



The Survivor Tree

Grades 2-5

9/11 Lesson Plans

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The Survivor Tree

Unit VI- Remembrance and Memory

Grade Level Range: 2-5

Time: 30-60 minutes

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on Holocaust Education

As you prepare to teach this lesson, be sensitive to the topic and how it may affect students, at any age. Even if a student was very young or not born yet, they may know about the events of the day from their families.

1. Ask if any students or their family members know people who were directly or indirectly affected by the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.
2. Give students the option of observing or not participating at all, if they wish.
3. Allow students to talk about their personal connection to 9/11 if they want to.
4. Indicate to the entire class that talking about 9/11 and thinking about the events of that day may cause people to experience different kinds of emotions. This is not unusual.
5. Encourage students to tell their families about the lesson.
6. Remember to be aware of your own reactions or thoughts.

Objective

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Explain why living plants and trees have become symbols of remembrance and memory.
2. Explain how a tree or other plant that survives a terrible tragedy or destructive event may become a symbol of hope to people as it eventually thrives and blooms again.

Key Terms

- survivor
- horticulture
- furrowed
- nursery
- flora

Materials

New York Times blog entry of April 30, 2009

<http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/30/a-911-survivor-blossoms-in-the-bronx?pag>

or <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?a=242828&c=50209>

Photo Analysis Worksheet from the National Archives

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/> click on the Photograph pdf

Activities/Procedures

- A. Read aloud or have students read the story of the “*survivor tree*” as appropriate to your grade level. (Do **not** show them a photo of the tree at the time of this reading.)
- B. Ask “Why was this tree selected among the other flora found at or near ground zero of the Twin Towers destruction of 9/11?”
- C. Discuss the general condition of the tree, describing its damage and its chance for survival and recovery.
- D. Show the class a photo of the tree at the time it was selected and moved to the Arthur Ross Nursery in Van Cortlandt Park.

For 4th and 5th grade students:

- Distribute copies of the Photo Analysis Worksheet from the National Archives website.
- Working individually or in pairs, have the students complete Steps 1 A & B, 2, and 3 A.

For grades 1-3:

- Ask students to describe what they see in the photo of the tree.
- Do they think this tree would have a chance to survive and grow?
- Show the second photograph of the tree as it appeared in May 2009.

For the 4th and 5th grade students:

- Have them complete a second work sheet answering the same questions.

For grades 1-3:

- Ask the students what they think of the tree shown in the photo.
- How has its appearance changed?
- Would they recognize it as the same tree just by looking at the two photos?
- Why did the workers at the nursery decide to plant narcissus around the tree when it was taken to the nursery in 2001?
- Why did Ronaldo Vega begin to look for the tree? How was it lost? How was it re-discovered?
- Where is the eventual destination of the tree?

Evidence for Understanding

1. The callery pear tree is a beautiful tree but it is not an unusual or rare tree.
 - Write a paragraph or a poem describing the tree and explaining why people wanted to save it as a “living memorial.”
 - Have students create a drawing of the tree to accompany the written work.

Extension Activities: Taking Action and Giving Service

1. Research the flora that will be placed in the plaza of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center.
 - What are some of the other objects that will be placed in and around the plaza?
 - What does the flora and other objects symbolize?
2. Read the poem *“Trees”* by Joyce Kilmer.
 - Relate the words of the poem to the story of the *“9/11 Survivor Tree.”*
 - Why does flora hold such an important position in world cultures as a symbol of so many things—important events, memorials, and gifts?
3. Research the poet Joyce Kilmer.
 - Prepare and present to the class a short presentation about his life and accomplishments, memorials that have been created in his honor, etc.
 - Visit Wikipedia and the web sites below to gather information as well as other resource materials.
<http://www.poetry-archive.com/k/trees.html>
<http://main.nc.us.graham/hiking/joycekil.html>
<http://www.westernncattractions.com/JKMF.htm>
4. Research the Oklahoma Survivor Tree
5. Read about the Rowan tree, a Celtic symbol of resilience
6. Research the Living Memorial Project from US Forest Service
http://www.livingmemorialsproject.net/ABOUT/livingmem_greeningres2.htm
 - Is there one in your school’s community?
 - Can your students contribute to a community garden?

Acknowledgments

This lesson plan was provided by The 4 Action Initiative, a joint project of Families of September 11, the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education and Liberty Science Center. The 4 Action Initiative curriculum includes seven units of lessons in multiple subject areas for grades K-12. In September 2010, the lesson plans will be released to New Jersey educators through the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education. The 4 Action Initiative will make the entire curriculum nationwide. For tips on how to approach the teaching of sensitive subjects, please visit us at <https://sites.google.com/site/the4actioninitiative/>

