

# WHAT HAPPENED ON SEPTEMBER 11

## OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze a documentary film about the events of September 11, 2001. *Optional:* Students will conduct research, synthesize information, and develop an essay or creative project to demonstrate historical knowledge and personal reflections.

## TIME

60 minutes, plus additional time for research and optional essay/creative project

## MATERIALS

- The free documentary *What Happened on September 11* at [www.hbo.com/classrooms/what-happened-on-september-11](http://www.hbo.com/classrooms/what-happened-on-september-11)
- What Happened on September 11 activity sheet
- Classroom film viewing equipment

## STANDARDS

### C3 (Civics and Social Studies)

Grades 6–8  
D1.2, D2.Civ.2,  
D2.Civ.6, D2.Civ.10,  
D2.His.1, D2.His.3,  
D2.His.16

### CCSS ELA

Grades 6–8  
W.6.1–6.4, W.6.7,  
W.6.9, W.7.1–4,  
W.7.7, W.7.9,  
W.8.1–4, W.8.7, W.8.9

## LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before showing students the film, ask questions about the attacks on September 11, 2001. Ask: *What do you know about 9/11? Do you think 9/11 still affects us today? What are things that you want to find out?*
2. Explain to the class that they will now watch a film that shows students like them learning about September 11, 2001. Tell them that the film focuses primarily on attacks on the United States that happened in New York City, but that other attacks also occurred at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and in a field outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania.
3. Distribute the What Happened on September 11 activity sheet, and review the five topics with students. Organize students into small groups and have them choose (or you can assign) one of the topics. Make sure that all topics have been assigned to at least one group.
4. Show the film *What Happened on September 11* (about 29 minutes) and have students take notes in response to the viewing questions on a separate sheet of paper. Tell them to listen closely for information on the topic their group has chosen. *Optional:* Re-show groups the designated time segments on the activity sheet so that they can finish their notes on their specific topic.
5. Direct student groups to meet briefly to review their notes and formulate a group answer to the topic's Presentation Question. Have students present their answers to the class and discuss.
6. Introduce the extension project, or wrap up with these discussion questions:
  - Why is it important to know about an event like 9/11?
  - How can one person's experience reflect the experience of a nation?



Stephen Kern tells middle school students his story of evacuating the towers after the planes hit.

- How do past actions create consequences for countries and individuals later on?
- How do we overcome prejudice and bias toward others?

## EXTENSION

### HISTORY AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION

- Have students use information from their notes and the Presentation Question to synthesize their learning, then express their knowledge in an essay, poem, drawing, painting, or sculpture. To accompany artwork, students should include a half-page description.
- For additional resources, you may wish to print and share student articles from *Scholastic News* magazine located at [bit.ly/schnews911](http://bit.ly/schnews911). Additional teaching resources are also available from the 9/11 Tribute Museum site at [bit.ly/2mdsE5B](http://bit.ly/2mdsE5B).
- Have students present their projects to the class.
- Wrap up with the discussion questions in step 6 at left.



A student from Secaucus (NJ) Middle School displays his work of art commemorating 9/11.

# WHAT HAPPENED ON SEPTEMBER 11

As you watch the film *What Happened on September 11*, take notes on the viewing questions below, paying special attention to your group's topic. After the film, you'll analyze your notes as a group, then prepare the answer to your Presentation Question.



## TOPIC 1: SURVIVORS OF THE 9/11 ATTACKS

**3:47–7:26**

- What was Stephen's Kern's reaction when the first plane hit the North Tower?
- How did Stephen and his group get out of the building?
- Describe his experience after the towers collapsed.

**Presentation Question:** How did the attacks on 9/11 affect those who survived?

## TOPIC 2: TARGETING THE TWIN TOWERS

**9:18–10:50**

- What was notable about the World Trade Center buildings?
- What were the buildings used for?
- How were the Twin Towers a symbol of the United States?

**Presentation Question:** Why might the Twin Towers have been chosen as a target?

## TOPIC 3: FIRST RESPONDERS

**17:47–22:26**

- Describe the early experiences Matthew Crawford had with his father.
- What were Matthew's thoughts about the destruction on 9/11?
- Why didn't Matthew become a firefighter?

**Presentation Question:** Why are first responders considered heroes?

## TOPIC 4: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

**14:20–17:00**

- Why was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan a threat to the U.S.?
- How did the war affect Afghanistan?
- Who was Osama bin Laden and why did he plan 9/11?

**Presentation Question:** Why is it important to understand that the 9/11 attacks are not a part of the religion of Islam?



## TOPIC 5: TREE AT GROUND ZERO

**23:48–28:28**

- What was the destruction like at Ground Zero?
- What did the rescue workers do when they discovered a surviving tree?
- How did the tree get back to the 9/11 Memorial? How did people react?

**Presentation Question:** How is this "Survivor Tree" symbolic of life after 9/11?