites of the terrorist attack, students and teachers alike worked together to comprehend and understand the state of the world they lived in. Instead of learning from a lecture or reading from a book, students analyzed the news reports and updates as they were broadcast. For the students and staff at Chapin, the terrorist attacks on September 11 were traumatic and upsetting. Explanations and updates were

⁶³ Klotz, Personal Interview by Alexis Opdycke. 2021.

⁶⁴ Rutledge, Sarah. Personal interview by Alexis Opdycke. December 9, 2021.

kept brief to keep students feeling safe, secure, and away from reminders of the traumatic experience they had lived through together.

In the years following September 11, teachers and students at Chapin recovered from the emotional trauma they had experienced together. On the anniversary in 2004, Koltz still felt as though September 11 was too fresh to discuss in detail with her students.⁶⁵ As time passed, more resources available to tell the story of September 11, and schools and teachers began to pass on their knowledge and experiences of September 11 to young students. However, the question remains the same, how do we explain the history of September 11 and what happened after?

Ten Years After

On the tenth anniversary of September 11, 2001, Americans chose different ways to remember and memorialize the event. The 9/11 Memorial, located in New York City where the World Trade Center once stood, opened on September 11, 2011. At the commemoration, “the families of victims gathered for a ceremony on the 9/11 Memorial Plaza to read aloud the names of 2,983 men, women, and children killed.”⁶⁶ More than 10,000 members of the victims’ families attended the event.⁶⁷ Across the country, the public remembered in their own ways, by displaying the American flag, and holding, “solemn and patriotic ceremonies, religious rites, tributes to the dead, and even political hiatus.”⁶⁸ The memory of September 11 was still fresh in the minds of millions of people living in America.

⁶⁵ Klotz, Ann. Personal Interview by Alexis Opdycke. December 10, 2021.

⁶⁶ National September 11 Memorial & Museum, “September 11, 2001, Commemoration” Accessed Nov. 21, 2022

⁶⁷ McFadden, Robert. “On 9/11, Vows of Remembrance” *The New York Times*. September 11, 2011. Accessed on November 21, 2022.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Commemorations of September 11, 2001, took place in schools across the United States as well, as an attempt to remember and teach students about the terrorist attacks that occurred a decade ago. Students may have tuned into the news to see the victims' names read and participated in guided discussions with their teachers. September 11 and the ensuing Global War on Terror had not been introduced into all formal social studies curriculum.⁶⁹ In Ohio, however, September 11 and the Global War on Terror were introduced into the curriculum in 2010.⁷⁰ The standard was written for the American History strand of Social Studies and stated, "The United States faced a new political, national security and economic challenges in the post-Cold War world and following the attacks on September 11, 2001." In 2016, Eric Westervelt wrote, "only about 20 states include anything in depth about the events of that fateful day in their high school social studies curriculum."⁷¹ Students may not have received formal education on September 11 and the Global War on Terror as current events, leaving students uninformed of these important historic events.

Teachers were tasked with the job of creating lessons to educate students about September 11, relying initially on personal memory. Students were either very young or not born yet when the terrorist attacks happened in 2001, so they had limited memories of their own. In a study by Aaron Ettinger, he concluded, "these students do not have the benefit of an accumulated knowledge of post-September 11 politics in the same way that their instructors do."⁷² While their teachers had experienced the breaking news of September 11 and the aftermath first-hand, their students did not. From their study, Mary Haas and Robert Waterson stated, "Memories, although

⁶⁹ Ettinger, Aaron. "Teaching the Post-September 11 Wars to the Post-September 11 Generation." *Politics* 36, no. 2 2016

⁷⁰ State Board of Education. "Ohio's New Learning Standards: Social Studies Standards," Ohio Department of Education. P.31. Adopted June 2010.

⁷¹ Westervelt, Eric. "Teaching Sept. 11 to Students Who Were Born after the Attacks Happened." *NPR*. 2016.

⁷² *Ibid*.

an important aspect of personal history, may in unexpected ways also distort, shift, and remodel events.”⁷³ As personal memories began to slip away, social studies teachers were forced to supplement their classes with other resources to create meaningful lesson plans for students.

Diana Hess and Jeremy Stoddard conducted research in 2007 to advocate for the inclusion of September 11 in school curriculum. They find that, “while there was a strong agreement that 9/11 deserved inclusion in the curriculum, precisely what students should learn about 9/11 and its aftermath was a point of contention.”⁷⁴ Hess and Stoddard stated, “Many prominent conservatives took umbrage at what they interpreted as classroom responses designed to foster a critique of the U.S., while many from the opposite side of the political spectrum worried that 9/11 would be exploited to promote a jingoistic form of nationalism.”⁷⁵ Conservatives worried about students being taught to question the government, because the United States government had multiple warning signs that pointed to a potential terrorist attack. On the other side of the political spectrum, the left worried that September 11 would be taught in a way that encouraged extreme American patriotism and aggressive nationalism. Overall, many believed September 11 should be included in school curriculum, and states began writing them into the standards around 2010. However, it was up to school districts and their teachers to decide how exactly to teach the catastrophic event.

Nonetheless, teachers often had little time to prepare to include September 11 into their already packed curriculum schedules. Haas and Waterson stated, “the teaching of 9/11 has been left to the efforts of individual teachers who are short on time and under pressure to meet many

⁷³ Haas, Waterson, Zevin, “The Challenges of Teaching 9/11: Now and the Future.” 2011.

⁷⁴ Hess, D., Stoddard, J., “9/11 and Terrorism: ‘The Ultimate Teachable Moment’ in Textbooks and Supplemental Curricula.” *Democracy Education*. 2007.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

curricula demands.”⁷⁶ Even when teachers did include September 11, they often, “don’t want to tackle the complex, often ugly aftermath at home and globally: the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; the Patriot Act and civil liberties; radical Islam and Islamophobia”⁷⁷ Because the terrorist attacks on September 11 altered the world, teachers likely needed multiple days to cover the days complexity. Without proper knowledge, “stereotypes and misinformation will continue,” especially regarding the misunderstanding and suspicion of the Islamic religion and culture.⁷⁸

Ten years after September 11, 2001, more scholarly articles, books, and materials had been published, assessing both the causes and effects of the terrorist attacks and the Global War on Terror. Teachers were better equipped with resources to use in their classrooms. Hess and Stoddard examined curriculum materials used to teach September 11 released by various organizations and their contents.⁷⁹ Overall, they found that, “there is an “American Tale” of 9/11 presented in everything we examined- both in what is given attention and what is left out”⁸⁰ This “American Tale” presented a patriotic view of 9/11. For example, in many of the materials examined by Hess and Stoddard an image of the American flag being raised at Ground Zero was included.⁸¹ These images of the American flag being raised at sites of destruction, exemplifies the xenophobic and nationalistic perspective in a post-September 11 world.

While some schools and teachers may have pushed this “American Tale,” this view did not provide students with an objective lesson on September 11. An increased nationalistic point of view on the terrorist attacks of September 11 incorporated a biased perspective that is

⁷⁶ Haas, Waterson, Zevin, “The Challenges of Teaching 9/11: Now and the Future.” 2011.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Hess, D., Stoddard, J., “9/11 and Terrorism: ‘The Ultimate Teachable Moment’ in Textbooks and Supplemental Curricula.” *Democracy Education*. 2007.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

detrimental to teaching history objectively. Although, it is important to address the increased nationalism that occurred in a post-September 11 for students to understand the state of the world after September 11. Islamophobia, a prejudice against Muslims, was increasing after September 11 in the United States. The “American Tale” may inadvertently reflect hatred on Muslims or other ethnicities. Including multiple perspectives from a wide variety of sources will help students gain a broader understanding of September 11.

In their research, Hess and Stoddard discovered that some materials asked students to analyze the definition of terrorism and how the United States should handle it, while some curricula do not.⁸² By identifying the attack on September 11 as an act of terror, students can categorize acts of terror and understand potential appropriate responses by a government. To Hess and Stoddard there, “is a difference that matters when creating materials designed to help young citizens in our democracy understand, reflect on, and respond to ‘the unteachable moment’”⁸³ By pushing students to critically analyze and understand the aftermath of September 11 and events that led to the Global War on Terror, students could develop a deeper understanding of terrorism.

In 2010, books like, *September 11 in History: A Watershed Moment* by: Mary Dudziak, *The 9/11 Commissioner Report*, *9/11 Investigations* by Steven Strasser, and *In the Graveyard of Empires* by Seth Jones, all would help teachers construct a cohesive lesson on September 11. By including information from these texts in their lessons, educators can build complex lessons and encourage students to argue their own idea of how an act of terror should be addressed by the government. By reading an array of different sources, students can analyze the government’s

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

decisions and actors when addressing September 11 and beginning the Global War on Terror. To become active, informed, and accountable citizens, students need to learn how to use resources to develop informed decisions on world issues.

As social studies teachers created their lessons, they moved away from personal accounts and consulted a wider variety of academic sources. Instead of books, teachers can also find videos, online interactive resources, and premade lesson plans to help build their lesson on September 11. Ten years after September 11, the short YouTube documentary, titled, *Boatlift: An Untold Tale of the 9/11 Resilience* provided a different perspective on September 11.⁸⁴ While based on the first-hand accounts of individuals on September 11, this documentary tells a feel-good story about simple acts of bravery and courage. On September 11, individuals in New York City ran from the World Trade Center and found themselves on the shore of the Hudson River. The only way they could leave lower Manhattan was by boat. Both first responders and civilians took any boat they had access to the harbor and evacuated individuals to other boroughs of New York and to New Jersey on the other side of the Hudson River. This documentary illuminated the kindness and bravery of everyday Americans. The documentary *Boatlift* was just one resource that came out ten years after September 11 that teachers could show to their students to share other, more positive stories from September 11.

Ten years after the terrorist attacks on September 11, many students had a limited knowledge of that day, the causes, and aftermath. Students had been exposed to the effects of September 11, yet, they have primarily been educated through personal accounts and memory. In an interview with Joe Corsaro, a current American History Teacher at Laurel School in Shaker

⁸⁴ Rosenstein, Eddie. Road to Resilience. "BOATLIFT, An Untold Tale of 9/11 Resilience," YouTube Video, 11:56, September 7, 2011.

Heights, Ohio, he emphasized the importance of pushing students to understand the complexities of September 11.⁸⁵ As memories fade, schools must include September 11 in the required curriculum for the future generation to learn from the past.

Twenty Years After

The generation of students twenty years after September 11, 2001 were not alive during the terrorist attacks themselves. Because students do not share a firsthand memory of September 11 like most of their educators do, they may have a difficult time understanding the emotional toll September 11 took on the American public. Educators must use a variety of resources, including photos, books, videos, and interactive museums, to explain to students the full effect of September 11 and the Global War on Terror. The September 11 Memorial and Museum, National Education Association, Scholastic Articles, and a variety of United States History textbooks provide content to help teachers educate themselves and their students.

The September 11 Memorial and Museum offers twenty interactive lesson plans for students in grades 3-12, covering the September 11 attack, repercussions, and the history of the World Trade Center.⁸⁶ One lesson plan is labelled for students grades 6-12, where the essential question is, “What happened on 9/11?”⁸⁷ In the beginning of the lesson, students separated information they already knew about September 11 from questions they had about the event. By establishing what students already know, teachers can tailor the lesson to their students' needs. Students then watch a short film, “which outlines the key events of the morning of 9/11” and

⁸⁵ Corsaro, Joe. Laurel School. Shaker Heights, Ohio. Personal Interview by Alexis Opdycke. December 9, 2021.

⁸⁶ National September 11 Memorial & Museum. “Lesson Plans.” Accessed on October 17, 2021

⁸⁷ National September 11 Memorial & Museum. “What Happened on 9/11? Part I.” Accessed on October 17, 2021

interact with a timeline of all the events of September 11.⁸⁸ Both the video and the timeline help students develop an understanding of the events on September 11.

In the next half of the lesson, students split up into groups and explore first-person accounts. There are multiple different video interviews of individuals providing first-hand accounts, and each is only about five minutes long. For example, one video is from a retired New York City Fire Department firefighter, Bill Spade, who recalled his experience on September 11. In the video, he states, that he worked for Rescue Company 5 in Staten Island. Along with his crew, Spade responded to the terrorist attack at the World Trade Center. He was only about 30 feet from the exit to the Trade Center when it began to collapse, and he was buried underneath the rubble for an hour before crawling out. Out of the twelve men who were working at Rescue Company 5 on September 11, Spade was the only survivor. He concluded his story by saying, “I lost most of my firehouse family that day, but I am blessed to be able to return home to my family.”⁸⁹ By listening to Bill Spade’s story, students will understand the perspective of a rescue worker on September 11.

Another video is from a high school student, Lila Nordstrom, at Stuyvesant High School in Manhattan, describing her evacuation from school on September 11. Nordstrom was in an architecture classroom and had a full view of the World Trade Centers from her classroom window. After her evacuation from school, she walked ten miles uptown to Queens and spent the night with a friend in Astoria. She did not return to her school building until October 9 and had to go through five police checkpoints to enter the building. On the second day of returning to school, parents launched a protest that school was unsafe due to the air quality. Nordstrom stated

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ National September 11 Memorial & Museum. “What Happened on 9/11? Part II.” Accessed on October 17, 2021

that she had a difficult time connecting with others in college due to the traumatic experience that she had lived through on September 11. Upon her graduation from college, Nordstrom began a Facebook petition to inform others about her high school classmates exposed to harmful materials in Manhattan after September 11. She eventually met with multiple politicians and began an organization called StuyHealth to help support those facing medical problems due to exposure to debris on and after September 11.⁹⁰ Nordstrom's experience as a high school student on September 11 will help students understand the event from the perspective of a fellow high school student.

Another video is from a World Trade Center Survivor, Lolita Jackson, who was an employee at Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, where she described the attack on the building. Jackson ran down 44 flights of stairs in ten minutes to escape the World Trade Center. She was underground in the subway when she felt the World Trade Center collapse. She claimed that September 11 has changed her outlook on life. She decided to leave her job on Wallstreet and work in the New York City Mayor's office. She stated, "If you could get killed going to work, you better really love your job."⁹¹ Jackson's experience will help students understand how the events on September 11 affected the lives of individuals in many ways, because Jackson changed her life and career in response to her traumatic experience on September 11. These examples of first-person accounts help students understand how terrorist attacks on September 11 personally affected individuals. Teachers can prompt their students to discuss how the first-hand accounts changed how students thought about September 11.⁹² Provided by the 9/11 Memorial and

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

Museum, this lesson serves as a basis for educators to build upon and advance student learning through the use of personal testimonies.

Another lesson from the September 11 Memorial and Museum, labeled for students grades 9-12, examines counterterrorism, strategies and tactics used by governments to prevent future acts of terror, after 9/11.⁹³ This lesson's essential question is, "how was the decision made to authorize a raid on the compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan?", addressing President Barack Obama's administration's decision to capture or kill Osama Bin Laden.⁹⁴ After watching a video about how the compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan was discovered and a video about the various options presented to President Obama, students are asked to analyze the president's decision to launch the raid. With the information presented in this lesson, students can form their own opinions, rank President Obama's options, analyze his decisions, and learn how counterterrorism tactics influence governmental decisions and have affected society.⁹⁵

The September 11 Memorial and Museum also offers an interactive timeline of September 11, which allows students to explore the events of the day as they unfolded.⁹⁶ This interactive timeline includes events beginning on September 11 at 5:45am and continuing until that night at 10:30pm. Students can click on links for each event to understand the day's timeline, which helps students analyze the cause-and-effect relationships from one event to another. For example, the length of time between the moment of contact and the collapse of each building, which provides insight into the amount of time people in the buildings had to evacuate.

⁹³ National September 11 Memorial & Museum, "The President Decides: Authorizing a Raid." Accessed October 17, 2021.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ National September 11 Memorial & Museum, "The President Decides: Authorizing a Raid." Accessed Oct. 17, 2021.

⁹⁶ National September 11 Memorial & Museum, "September 11 Interactive Timeline." Accessed Sept. 27, 2022.

Students can also listen to recorded conversations from the hijacked planes, which convey the emotion of each caller. Photographs and short video clips are included in the interactive timeline as well. Students can click on each of these events to read more about it. Some of the content, like the phone calls and videos, are difficult to listen to and watch due the horrific outcome of the terrorist attacks, including the death of innocent civilians. Based on the age of students, some do not feel comfortable listening to voice recordings or watching videos from September 11. Each student is different, and it is up to the teacher to decide which images, videos, and photos, they want to share with their students. If students do not feel comfortable exploring parts of the timeline, they can still get the brief explanation and summary without having to click on the recording or video itself. Because this interactive timeline only includes events from September 11, 2001, students will still need other materials to learn the terrorist motives and lasting effects that led to the Global War on Terror.⁹⁷

Scholastic Articles, a series of articles created for students, are another resource that teachers commonly use to aid their lessons. One titled, “From Terror to Hope,” by Kristen Lewis, is written for middle school students. The article provides an inspiring story of one girl’s experience at her school in New York City on September 11 and her thoughts on the attack in the days following.⁹⁸ Because the girl, Helaina, in the article is a middle school student, students should be able to envision themselves on September 11. The Scholastic article tells Helaina’s story as she felt the floor shake in her first-period science class after Flight 11 crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center. After learning about Helaina’s experience, Lewis then explains that “a group of terrorists called al Qaeda had hijacked four planes. al Qaeda followed a

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Lewis, Kristen. “From Terror to Hope” Scholastic Action. September 2018.

hate-filled form of the religion Islam”⁹⁹ Lewis goes onto clarify that, “Most Muslims- people who follow Islam- do not agree with al Qaeda’s beliefs.”¹⁰⁰ She provides context on the beliefs of al Qaeda and clarifies that not all Muslims believe in the same ideals, which is important for middle school students to understand. Lewis provides sections on how the aftermath and rebuilding of New York City after September 11 as well, where thought questions were posed to students, like, “how did the events of September 11th change our country?”¹⁰¹ Lewis’s article encompasses a personal story, basic information about the cause of September 11, and allows students to recognize the changes after the terrorist attacks on September 11.

The National Education Association provides teachers with a resource page on September 11. Links to lesson collections, background resources, approaches to teaching, memorials, and images, all give teachers a basis for creating their own lessons on September 11.¹⁰² One of the links in the background resources leads teachers to The September 11 Digital Archive, which preserves personal memories from September 11.¹⁰³ This digital archive provides multiple different primary sources from September 11 that teachers can use in their lessons. Collections include, art, audio, first responders, photography, personal accounts, and videos.¹⁰⁴ Online users can contribute to the collections as well. One section of the archive includes personal accounts of September 11 in the form of short written stories and graphics. One individual, April Burke, shared multiple graphics relating to September 11 and an email containing a poem to Bin Laden. In the poem to Bin Laden, the author wrote, “I have a question,

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Nast, Phil. “Teaching About 9/11.” National Education Association. September 23, 2020.

¹⁰³ September 11 Digital Archive. “Collections” Accessed December 1, 2022.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

about your theory and laws; ‘How come you never die for the cause?’”¹⁰⁵ By reading through the personal emails, graphics, and messages sent after September 11, individuals can explore the personal feelings and emotions after the traumatic event.

The First Responders section of The September 11 Digital Archive contains different primary sources from first responders on September 11. One collection contains the Fire Department of New York Incident Action Plans. Within this collection, there is an Incident Command Post Meeting from September 22, 2001, containing information of the incident on September 11, 2001.¹⁰⁶ In the art section of the September 11 Digital Archives, there are various art pieces, including paintings, poems, photography, relating to September 11. One example, from Carl Butler, includes four paintings of the World Trade Center buildings on September 11.¹⁰⁷ Students can explore this website and the vast amount of art, documents, audio recordings, stories, poems, songs, and other materials relating to September 11. As the memory of educators fade or new educators teach September 11 without a personal memory of their own, digital archives can help teachers convey September 11 in an interactive and engaging way that becomes meaningful and memorable to their students.

The National Education Association also included links to resources and powerful images as well. One of the most famous images taken on September 11 is, “Falling Man,” a photo taken by Richard Drew (see figure 2).¹⁰⁸ This photograph displays a man falling upside down from one of the Twin Towers. The man presumably jumped to his death to escape the burning building.

¹⁰⁵ September 11 Digital Archive. “April Burke” Accessed April 16, 2022.
<https://911digitalarchive.org/collections/show/123>

¹⁰⁶ September 11 Digital Archive. “FDNY Incident Action Plans” Accessed December 1, 2022.
<https://911digitalarchive.org/collections/show/127>

¹⁰⁷ September 11 Digital Archive. “Carl Butler” Accessed April 17, 2022.
<https://911digitalarchive.org/collections/show/67>

¹⁰⁸ TIME photo. “September 11th Attacks: The Story of the Falling Man Photo.” *Time*, Time. 2016.

There have been multiple attempts to identify the individual in the image. However, all attempts have been unsuccessful, and the identity of the falling man remains unknown. The “Falling Man,” “is less about who its subject was and more about what he became: a makeshift Unknown Soldier in an often unknown and uncertain war, suspended forever in history.”¹⁰⁹ The “Falling Man” is appropriate for the high-school classroom, but it may be too graphic for younger students due to the realization that this person made the decision to jump out of the World Trade Center to certain death. To understand the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, students need to understand the trauma that was faced on September 11. This image will help students understand the terror on September 11.

The National Education Association also linked a National Geographic article with 27 remarkable photos that help recall the events on September 11.¹¹⁰ Among this list is a photo labeled, “Silent Witness”, of the iconic Empire State Building with both the Twin Towers burning behind it (see figure 3).¹¹¹ This photograph was taken by Marty Lederhandler.¹¹² The Empire State Building stood by as the “Silent Witness” of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. This photograph would help students see the horrors as the Twin Towers stood smoking next to the unaffected Empire State building. The skyline of New York City was forever changed on September 11, 2001, after the Twin Towers collapsed. Another photo, taken by Jim Varhegyi, a member of the U.S. Air Force, labeled in the article as “Pentagon Fire” shows the broken sector of the Pentagon while fire personnel attempt to put the flame out with water (see figure 4).¹¹³ This image shows where the Pentagon was hit by Flight 77, and how

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Little, Becky, Howard, Brian Clark, and Handwerk, Brian. “Remember 9/11 in Pictures” National Geographic. Updated on September 11, 2018. Accessed on December 1, 2022.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

much of the Pentagon was damaged. By using photographs, students will see the damage done to American cities, buildings, and people on September 11.

While photos, videos, and websites can be used to teach September 11 successfully, some schools and teachers can now rely on textbooks to aid in student learning. Peter Wood analyzed five different high school history textbooks to discover what they say about September 11 and the Global War on Terror.¹¹⁴ The textbooks that Wood used in his study are: *American History*, 2018 edition, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, *United States History and Geography*, 2018 edition, McGraw Hill, *United States History*, 2016 edition, Pearson's, *America's History*, Ninth Edition, Bedford St. Martin's, and *The Unfinished Nation*, Ninth edition, McGraw Hill. He found that *American History* failed to mention, "any hint of the motives of the 'terrorists,'" and lacks any concrete background information about why September 11 happened.¹¹⁵ *United States History and geography*, "gets points for at least trying to establish a context that bears on what the 9/11 attack was about," however, the context provided an obscure motive.¹¹⁶ The text stated, "Muslims feared their traditional values were weakening as the oil industrialists also brought Western ideals into the region," as the motive to the terrorist attacks on September 11, which is vague.¹¹⁷ *United States History* provided more details and explanation for what caused September 11. Wood wrote, the text, "captures the sudden outpouring of patriot feeling that followed the attacks," that other textbooks ignored.¹¹⁸ *America's History*, "offers literally nothing on why the US was attacked or what it meant to Americans."¹¹⁹ Finally, *The Unfinished Nation* "is providing data, not telling a story, and nothing in this account of the events hints at

¹¹⁴ Wood, Peter. "What high-school history books teach about 9/11" *Spectator world*. September 11, 2021.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

motives or meaning,” and “attributes the attack, at some deep level, to Middle Eastern ‘poverty.’”¹²⁰ Each textbook lacked a comprehensive understanding of September 11, simplifying the motives so much that they do not make sense.

After analyzing each textbook, Wood concluded the strongest history textbooks provide information about the motives of the terrorist attacks and context.¹²¹ He concluded that the texts, “are factually accurate but estranged from the meaning of what happened- the meaning for the terrorists but even more so the meaning for Americans.”¹²² Instead of telling the whole story of September 11, four out of the five history textbooks just state facts, without providing much detail or giving much context.¹²³ For students to know the whole story behind September 11, they must understand the terrorist motives, the increased American patriotism after the terrorist attacks, and the increased Islamophobia in the United States. Many history books currently do not provide students this information.

Even with an abundance of resources for teachers, educators are still requesting help to teach September 11 twenty years later. Schools and teachers need to clarify how to go about teaching September 11 because, “some teachers engage students in only the anniversary as a form of memorial, while others want students to understand how the US and world response to 9/11 has impacted their lives.”¹²⁴ Although September 11 and the Global War on Terror is a complicated area to study, it must be covered in the curriculum. Without it, “this new generations’ lack of knowledge of 9/11 and the GWOT (Global War on Terror) and belief in

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Stoddard, J. “Teaching 9/11 and the war on terror national survey of secondary teachers.” *Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin – Madison*. 2019.

misinformation or even conspiracies was identified as a major constraint.”¹²⁵ Educators should use the resources from the National 9/11 Memorial and Museum, Scholastic Articles, and the National Education Association to tell a more complete story of September 11.

Conclusion

In the years after September 11, 2001, new books have been published, articles written, museums built, and teaching materials released. With the influx of materials, schools and educators can build more cohesive lessons. Initially and even in the first ten years after the terrorist attacks on September 11, teachers drew from their own personal memories and accounts to explain September 11 to their students. As memories drift and younger teachers begin to enter the field twenty years after September 11, lessons have evolved and certainly will continue to evolve to encompass new resources and materials. Students in today’s middle and high school history classrooms have no memory of September 11. Teachers are tasked to tell the complete and complex story of September 11 and the Global War on Terror.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Appendix A



Figure 1. photo of Flight 93 crash in Shanksville, PA taken by Valencia M. McClatchey.



Figure 2. “The Falling Man” photo taken by Richard Drew.



Figure 3. The Twin Towers burning behind the Empire State Building. Photo taken by Marty Lederhandler.



Figure 4. Firefighters put out the fire at the Pentagon on September 11. Photo taken by Jim Varhegyi.

Appendix B

September 11 in the Classroom Lesson Plan

State Content Standard and/or Common Core Standards:

In the current Ohio Department of Education Content Standards for Social Studies, adopted in 2018, September 11 is mentioned in only standards for American History. There are two standards involving September 11, standard number 32 states, “The United States faced new political, national security and economic challenges in the post-Cold War world and following the attacks on September 11, 2001.” Number 33 states, “Focusing on foreign policy, the United States faces ongoing economic, political, military, and social challenges in the post-Cold War era and following the attacks of September 11, 2001.”

However, even if September 11 is not specifically stated in other sections of social studies curriculum, the details of the event and aftermath are still necessary to teach for students to understand the current state of the world. Teachers should use this comprehensive lesson plan to cover September 11 on the anniversary each year.

Learning Objective: To display their knowledge on September 11, students will write a response to the question, “How did the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, change the world?”

Depending on student ability, teacher should alter this base standard to align with their expectations of students. This lesson plan is equipped with multiple different strategies and resources for teaching about September 11 at the middle school and high school level. Based on the age of students and about of time available, teachers should use what is the most appropriate for students.

DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION

Opening: Key Events of September 11, 2001
<p>1. For middle school and high school students (7th to 12th grades): Teacher welcomes students to the classroom. To gauge prior student knowledge about September 11, teacher will post a bellringer question on the board and ask students to respond. Using Google Classroom, students can respond to this bell ringer question and the teacher can read answers as they are submitted.</p> <p>Bellringer Question: What do you know about the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001?</p>

<p>Teacher will read student answers to understand what students already know about September 11.</p>
<p>2. For middle school and high school students (7th to 12th grades): To fill in the gaps of what students know about September 11, teacher uses the September 11 Memorial and Museum Timeline. This timeline displays key events of September 11 throughout the day. Teachers and students together can explore this timeline. Based on grade level (7-12), teacher may allow students time to explore the timeline on their own.</p> <p>Teacher should stop and explain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8:19AM Flight 11 Crew Members Contact Ground Personnel - 8:46 AM North Tower Attack - 9:03 AM South Tower Attack - 9:37 AM Attack at the Pentagon - 9:59 AM Collapse of the South Tower - 10:03 AM Crash of Flight 93 - 10:15 AM Collapse of the Pentagon E Ring - 10:28 AM Collapse of the North Tower - 8:30 PM U.S. President Addresses the Nation from the White House <p>https://timeline.911memorial.org/#Timeline/2</p>
<p>Body of the Lesson: Exploring the Effects of September 11</p>
<p>1. To understand the initial reactions of the terrorist attacks on September 11 and the personal experiences of individuals, teachers will use a primary source example to connect students with individuals that lived through September 11.</p> <p>For middle school students (7th and 8th grades): Teachers should use the Scholastic Article titled, “From Terror to Hope,” by Kristen Lewis. This article provides an inspiring story of one girl’s experience at her middle school in New York City on September 11 and her thoughts on the attack in the days following. Lewis’s article encompasses a personal story, basic information about the cause of September 11, and allows students to recognize the changes after the terrorist attacks on September 11.</p> <p>https://action.scholastic.com/issues/2018-19/090118/from-terror-to-hope.html#670L</p> <p>For high school students (9th-12th grades): Teachers should use materials from the 9/11 Museum and Memorial lesson plans. In the lesson plan, “What happened on September 11? Part II.,” there are multiple videos of individuals sharing their first-hand experience on September 11.</p>

Teachers should show the individual first-hand accounts from Bill Spade, a rescue worker on September 11, Lila Nordstrom, a high school student on September 11, and Lolita Jackson, who was working in the World Trade Center at the time of the attack.

<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/lesson-plans/what-happened-911-part-ii>

Teachers may also want to use resources from the 9/11 Digital Archive. The materials from the September 11 Digital Archive are from individuals who were personally affected by the terrorist attacks on September 11. Many of these individuals share their personal narratives, art pieces, audio recordings, videos, and photographs to help inform others about their experiences on September 11.

Teachers should share the poem in April Burke's personal account file written to Bin Laden.

<https://911digitalarchive.org/collections/show/123>

Teachers should share the four paintings in Carl Burke's file of the World Trade Center building.

<https://911digitalarchive.org/collections/show/67>

2. **For both Middle and High school students (7th-12th grades):** To understand the changes in American government and the public fear due to the terrorist attack on September 11, teacher should show the Bullhorn Address to Ground Zero Workers from President Bush in the few days after September 11.

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911groundzerobullhorn.htm>

3. **For both Middle School and High School Students (7th -12th Grades):** Teachers should discuss the increased Islamophobia after September 11. Teacher should define Islamophobia for students and explain why the terrorist attacks would have caused increased Islamophobia in the United States. By addressing the high emotions and public fear within the United States after the attack first, students will understand why some individuals had an increased dislike or prejudice against Muslims. Teacher must address Islamophobia to combat prejudice against Islam or Muslims.

To address Islamophobia, teachers can use materials from the three-part lesson plan titled, "Muslims in America after 9/11" from the 9/11 Memorial and Museum. Within

this lesson plan, students will address how the public attitudes towards Muslim-Americans or those perceived to be Muslim changed after 9/11.

<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/lesson-plans/muslims-america-after-911-part-i>

4. **For Middle School Students (7th and 8th Grades):** To address the anxiety of Americans after September 11, teachers could use the resources in the 9/11 Memorial and Museum Lesson Plan titled, “American Anxiety After 9/11.” This lesson plan is fit for middle school age students and addresses how 9/11 affected Americans’ sense of safety.

<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/lesson-plans/american-anxiety-after-911>

For high school students (9th to 12th grades): Teachers should also explain to students the development of the Department of Homeland Security and the increased security in airports and on airplanes. The Department of Homeland Security was developed in 2003. To address other governmental concerns relating to September 11 and the international fight against terrorism, teachers can use the 9/11 Memorial and Museum Lesson Plan titled, “The International Fight Against Terrorism.” This lesson plan is for high school students and addresses how other nations assisted the United States in the immediate search for Osama Bin Laden. Within this lesson plan, students will learn the vocabulary terms al Qaeda, CIA, NATO, and Taliban through watching a short video about American’s response to September 11 with Operation Enduring Freedom. Students will then answer a few questions relating to how the International Community responded to the terrorist attacks on September 11.

<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/lesson-plans/international-fight-against-terrorism>

Closing: Other stories from September 11

5. **For middle school and high school students:** To share an uplifting story from September 11, 2001, teacher should show the Boatlift documentary on YouTube. This video is only 10 minutes long and shares a positive story from courage on September 11.

Boatlift Documentary Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MDOrzF7B2Kg>

Homework: Drawing Conclusions about September 11

6. **For middle school and high school students:** To display their knowledge on September 11, students will write a response to the question, “How did the terrorist

attacks on September 11, 2001, change the world?” Based on student ability, this response could be as long as one page, including sources from the lesson or as short as one paragraph. This open-ended question encourages students to draw conclusions about the terrorist attack on September 11.

Example Grading Rubric

	Beginner (1 points)	Capable (3 points)	Accomplished (5 points)
Answer Quality	Student lists but does not explain one change in the world after September 11.	Student explains at least 1 change in the world after September 11.	Student explains at least three changes in the world after September 11.
Refers to resources discussed in class. (Timeline, videos, images, etc.)	Student does not refer to the resources discussed in class.	Student refers to at least one resource discussed in class.	Student refers to multiple resources discussed in class.
Correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	Student has multiple grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes.	Student has less than two grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes.	Student has one or less grammar, spelling, and punctuation mistakes.
Total Score:			/15

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