

Where were you on

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001?

REMEMBER

SHARE YOUR STORY

Opportunities for Sharing, Empathy and Discussion

## Memories of September 11, 2001

[www.911Memories.org](http://www.911Memories.org)

By Kara Clayton and Carolyn Fortuna, [Media Education Lab](#)

### Curriculum

These lessons encourage students to activate digital literacy competencies as they research and discuss people's memories of September 11, 2001. The series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda on the U.S. on Tuesday, September 11, 2001 continue to deeply affect U.S. identity and politics. Through an academic forum, learners gather information and compare observations of memories of September 11, 2001 to reflect upon the variety of experiences and interpretations of this important historical event. [Watch the Video](#)

### Overview

This lesson encourages students to draw upon digital literacy to research and to discuss memories of September 11, 2001. The series of four coordinated terrorist attacks by the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda on the U.S. on Tuesday, September 11, 2001 continue to deeply affect U.S. identity and politics. Through an online academic forum, students compare observations of memories of September 11, 2001 and demonstrate empathy in a digital age.

While historians and history students can use traditional documents to reconstruct the past, everyday people fall through the cracks in the written record."

--- Kathryn Walbert, Southern Oral History Program

# MEMORIES OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

## Rationale

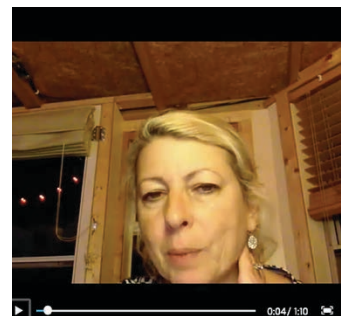
For the first time, since September 11, 2011, the 9th grade students who arrive in our high school classrooms in August or September have little to no first hand memory of the events that took place on U.S. soil that has come to be known as “9/11.” On September 11, 2001, the United States was attacked in four separate incidents involving jet airliners that had been hijacked by members of a terrorist organization known as Al-Qaeda. In New York City, the World Trade Center was hit by two separate planes. A third plane was set to crash into the White House, when passengers rushed the cockpit, took over the controls, and crashed the plane into a field in Pennsylvania; all lives on board were sacrificed. The fourth airliner crashed into the Pentagon.

In all, thousands of lives were lost, and airline travel, privacy, and national identity as people in the United States knew it changed unalterably. Importantly, living in a “Post 9/11 Era” has resulted in “contested meanings” (O'Brien, 2011) around what it means to be a U.S. patriot.

The overarching purpose of this unit of instruction is to help high school students to understand the importance of sharing memories as a form of oral history, especially about an important event in U.S. history like September 11, 2001. Though current high school history books might not yet have detailed, first-hand information about September 11, students who have the ability to participate in an asynchronous conversation with someone who actually experienced the September 11 event may gain empathy in a way that words on a page might not fully be able to provide.

Engaging in a digital social discussion forum can allow students asynchronous access to individuals who experienced the events of September 11 personally and emotionally. Such access can confer the ability for students to engage in dialogue so that they learn about the events of the day in deeper and meaningful ways. The word, dialogue is an important word to explain to students. The goal here is not for students to come to consensus on specific points or events around September 11, rather we want to students to hear diverse perspectives on this topic so that they can continue to have dialogues--rather than discussions--on their own in the future.

Moreover, it gives students an opportunity to **learn about another person who is not necessarily part of their immediate community** in order to expand their social horizons in a safe manner. As a whole, this unit seeks to re-conceptualize how teenagers learn from and communicate with “everyday people” about a day in history that many will never forget.



## Technology Matters

Encouraging students to participate in civic engagement through discussion in digital forum is a skill that many teenagers may not have yet developed. Although, according to Gao, et al, asynchronous discussion environments support important learning objectives, teachers often design threaded forums, which “do not foster productive online discussions.” This unit on “Memories of September 11, 2001” **helps student discussions to emerge organically from teens’ authentic areas of interest**, which can generate deeper civic engagement, shared purposes, transparency, and increased participatory culture.

Using Flipgrid, an asynchronous digital discussion tool, students engage with people who aren’t able to come into their classroom for a lecture but who can provide first-hand knowledge and experience on the topic of September 11. Flipgrid extends the classroom far beyond the school day. Students who may feel reluctant to participate in a discussion within the four walls of their classroom can plan what they have to say without feeling pressure from their peers (Repman, et al., 2005).



## A Note on Supporting Students’ Socioemotional Competencies

Students who have the opportunity to engage in soft skills such as showing empathy as well as establishing and maintaining relationships with others are often more successful in both their academic and personal lives. According to Hamedani and Hammond (2015, p. 1):

“social emotional learning school environments and practices hold the potential to better equip students with critical psychological resources and social emotional supports that they need to feel like school is important, that they belong there, and that they can be successful.”

By providing students with the opportunity to connect with others through *dialogue*, not only do we help students to break down walls that can interfere with the ability to engage in rich conversations, but we also provide them with opportunities to practice speaking and listening with others in a safe, mediated space.

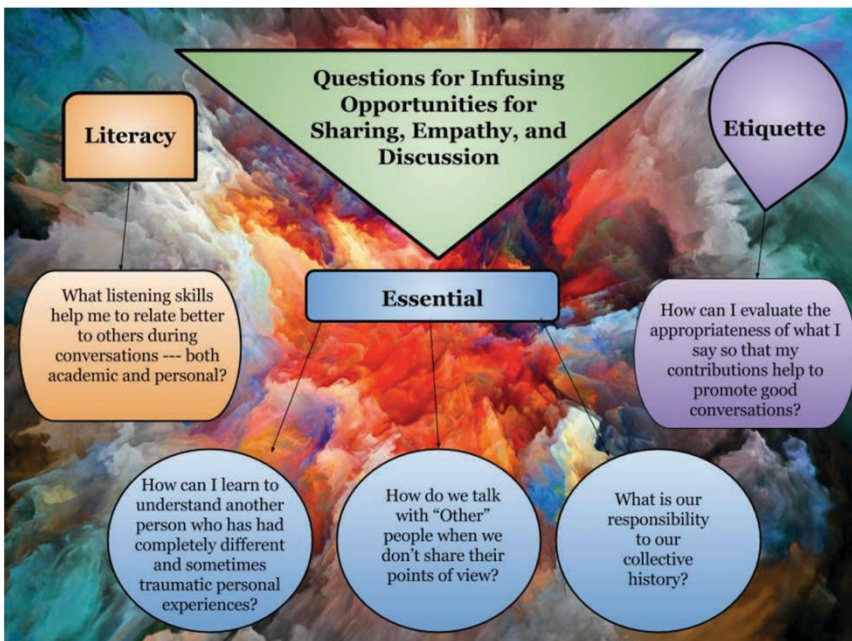
Such contexts require scaffolded, advanced planning that include opportunities for students to gain motivation, discussion guidelines with clear expectations, a strong sense of community, and attention to issues of social equity.

## INTRODUCTION

Although many high school students have little to no recollection of the terrorist attacks that took place on American soil on September 11, 2001, these attacks continue to impact their lives. Many thousands of people lost family members in the tragedy. Wars are being fought in Afghanistan and Iraq based on the consequences of these attacks. In the United States, immigration policies are adversely impacting the families of many students. Certainly, other consequences of 9/11 continue to affect today's generation of students, their families, and communities. By using an asynchronous video discussion tool, Flipgrid.com, students gain access to diverse sources of personal knowledge and experience through storytelling and improve their ability to respond appropriately to engage with others in online dialogue and discussion.

## Introduce the Instructional Goals

Teacher introduces the Essential, Literacy, and Etiquette essential questions. Teacher shares the Standards and Principles of the unit by pointing to a prepared bulletin board where each is posted prominently. Teacher should refer to these Standards and Principles throughout the unit. Teacher then previews the Key Vocabulary for the unit. Subsequently, students draw images with captions, both of which demonstrate comprehension of key terms.



## Objectives

This unit of instruction has been developed with four primary student objectives in mind. Students will be able to:

- Listen and respond to other's remarks succinctly, coherently, and with empathy;
- Deconstruct messages contained in primary (Flipgrid responses) and secondary (support materials) resources by applying key questions of media literacy;
- Access a digital app to engage in inquiry based discussion; and,
- Demonstrate digital etiquette in a controlled social media environment.



### **Key Vocabulary**

**digital etiquette** - practicing safe and polite behavior while using digital devices and the Internet

**empathy** - to understand how someone else thinks and feels

**perspective** - a particular way of seeing and interpreting issues and the world; a point of view

**bias** - a prejudice against someone, something, or a group that is usually seen as unfair.

**primary resource** - an artifact that is a first-hand account of an event, like a photograph or an interview about an historic event (in this case, September 11, 2001)

**succinct** - to make a point clearly and with as few words as possible.

### **Modifications and Accommodations**

Teachers can adapt this lesson plan to personalize for learners. Sample modifications and accommodations might include word banks, annotating primary resources, compiling master notes from class discussions, modeling digital etiquette in small group settings, or providing alternative formative and summative assessments as applicable.

**LESSON 1****What Do I Know About September 11, 2001?**

*By having students participate in activities prior to introducing new content, teachers can identify incomplete, faulty, or conflicting ideas or misconceptions, and accelerate students' ability to successfully learn and apply new information.*

**Activate Prior Knowledge**

Start by working as a full class to create a K-W-L chart on large chart paper. Ask students to help add to the first two columns: What Do We **Know** About September 11, 2001? And, What Do We **Want** to Know About September 11, 2001? The final column, What We **Learned**, is completed at the end of the lessons.

**Close Reading and Viewing**

Then ask students to read and annotate the online article called from KQED entitled, ["How 9/11 Changed America."](#) Once they are done, students can fill in the last column of the K-W-L as a class.

View the video ["Photographer Tom Franklin Remembers 9/11"](#) as a whole class. Ask students to write down new information that they learn as they watch the film. Then conduct a whole class discussion in which students share what they learned while watching the film.

**Create and Reflect**

Ask students to participate in a 3-2-1 (Three-Two-One) writing activity. Students write 3 key terms from what they have just learned, 2 ideas about which they would like to learn more, and 1 concept or skill they think they have mastered. Students then respond to the following questions to end this activity:

- What is the role of a photojournalist?
- How does a photojournalist overcome her or his emotions in order to tell a story with visual imagery?

**Resources Used In this Lesson**

["How 9/11 Changed America"](#)

["Photographer Tom Franklin Remembers 9/11"](#)

## LESSON 2

### Exploring Newspaper Front Pages

*By reading newspaper front pages and viewing videos, students use digital resources to gain knowledge that will prepare them for listening and interviewing people who remembered the events of September 11, 2001.*

### Analyze Texts

First, the teacher models newspaper analysis using the Newseum's ["Today's Front Pages"](#) from September 12, 2001 to make some observations about the content and structure of the front pages.

Working individually or with a partner, students choose five front pages from different states or countries, using [a Google Doc worksheet](#) to document their exploration of the website. They make observations and review the regional differences in the wording of the headlines and consider the choice of photos selected by newspaper editors. They reflect on what feelings they might have had if they were old enough to read one of these newspapers on September 12, 2001,



### Analyze Video

Using the ["Our City, Our Stories" website from the 9/11 Memorial Museum](#), students identify common elements that emerge across stories of September 11, considering the content and format of the materials using Video Analysis Worksheet

### Resources Used In this Lesson

["Today's Front Pages" for September 12, 2001](#)

["Our City, Our Stories"](#)

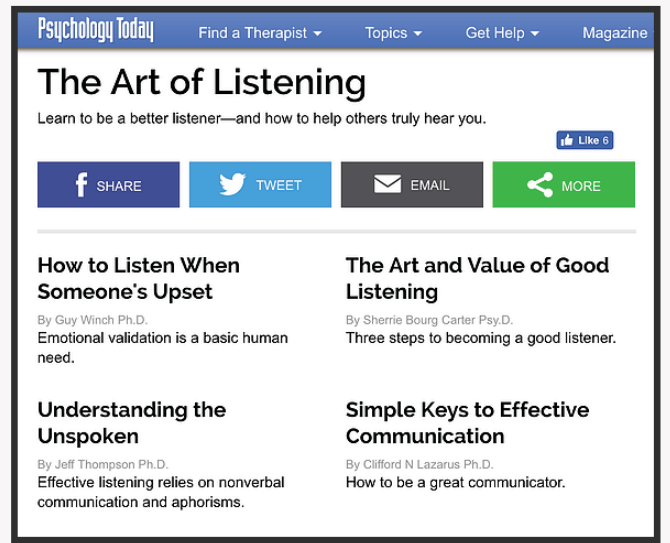
**LESSON 3**

**Participate in a Digital Conversations with  
Someone Who Remembers September 11, 2001**

*Students read about effective listening and questioning techniques and put these techniques into practice as they listen to memories from people who experienced September 11, 2001 and follow up with questions of their own.*

**Engage**

Students select one or more articles from the [The Art of Listening](#) page at Psychology Today. As they read, they should construct a list of five Big Ideas that might help them as they listen to others talk about experiences of September 11, 2001 which may bring up many different emotions. The provided graphic organizer is a place for students to note their findings.

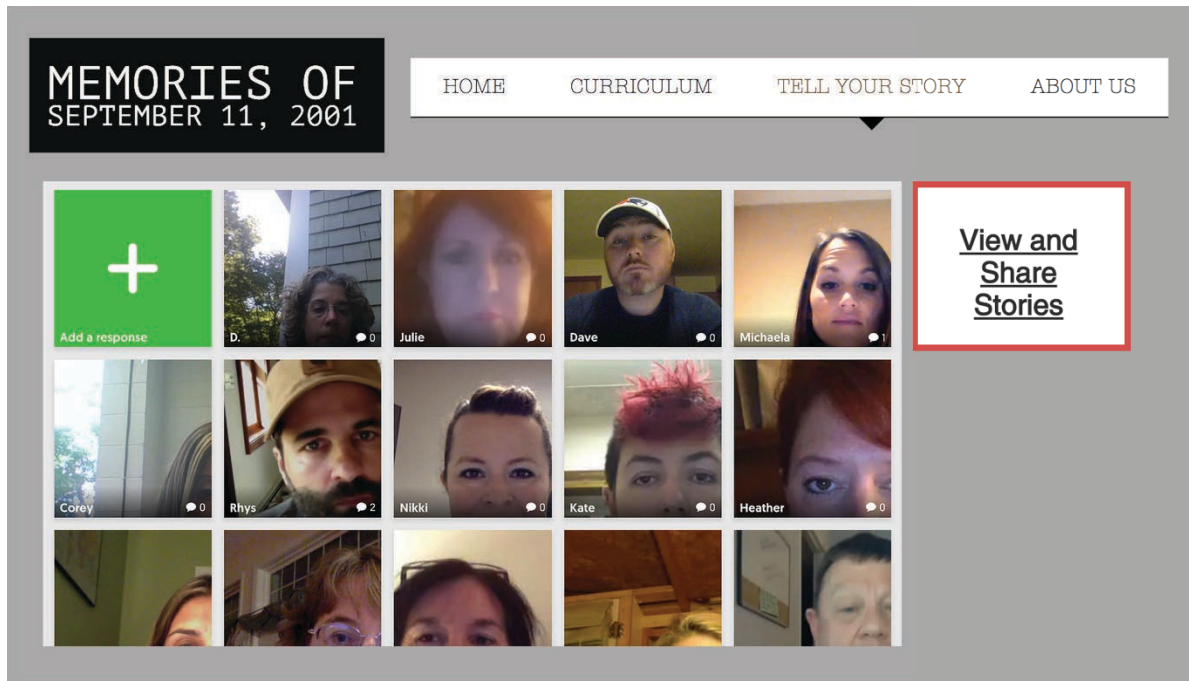


Article Name	Big Idea	Why it could be valuable to me as I compose questions to use in an important conversation



## LESSON 3

### Participate in a Digital Conversations with Someone Who Remembers September 11, 2001



### Sharing Our Stories

Teacher should model how to use [Flipgrid September 11 Memories](#) by viewing one video and using the “Reply” function to respond appropriately and with empathy.

### Reply

To respond to an existing video, encourage students to reply by summarizing first, then adding their comments and questions:

**Summarize.** What is the central message of this video?

**Connect.** What is one connection you can make between what the speaker said and what you learned?

**Reflect.** How might the speaker’s personal life experiences have affected his/ her memories of September 11?

**Respond.** How did the speaker’s tone help the listener connect emotionally to the video?

**Wonder.** What questions do you have after listening?

### LESSON 3

#### Participate in a Digital Conversations with Someone Who Remembers September 11, 2001

Teachers may want to share a copy of this [Google Doc Flipgrid Assignment Sheet](#) to support student creative work.

#### Create

To create a new Flipgrid video entry on the [Flipgrid 911 Memories board](#), learners might engage with parents and family members to capture their memories using the Flipgrid tool:

- How old were you on September 11, 2001?
- Where were you on September 11, 2001?
- What do you remember about media reports of the attacks?
- What images stick in your mind about the attacks on September 11, 2001?
- How did you feel when the attacks occurred?
- What personal story might you relate about September 11, 2001?
- What personal or national changes have you felt or observed since September 11, 2001?

Students can complete a Flipgrid by interviewing parents and family members at home. They can individually view the 9/11 Flipgrid if 1:1 personal technology devices are available. In a computer lab, students can work with a partner or individually. Teachers can use random selection and full class viewing if there is only one computer available for the class to use.

#### Reflect

After completing this activity, engage in dialogue by responding to these questions:

- What is the purpose of listening to different perspectives of an historical event such as September 11?
- What assumptions did you make about each person on the Flipgrid before viewing? Were your assumptions different after viewing?
- Write one or two lingering questions that you have about September 11 after reading, analyzing and viewing first hand responses. How can you go about finding answers to those questions?

#### Resources Used in this Lesson

[The Art of Listening](#)

[Flipgrid 911 Memories Board](#)

[Google Doc Flipgrid Assignment Sheet](#)

**LEARN MORE**

**The Reichstag Fire Next Time  
by Masha Gessen**

This [thought-provoking essay in Harper's Magazine](#) by Masha Gessen compares September 11, 2001 to other historical moments when dramatic events were used to create a “state of exception” to justify the suspension of civil and political rights. The title refers to the Reichstag fire, which Hitler used to justify the suspension of democratic practices in Germany in 1933.

**How Accurate are Memories of 9/11?  
by Ingfel Chen**

Published in *Scientific American*, [this interview with researcher Elizabeth Phelps](#) sheds insight on how our memories about this significant event have changed over time.



## LEARN MORE

**Map.** Anyone who participates in the Flipgrid can create a pin on the map and link their video to the pin. Students can look at this map and look at the pins to see where each Flipgrid participant was at the time of the September 11, 2001 attacks. Students should consider the location of the pins. How does someone in a different location experience the same event? How might someone from the Midwest or another urban center have experienced the attacks differently than someone lived in a big city with high rises? How did the physical landscape impact the magnitude of the attacks?

**Compare.** Compare the events of September 11 to other surprise attacks such as the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. What first person accounts can you find, and how do they compare to those which were shared on the 9/11 Flipgrid? One resource that might be engaging for students is to listen/view first-hand accounts from Veterans who fought in World War II called, "[Stories From the Veterans History Project: Pearl Harbor 70th Anniversary.](#)"

**Get Support.** Topics that bring up emotional responses like this September 11, 2001 curriculum can be difficult for some students. Teachers who feel it is appropriate might invite in an adjustment/ guidance counselor to sit in on a class as the topics of discussion around 9/11 become more complex.

## Materials Used in Lessons

### [Photographer Tom Franklin Remembers 9/11 Video](#)

Learn how photographer Tom Franklin felt about having the job of documenting events in New York City as a photojournalist.

### [Newseum Front Pages from 9/12](#)

The Newseum in Washington D.C. collected front pages of newspapers from around the country and around the world for display on their website. Examine the powerful language and images used in these newspapers on 9/12/2001.

### [Our City, Our Stories](#)

Listen to audio recordings from people who were in New York City at the time of the terrorist attacks.

### [Article from Edutopia on Asking Questions](#)

This short article by Warren Berger provides five simple ways to help students learn to ask questions.

### [The Art of Listening](#)

Essays from Psychology Today help students think about how they attend to and respond to others.

### [9/11 Memories on Flipgrid](#)

This is an app that can be accessed from a mobile device or desktop computer. It is being utilized in this unit to engage people in conversation about their experience on September 11, 2001. All that is needed is the camera and microphone that comes with a digital device in order to participate in this crowd-sourced conversation.

## STANDARDS

### Common Core Standards - English Language Arts Speaking and Listening

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with pertinent descriptions, facts, details, and examples; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.5 Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.7.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 7 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.4 Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.5 Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.8.6 Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. (See grade 8 Language standards 1 and 3 here for specific expectations.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

### CCS- National Council for the Social Studies

Global Connections Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and independence.

II - Time, Continuity, & Change

III - People, Places, & Environments

IX - Global Connections

### The Core Principles of Media Literacy Education

Media Literacy Education requires active inquiry and critical thinking about the messages we receive and create.

Media Literacy Education expands the concept of literacy to include all forms of media (i.e., reading and writing).

Media Literacy Education builds and reinforces skills for learners of all ages. Like print literacy, those skills necessitate integrated, interactive, and repeated practice.

Media Literacy Education develops informed, reflective and engaged participants essential for a democratic society.

Media Literacy Education recognizes that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialization.

Media Literacy Education affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages.



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