

NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11  
MEMORIAL & MUSEUM  
AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER

# History in the Making

## Teaching Guide and Take-Home Pages

The National September 11 Memorial & Museum, now being built at the World Trade Center site in New York City, is dedicated to the remembrance of September 11 and the previous attack at the World Trade Center on February 26, 1993. The growing collection of primary sources—including artifacts, documents, and recorded testimonies—offers firsthand perspectives on the events of September 11 and the days following. The Memorial Museum will offer future generations the opportunity to examine this history and think critically about the significance of September 11.

### TOUR FOR THE NATIONAL SEPTEMBER 11 MEMORIAL & MUSEUM LAUNCHES FALL 2007

Initial stops include:

Columbia, SC  
Raleigh, NC  
Norfolk, VA  
Pittsburgh, PA  
Charleston, WV  
Cincinnati, OH  
Lexington, KY  
Fort Wayne, IN  
Lansing, MI  
Aurora, IL  
Madison, WI  
Sioux Falls, SD  
Des Moines, IA  
Omaha, NE  
Wichita, KS  
St. Louis, MO

Please visit  
[www.national911memorial.org/btm\\_nationaltour](http://www.national911memorial.org/btm_nationaltour)  
for additional tour stops and details.

[www.national911memorial.org](http://www.national911memorial.org)



Thoughtful lessons to help students think critically about the events of September 11 and:

- how current events become part of history
- how the past affects our lives—as individuals, as members of a local community, and as citizens of the world

# Dear Teacher,

Helping young people to understand the events of history and recognize the impact of these events on today's world is one of the most important things you do as a teacher. Your job has become more complicated as news and information are transmitted around the world and people everywhere experience historic events instantaneously.

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, happened only six years ago. The record of the events of September 11, the significance of those events, and our understanding of their impact are still evolving.

As scholars and historians search for “meaning,” students in classrooms all over the world are asking the same difficult questions: “What happened?” as well as “Why?” and “What does this mean for our future?” As an educator, you are challenged daily by these inquiries and the need to provide opportunities for students to share and express their feelings about complex ideas and issues.

The lessons in this Teaching Guide from the National September 11 Memorial & Museum are meant to help students understand:

- how historical records and authoritative history are written, and how they are formed from the careful and balanced combination of documentary accounts from many and varied primary sources; and
- that many perspectives come together to shape historical records.

We hope that by learning about these concepts through a discussion of the events of September 11 your students will understand more about the evolving world in which they live.

The Memorial & Museum's tribute exhibition is currently visiting cities around the country. Please watch for the tour when it travels to a city near you, visit the website, and learn more about this important institution.

National September 11 Memorial & Museum

On September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists hijacked four planes and killed 2,974 people at the World Trade Center in New York City, at the Pentagon outside Washington, DC, and in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. As these horrific events unfolded, people from all over the world came to help; together they mourned the innocent lives lost, honored the first responders and all those who risked their lives to save others, and recognized the thousands of people who survived. September 11 stands as a defining moment in history, an event that continues to affect individuals and local, national, and international communities.

## LEARN MORE:

- For excerpts from firsthand accounts and responses to the events of September 11, 2001, see the class set of Take-Home Pages included with this Teaching Guide.
- Visit the Museum's exhibits through the online Multimedia Gallery at [www.national911memorial.org](http://www.national911memorial.org), where you can explore the collections and photographs and listen to firsthand accounts from the Museum's expanding library of recorded testimonies.

**Visit [www.national911memorial.org](http://www.national911memorial.org)**

- Download copies of this Teaching Guide and Take-Home Pages
- Connections to national standards
- Links to additional resources

# Lessons Overview

With a focus on the events of September 11, 2001, these lessons emphasize the importance of primary sources as vehicles for remembering people and events of the past, and as a way to learn about history.

## What students should know:

- The events of September 11 were witnessed by a global audience in real time. As a result, there is an abundance of primary source material—first-person testimonies, objects, and digital materials—for scholars and future generations interested in learning about this event.
- Different people may describe or remember the events of September 11, 2001, in different ways.
- Artifacts—from building remnants to personal belongings—help document the story of past events.
- It is important for artifacts to be preserved by archivists and museum curators so that historians and future generations may study and learn about the past.

## What students should be able to do:

- Identify the kinds of primary sources that have been preserved, so that future generations can learn about the events of September 11, 2001.
- Record a story of September 11 and its impact as told through the eyes of someone who remembers it.
- Compare and contrast the different points of view reflected in various accounts, and recognize that individual and personal memories reflect different perspectives on an event.
- Recognize the range of artifacts being collected by the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center.

## LESSON 1: Gathering Primary Sources—Oral Testimonies

**Objective:** To help students understand that personal testimonies tell the story of an event from many different perspectives and that the role of historians is to create an accurate public record of history.

**Overview:** Students will gather stories from family members and others at home about their memories of September 11, 2001, and its aftermath, and then compare and contrast their stories, studying different points of view and what people know at different points of time. Ask: *Do we know more now, six years after the event? Are there additional parts of the story and perspectives that came to light after the event that help us to understand more about what happened at that time?*

**Time:** Two 40-minute class periods

### Resources/Materials:

- Take-Home Pages as preparation
- paper/notebooks for recording interviews (recorders optional)
- additional first-person accounts from [www.national911memorial.org](http://www.national911memorial.org), StoryCorps ([www.storycorps.net](http://www.storycorps.net)), and other websites.

### ACTIVITIES—DAY 1:

#### 1. Warm-up/Preparation:

- Pose this question: *Why is the history of events such as September 11, 2001, important to record?* (Students should understand that for people now and in the future to know what happened, history must be recorded.)
- Pose this question: *How do historians write history?* Discuss the difference between secondary sources (e.g., books written by historians) and primary sources (e.g., firsthand

accounts, diaries, letters, recordings, print interviews, photos, and other artifacts).

- Review with students this definition of “primary source”: a firsthand document, oral testimony, or object that dates from the time of an event in history. Ask: *How does a primary source differ from a secondary source?*
- Guide students to develop criteria for analyzing primary sources. (For example: *Who spoke the words? What is that person’s relationship to the event? When was the document written, or when was the story recorded? Is there evidence of bias? To whom did the object belong? How does the object relate to the event?*)
- Point out that historians evaluate many, often conflicting primary sources, in order to draw historical conclusions about an event such as September 11.
- Provide examples from September 11 (refer to examples in the Take-Home Pages and websites), such as a fire officer’s helmet damaged by debris when the South Tower collapsed; an interview with a person who survived the events at the World Trade Center; a twisted piece of steel from the North Tower; interviews with two survivors giving conflicting accounts of the same events; a videotape of firefighters entering the South Tower. Ask: *Why should these objects and texts be preserved?* (Students should understand that these primary sources, even conflicting ones, help historians and future generations learn about the events.)

#### 2. Assignment—Gathering Primary Sources:

- Remind students that primary sources provide firsthand, real perspectives related to events in history.

- Explain that they are going to become “primary researchers” on the events of September 11, 2001, and its aftermath. Their research will involve interviewing at least one person who remembers the event. The person could be a family member, friend, or neighbor.

- Have students record the following in their notebooks:

STEP 1: Record the name of the person being interviewed and how you know him/her.

STEP 2: Ask the interviewee these questions and any additional ones you think of:

—Where were you when the events of September 11, 2001, happened?

—How did you learn about the events?

—What do you recall about the events and other events related to it?

—Why is it important for people in the future to know about these events?

—How is your life different as a result of September 11?

STEP 3: Record your interviewee’s answers.

#### 3. Wrap-up:

- Review the definition of “primary source” and the criteria used for evaluation. Then review the questions that students will be asking during their interviews.

### ACTIVITIES—DAY 2:

#### 1. Compare and Contrast:

- After collecting and reviewing student interviews, read aloud four excerpts that show different perspectives on the events of September 11, 2001.

- Have students create a simple chart to compare and contrast the four examples. Headings could include “Major Similarities” and “Major Differences” and may be further refined based on the contents of the interviews.
- Now have students respond to these questions orally or in writing: *What can someone learn about the events of September 11, 2001, from the research you conducted? What other information would a historian need to write the history of these events? What questions would he or she ask about your primary research?*

## 2. Wrap-up:

- Have students write thank-you letters to the people they interviewed. In their letters, encourage them to note the importance of primary sources, such as the interviewee’s story, to the historical record of events like September 11.

## LESSON 2: Learning from Objects and Memorials

**Objective:** Students will understand how artifacts—from building remnants to personal items—help document the story of past events and why it is so important for archivists and museum curators to preserve this tangible evidence for future generations to study and learn about the past.

**Overview:** Students will visit (in person or online) a public memorial to gather details about the event/person/group of people honored by the memorial and to understand the reason why this event/person/group of people was honored.

**Time:** Two 40-minute class periods

### ACTIVITIES—DAY 1:

#### 1. Warm-up/Preparation:

- Define “memento”: a small item kept to remember a place, an experience, or a person. Ask: *What kinds of mementoes do you or your family and friends have? How do they help you remember an event or person? What stories are associated with these mementoes? What could future generations learn from these objects?*
- Then ask: *Do you or does anyone you know have any objects that remind you of the events of September 11, 2001, or of visits to the World Trade Center in New York City before then? How might these objects be valuable for historians in the future?*

#### Artifacts and History

- Discuss the definition of “artifact” with students: an object produced by human workmanship, especially one of

historical interest.

- Provide students with descriptions of some of the artifacts the National September 11 Memorial & Museum will collect and display. Stress that this is only a tiny sample of the artifacts: a fire officer’s helmet damaged by debris when the South Tower collapsed; monumental pieces of steel from the North Tower, twisted on impact with the first plane; wall and column remnants of the World Trade Center towers; recorded testimonies and written remembrances of the events of September 11.
- Discuss how each artifact could help visitors to the Memorial understand the events of September 11, 2001. Ask: *How will these artifacts help visitors draw meaning from the events? How will they help historians and future visitors understand the events? What other artifacts do you think could be included at the Memorial Museum?*

#### Memorials

- Pose this question: *What is a “memorial”?* (Something that is built or done to help people continue to remember a person or an event.) Make sure students connect “memorial” to the words “memory” and “remember.”
- Point out that a memorial or memorial site can be private or public. A cemetery is filled with private memorials; a wreath by the roadside where an accident occurred is a private memorial in a public space.
- Elicit from students some examples of public memorials, both national and local: For example: *national*—Washington Monument or Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC; National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York; *local*—sculpture, plaque, or structure honoring local men and women or a local event.
- Ask volunteers to describe a visit to a memorial, either private or public. In describing their visit, students should answer these questions: *What or who was being remembered? What are some of the important things you learned on that visit? How did you feel about your visit to the memorial?*
- Discuss the statement: A memorial is a way that communities make promises to the future about the past. Ask: *What kinds of events are important to remember? Why?*

#### 2. Assignment—Describing Public Memorials

- Tell students that for this assignment they will be investigating a public memorial in their community.

- Have students write the following assignment in their notebooks:  
STEP 1: On a sheet of paper, record the name of a memorial and its location.  
STEP 2: Answer these questions on the same page:  
—*What event/person/group of people does this memorial honor?*  
—*Describe it briefly (or sketch it). What details, such as words or decorative objects, appear on it?*  
—*What do these details say about the event/person/group of people’s significance to your community?*  
—*What questions do you have about this memorial? Where could you find answers to these questions?*

**Note:** If it isn’t feasible for students to visit a local memorial, have them take a virtual trip to a national memorial website and answer the above questions in response to what they view online. Some suggestions include—

- National Fallen Firefighters Memorial: [www.usfa.dhs.gov/fireservice/fatalities/memorial/index.shtm](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/fireservice/fatalities/memorial/index.shtm)
- The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial: [www.nleomf.org/TheMemorial/memorial.htm](http://www.nleomf.org/TheMemorial/memorial.htm)
- Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum: [www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org](http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org)
- USS Arizona Memorial: [www.nps.gov/archive/usar/photos2/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/archive/usar/photos2/index.htm)
- Vietnam Veterans Memorial: [www.nps.gov/vive/](http://www.nps.gov/vive/)

#### 3. Wrap-up:

- Review the definition of “memorial.” Then go over the questions that students will be answering during their investigation of a local memorial.

### ACTIVITIES—DAY 2:

#### 1. Share Your Findings:

- Have students share their findings about local memorials.
- Have students respond to these questions orally or in writing: *What different kinds of public memorials are there in your community? What did you learn from the memorial you visited? In what other ways could the community remember the event/person/group of people? What additional artifacts and materials would help to better document the story of your local memorial?*

#### 2. Wrap-up:

- Have students recommend which primary resources will best document the story of September 11 and its aftermath.