



TeachableMoment Classroom Lessons

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility

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9/11 ANNIVERSARY TEACHING GUIDE

Submitted by **Tom Roderick** [1] on Thu, 09/11/2014 - 15:33

Area: Current Issues

Grade Level: Elementary School
Middle School
High School

Topic: Handling Difficult Issues

Description:

Our age-appropriate classroom lessons and activities for grades K-12 aim to deepen your students' understanding of September 11 and the 10th anniversary ceremonies, and develop their critical thinking skills. The guide, written by Morningside Center executive director Tom Roderick, also includes recommended books and other teaching ideas.

by **Tom Roderick**

INTRODUCTION

How should educators acknowledge the tenth anniversary of September 11th and educate students about the events of that day and their impact?

Those of us who lived through September 11, 2001, remember where we were when we got the news, what we did, how we felt. And we are aware that the impact of September 11 goes far beyond the thousands of tragic deaths that occurred that day. The attacks have had far-reaching consequences ranging from increased airport security to discrimination against Muslims and Arab-Americans to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in which hundreds of thousands have died.

In short, the 9/11 attacks have changed the course of history.

But for most of our students, September 11 is just that: history. Many were not even born and the rest were quite young when the attacks occurred.

This year on September 11, solemn ceremonies will mark that fateful day ten years ago by honoring the people who lost

their lives, and the many who did what they could to help. Will our students take part in these ceremonies or watch them on TV or their computers? Will they hear their parents talking about 9/11? If so, what will they feel and what sense will they make of what they see and hear? What's our responsibility as educators?

Morningside Center's answer: Use the tenth anniversary of 9/11 as a "teachable moment." Morningside Center defines a teachable moment as an event that occurs in the wide world or in your classroom that your students (or at least some of them) are aware of. This provides an opportunity for learning--and one we need to seize. Especially when the events are dramatic, students may take in biased, emotionally charged, inaccurate information. Part of our mission as educators in a democratic society is to correct misinformation, facilitate thoughtful discussion, and develop our students' ability to think critically, which includes asking good questions. If we don't do this, who will?

Like many teachable moments, September 11 provokes strong emotions, and aspects of the event and its aftermath are controversial. Controversy is at the heart of democracy. Educating young people for participation in a democratic society means welcoming controversy into our classrooms and working with it. We do that by helping our students develop habits of dialogue and civil discourse in which they share their points of view, listen respectfully and open-heartedly while others share theirs, sometimes change their minds, and, on other occasions, agree to disagree.

To help you set the stage for a discussion of 9/11 -- and help you and your class start the new school year -- please see "[Getting to Know You](#) [2]." This pdf booklet includes many activities for grades k to 12 that teachers can use to build community in their classrooms, get to know their students, and get their students to know each other.

We suggest that before opening up the topic of September 11th or any potentially controversial issue, you review Morningside Center's "[Guidelines for Teaching on Controversial Issues](#). [3]"

Also, be aware: It's possible that the tenth anniversary of September 11th will stir up negative feelings about Muslims and Arab-Americans, and lead to teasing and harassment in school. See our lesson on "[Countering Bias against Arab-American, Muslim, and South Asian Students: Suggestions for Educators](#)." [4]

Morningside Center's response to 9/11 was to create TeachableMoment.org, our website of teacher resources on which we're continually posting short curriculum pieces on current issues in the news. Visit TeachableMoment.org for many pieces relevant to 9/11 and its aftermath, including the following:

- Oil: Saudi Arabia, the U.S. & Osama bin Laden: Three lessons for High School Students by Alan Shapiro: <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/oil-saudi-arabia-us-osama-bin-laden-three-lessons-high-school-students> [5]. [6]
- Civil Liberties and Terrorism: Three Lessons for High School Students by Alan Shapiro: <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/civil-liberties-terrorism> [7]
- Investigating Terrorism: 3 Lessons for High School Students by Alan Shapiro: <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/investigating-terrorism-3-lessons> [8]
- Teaching Critical Thinking: The Believing Game and the Doubting Game by Alan Shapiro: <http://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/teaching-critical-thinking-believing-game-doubting-game> [9]
- Responding to the Death of Osama Bin Laden by Marieke van Woerkom: <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/responding-death-osama-bin-laden> [10]

For other helpful resources, please see:

- [9/11 Memorial & NYCDOE Instructional Resources](#) [11], K-12 lessons developed through a

partnership of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum and the NYC Department of Education

- **Prepare New York** [12], discussion guidelines and other resources from the Tanenbaum Center for Religious Understanding

You might also consider incorporating these videos and accompanying materials into your approach to the anniversary:

- **Project Rebirth:** <http://projectrebirth.org/film/> [13]
This full-length documentary by director Jim Whitaker chronicles the lives of five people directly affected by 9/11, their recovery and resiliency. The film also uses multi-camera time-lapse photography to document the evolution of the former WTC site. An accompanying book by Dr. Robin Stern and Courtney E. Martin, *Project Rebirth: Survival and the Strength of the Human Spirit from 9/11 Survivors*, uses eight stories, including four not seen in the documentary, to explore the grieving process and people's capacity for resilience.
- **The Second Day:** <http://theseconddayfilm.com/film/> [14]
This 37-minute film was directed by 14-year-old Brook Peters, who was a kindergartener at P.S. 150 Tribeca Learning Center on 9/11. Brook interviews fellow classmates, students, teachers, faculty, firefighters, and counselors about what they saw and felt on 9/11, how they coped in the days that followed, and what they learned from the experience. An accompanying study guide will be available on the website.

USING OUR LESSONS

The lessons and additional classroom activities described below aim to deepen your students' understanding of September 11 and the tenth anniversary ceremonies, and to develop their critical thinking skills in ways that are appropriate for their ages. They are organized by grade level:

- **Kindergarten to 2nd grade**
- **3rd to 5th grade**
- **Middle school**
- **High school**

Since September 11 occurs on a Sunday this year, the lessons and activities described below are for the week leading up to September 11 or for the week that follows.

We hope you find these resources useful. Please give us feedback and share your experiences with other educators!

- post comments on our **Facebook page** [15].
- join our conversation on **Twitter** [16].
- email us at [17]lmcclore@morningsidecenter.org [18]

Tom Roderick

Executive Director

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES K-2

Objectives

Students who have 9/11 on their minds for whatever reason will:

- have a safe space for sharing their knowledge, experiences, thoughts, and feelings with an adult (their teacher)
- have the opportunity to ask any questions they may have and get answers that extend their understanding
- learn ways people tried to help each other after the September 11th attacks
- get the message that their classroom is also a place where we help each other

Materials Needed

None for the main activity.

If you have students who know about September 11th and are interested in learning more, you may want to read them a book on the topic. Here are some books we recommend:

- *September 12* by Masterson Elementary Students
- *There's a Big Beautiful World Out There* by Nancy Carlson
- *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* by Mordicai Gerstein
- *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey* by Maira Kalman

In our opinion, children ages 4 to 7 are too young for a lesson on September 11. They lack the knowledge to make sense of the attacks and their aftermath in any meaningful way.

That said, some schools may acknowledge the tenth anniversary of 9/11 with assemblies, programs broadcast over the public address system, or minutes of silence. If your students hear about September 11 in this way, we suggest that you give them a chance to share their knowledge, questions, and feelings. You might gather your students on the rug and open discussion by saying something like this:

We just experienced a minute of silence for people who died on September 11 ten years ago. That was a long time ago—before you were born. Does anyone know what happened that day? Explain or elicit from the students that in New York City there were two very tall buildings. Buildings like these are called skyscrapers because they reach way up into the sky. Since these two buildings stood right next to each other, they were called the Twin Towers. The two buildings had many offices where people worked. On the morning of September 11 ten years ago, two airplanes crashed into the Twin Towers, and both of them fell down. After that happened, firefighters and police officers and many other people tried to help. Every year on September 11, people across the country stop what they're doing for a while to remember that sad day. Does anyone want to say something about September 11? Do you have any questions?"

Listen to their comments, correcting any misinformation; acknowledge feelings students express; and answer their questions matter-of-factly.

Whether or not your students hear about September 11 from a ceremony at school, you could possibly have students in your class who have been deeply affected by 9/11. For instance, they might have family members who were killed on 9/11, have family members who were part of the 9/11 rescue/recovery/cleanup effort (and who may be ill as a result), or have family members who are serving in Iraq or Afghanistan or were killed or injured in those wars. Or they may know that family members were targeted after 9/11 because they are Muslim or for some other reason. These students may need special support before and after the tenth anniversary observances.

You may also have students who know something about September 11 because they've heard their parents talking about it, because they have actually participated in the tenth anniversary remembrance ceremonies either in person or by TV, or because their parents, for whatever reason, felt it was important to tell them.

We suggest that you observe your students and notice if any are bringing September 11 into their play, their drawing, their writing, or their conversation. Are two children building towers in the block area or with Legos and knocking them down with pretend planes? Is a child drawing pictures of planes crashing into buildings? If you generally begin your day or week with a class meeting, on Monday September 12 you might have a go-round in which students share one thing they did over the weekend and see if any of them mentions participating in 9/11 remembrance ceremonies.

If you observe behavior that suggests 9/11, open up an informal dialogue and use your active listening skills (e.g. gentle questioning and paraphrasing) to get the child or children to say more. If the child is engaging in play or drawing that suggests 9/11, focus your questions first on the play or the drawing to understand what's going on in the child's mind. For instance, you might ask, Who is driving the planes? Why are they crashing into the buildings? Are there people in the buildings? Who will help the people?

Through questions such as these you may be able to help the child extend the play to include people rescuing people in danger because of the crash. Who might come to rescue the people? you might ask. That might lead the child to think of firefighters and police officers. You can tell the child that that's exactly what actually happened. Firefighters and police officers risked their lives to try to help people. Or maybe in play the child decides to become a hero (even a superhero!) who takes people to safety.

In this way, you may be able to introduce the child to one of the most important lessons of September 11: that when people are hurt, we need to do what we can to help - and New Yorkers did just that, responding with tens of thousands of acts of kindness and courage on September 11 and the days following.

Going further, without prying or seeming too interested, you might try to find out why September 11 is on the child's mind and what the child knows. Where did the child's information come from? A conversation with a parent? Dramatic images on television or in a newspaper? Participation in a remembrance ceremony? Your role is not to be a therapist but to provide a safe place for children to share what's on their minds and get some adult help in making sense of it. If the child has some obvious misunderstanding or misinformation, correct it matter-of-factly. Ask if the child has any questions and answer them simply and straightforwardly as best you can.

And that may be where you want to leave it.

However, if interest is high, you may want to extend the students' learning by reading them a story. If you sense that September 11 has stirred students' fears, a good choice is *There's a Big Wonderful World Out There* by Nancy Carlson. *September 12*, written by a first-grade class at Masterson Elementary School in Kennett, Missouri, provides reassurance by telling all the ways children knew their world was safe after 9/11. If your students are fascinated by the twin towers, you might read them *The Man Who Walked Between the Towers* by Mordecai B. Gerstein, which tells the story of Philippe Petit, the tightrope performer who walked from one of the Twin Towers to the other on a high-wire suspended between them. *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey* by Maira Kalman emphasizes the heroism of those who helped out after the disaster. For more information on these books, see below.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Countering Bias against Muslims and Arab-Americans [4]

Even young children may have internalized biases against groups of people, which they may express by such behaviors as teasing, making hurtful remarks, and exclusion. The tenth anniversary of September 11th may stir up biases against Muslims and Arab-Americans. See our lesson on countering bias against Arab-American, Muslim, and South Asian students.

Getting to Know You [2]

Morningside Center's pdf booklet includes many activities for grades k-12 that teachers can use to build community in their classrooms, get to know their students, and get their students to know each other.

Children's Books on 9/11

September 12: We Knew Everything Would Be Alright [19] by Masterson Elementary Students. Tangerine Press, 2002. With words and pictures by 1st grade students at H. Byron Masterson Elementary School in Kennett, Missouri, this reassuring book tells all the ways kids knew their world was safe after 9/11.

There's a Big Beautiful World Out There [20] by Nancy Carlson, Puffin Books, 2002. This book, written in response to September 11, doesn't mention September 11 but describes many typical fears children experience. It's a good book for opening up a conversation with children about things they may be afraid of. The message is that although we all have fears, we mustn't hide under the covers because "there's a big beautiful world out there" we don't want to miss.

The Man Who Walked Between the Towers [21] by Mordicai Gerstein, Roaring Brook Press, 2003. This book tells the story of Philippe Petit, the aerialist who walked between the Twin Towers on a tightrope. It ends by saying that the Twin Towers are no more.

Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey [22] by Maira Kalman, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2002. This book tells the exciting story of how a New York City fireboat, originally slated to be retired and scrapped, plays a crucial role in putting out fires after the September 11 disaster. Many schools, especially in New York City, will have a copy of this book in their libraries because many copies were donated to schools in the wake of September 11 ten years ago. It's also available from Amazon.com. We love this book for older students but use your judgment about whether it's appropriate for your k-2 students. The School Library Journal recommends the book for grades 3 and up. They advise caution in using the book with younger children because it contains graphic illustrations of the crash and explosions. But illustrations in a book may be tame compared with the violent images many young children experience through television and the movies. And the book's emphasis is not on the violence but on people showing courage in helping others. For discussion questions and activities for Fireboat, see Additional Activities for Grades 3-5 below.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR GRADES 3 TO 5

Objectives

Students will:

- share knowledge, experiences, feelings, and questions about September 11
- correct misinformation and increase their understanding
- develop their critical thinking and research skills

Materials Needed

- The agenda for the lesson on chart paper
- Chart paper and markers
- A newspaper with a photo of a September 11th Tenth Anniversary event or a short video clip of such an event.

This lesson is designed to take place on Monday September 12. Seat the children in a circle on the rug if possible.

GATHERING

(5 minutes)

Have the students "turn and talk" for a minute or two with a partner about something they did over the weekend. Give several students a chance to share what they did with the group.

CHECK AGENDA

(5 minutes)

Ask the students what the date is today. Elicit that it's September 12. Ask, what was the date yesterday? September 11. Say that September 11 is an important date for our country (and for our city if you happen to live in New York). Why?

Building on what students know, explain that ten years ago on September 11, a group of men took over two planes and flew them into the World Trade Center, a pair of skyscrapers in downtown Manhattan. After several enormous explosions, both buildings collapsed, killing almost 3,000 people. On that same day, two additional planes were hijacked by the same group. One was flown into the Pentagon in Washington, DC, killing 125 people, while the other crashed in a field in Pennsylvania killing all on board. Though it was never proven, that last plane was thought to be on its way to the White House or the Capitol.

In the days after 9/11, people in New York City came together to console and support each other during this difficult time. They set up impromptu memorials to remember the victims, including some that called for peace and no war. People from other parts of the country, including children and young people, sent cards and gifts, and some came to the city to help out. At the same time, though, some people were threatened and even attacked because other people thought they looked like those who were behind the attacks. Political leaders, including then President George W. Bush, cautioned that 9/11 should not be an excuse for discriminating against anybody. The site where the buildings came down has been known as Ground Zero ever since. It has become a place for people to go and honor and remember those who were killed that day.

Explain that this lesson will focus on September 11. Students will have a chance to share what they know, ask questions, and deepen their understanding of this important event.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

At the beginning of a school year, and whenever you introduce a potentially controversial and emotional topic, it's appropriate to establish "community agreements"- guidelines for creating a safe space for sharing opinions and feelings. It is especially important to do this when discussing 9/11. You may have students in your class who have been deeply affected by 9/11. For instance, they may have family members who were killed on 9/11, have family members who were part of the 9/11 rescue/recovery/cleanup effort (and who may be ill as a result), have family members who are serving in Iraq or Afghanistan or were killed or injured in those wars, or have family members who were targeted after 9/11 because they are Muslim or for some other reason. These students may need special support before and after the tenth anniversary observances. Before doing a lesson on 9/11, you may want to tell your students that anyone who fits into the above categories -- or is sensitive about the topic for any reason -- should feel free to talk with you privately. You should mention that because some students may have been personally affected by 9/11, it's essential that the class establish and abide by some community agreements.

Ask the students to reflect for a moment about what they need so that they can participate freely in class and be fully present. Then ask them to share ideas for guidelines they'd like the students in the class to agree to. Chart their ideas. Your list might look something like this:

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- One mike (speak one at a time)

- No put-downs, verbal or nonverbal
- Listen respectfully
- Agree to disagree
- Speak from your own experience; avoid sweeping generalizations about groups of people
- Use I-statements, not you-statements

Once you've completed your list, take each item in turn and ask the students to raise their hands if they're willing to agree to it. If some students balk at any of the proposed agreements, discuss it and try to come to agreement. Post the agreements and remind students of them each time you meet. You can add additional agreements as needed throughout the year.

REMEMBERING SEPTEMBER 11

(10 minutes)

Show the class a photo from a newspaper or a short video clip depicting some aspect of the remembrance ceremonies that took place over the weekend. Explain or elicit that yesterday, the tenth anniversary of the attacks, there were special ceremonies to remember those who died and honor those who did what they could to help. Did any of the students attend a ceremony or watch one on television? Did any hear adults talking about September 11 or have conversations with their parents about it?

Give students who had some form of September 11 experience over the weekend a chance to describe it.

CREATING A WEB OF SEPTEMBER 11

(15 minutes)

To get more information about what students know about September 11, write September 11 in the middle of a piece of chart paper and ask students to free associate, sharing any words, thoughts, images that come to mind when they think of September 11. There are no wrong answers. As they share their free associations, chart them, eventually drawing lines from "September 11" in the middle to the students' associations, forming a web, as illustrated below:



Encourage students to share words that name feelings they associate with 9/11. Continue as long as interest remains high. When you come to a stopping place, ask students to pause for a moment and look at the web. Ask, what do you want to say about it? What are your observations, comments, thoughts?

At this point, if students have shared some associations you don't understand or want to know more about, ask the class or the person who shared the association to say more. Your aim is to provide a safe place for students to share their current understandings, so accept what students have to say at this point. After clarifying any of the students' associations that need more explanation, gently correct in a matter-of-fact way any factual misinformation that the web activity has revealed, e.g. "Just so you know, Afghanistan is not in Africa. Let's find it on the world map."

Ask the students if, in thinking about September 11, feelings have come up that they would like to share. Listen while students share their feelings.

Then ask if anyone has a question. Is there something they don't understand or would like to know more about? Chart their questions and, where possible, provide answers to relatively simple questions of fact.

For more complicated questions, you might follow up by bringing in newspapers or print-outs from the internet. You might also guide students in using the web to research their 9/11 questions. Students could work in small groups to get information about particular questions the class is interested in and then report their findings to the class. You could do these activities either in subsequent lessons with the whole class or as special projects for students who are interested in September 11th.

EVALUATION AND CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Ask students to turn and talk with a partner about one thing they are taking away from today's lesson. Give a couple of students the opportunity to share what they learned with the group.

Lead the students in a round of applause to celebrate their hard work on a challenging topic.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

THINK DIFFERENTLY

This is an activity you can use throughout the year to encourage students to share their opinions on a variety of topics and listen respectfully to each other's points of view. Students love it, and it sharpens their thinking. It uses controversy to increase engagement with learning.

Remind the children that in our classroom we want to respect each other's needs and opinions. Ask, what is an opinion? Elicit that it's a strong belief that people have, sometimes based on fact and sometimes not.

Designate one corner of the room for "strongly agree," the opposite corner for "strongly disagree," and the middle for "not sure." Make signs if necessary. Tell the children you'll say a statement. They are to go to the appropriate place according to whether they agree with the statement, disagree, or aren't sure. Try to think of statements on which children will have a range of opinions. Once the children have taken their places, ask for volunteers from each location to explain their opinion. Remind them of the rules for talking and listening: no interrupting, no put-downs, pay good attention when someone is speaking. Encourage some dialogue among children with differing opinions. If children change their minds in the course of the discussion, they can change places. If the dialogue gets heated, remind them of the rules and ask them to paraphrase what the other person has said before making their point. Here are some suggested statements you might use to introduce students to the process:

- Vanilla ice cream is the best.
- Spring is the best season of the year.
- Basketball is the best sport.

Once the students have practiced "Think Differently" with these simple issues, you can introduce statements on more important matters, e.g. "The main cause of the American Civil War was slavery" or "Plants make their own food using sunlight" or "Invading Afghanistan was the right thing to do after 9/11."

CHILDREN'S BOOKS ON 9/11

If your students are interested in September 11, you may want to extend their learning by reading them a book. Here are some we recommend:

September 12: We Knew Everything Would Be Alright by Masterson Elementary Students [23]. Tangerine Press, 2002. With words and pictures by 1st grade students at H. Byron Masterson Elementary School in Kennett, Missouri, this reassuring book tells all the ways kids knew their world was safe after 9/11. This book is out-of-print but used copies are available from Amazon.

There's a Big Beautiful World Out There [24] by Nancy Carlson, Puffin Books, 2002. This book, written in response to September 11, doesn't mention September 11 but describes many typical fears children experience. It's a good book for opening up a conversation with children about things they may be afraid of. The message is that although we all have

fears, we mustn't hide under the covers because "there's a big beautiful world out there" we don't want to miss.

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Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey [22] by Maira Kalman, GP Putnam's Sons, 2002. This book tells the exciting story of how a New York City fireboat, originally slated to be retired and scrapped, plays a crucial role in putting out fires after the September 11 disaster. Many schools, especially in New York City, will have a copy of this book in their libraries because many copies were donated to schools in the wake of September 11 ten years ago. This is our favorite children's book about September 11.

OPTIONAL LESSON USING FIREBOAT

Below is a summary of the Fireboat story and suggested discussion questions and classroom activities.

SUMMARY: A lot happened in 1931. The Empire State Building and the George Washington Bridge went up. Babe Ruth hit his 611th home run. The candy bar Snickers appeared in stores. And "on a sunny fresh day, the John J. Harvey fireboat was launched." It was the "largest, fastest and shiniest" of the twelve fireboats in New York City. For 63 years the boat helped save lives, but by the mid-1990s, "the city no longer needed so many fireboats," and she was junked, "waiting to be sold for scrap." Then a group of friends decided to buy the boat and restore her. Although the book doesn't say it, the John J. Harvey served, and still serves, as a floating museum. Then on September 11, 2001, as flames engulfed a portion of lower Manhattan after the attacks on the World Trade Center, the volunteers who ran the Harvey called the fire department and offered their help. Because the "water pipes were broken...and the fire trucks could not pump water," for four days and nights the Harvey and New York's two other fireboats pumped water to fight the fires caused by the attack. The Harvey received an award for "coming out of retirement to provide invaluable aid in New York City's hour of need."

COMMENT: The theme to emphasize here is the community of people who rescued the Harvey when it was considered useless, and the way that they responded to the needs of the larger New York City community in a time of distress. The story also emphasizes that everyone can choose to make a difference in some way. We can talk about all the people who help make our community a good place to live: firefighters, police officers, teachers, school crossing guards, construction workers, medical personnel, cooks, sanitation workers, parents, children, etc. We can look at the ways we can make a difference in our community.

READ ALOUD: Show the front of the book. What kind of boat do the students think is on the cover? What do they think the book might be about? What are some clues?

Read the story through, perhaps pausing only to explain unfamiliar words, such as barnacles.

BOOK TALK: After you read the story, engage the students in discussion using the following questions:

1. What interested you about the book? What do you want to say about it?
2. What is the book about? What are the book's themes?
3. What do you think is the main thing the author is trying to say through the book? What's the main point?
4. Bob Lenney worked on the Harvey for 25 years. How do you think he felt when it was about to be scrapped? How do you think he felt after it was rescued?

5. All the owners had the same idea - to help out. Who are some of the other people who helped out that day? Encourage students to think of other types of people in addition to the ones named in the book, and to think about the ways that people helped. For instance, many children collected money or sent cards to firefighters and police officers. Many store owners gave water to people. Children may remember specific incidents from among their own family and friends.

6. Have you ever done something with a group of friends? What was it? List the activity on the board. It can be anything from playing a game together to building a city from blocks.
7. Who are some of the everyday heroes in our community? Name the people who make our life better in the community.
8. What are some things we would like to do to make our community better? List them on the board. What are some things we could do right now?

ACTIVITIES TO DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING OF THE BOOK:

- If you could get your friends together to buy a boat, what would it look like? Draw a picture. Put your friends on the boat. Write a caption or adventure story about your boat. Every ship has a name. Give your ship a name and draw a flag for it.
- Fireboat brings to mind the story of "Little Toot," the courageous New York tugboat. Get Little Toot from the library and read it to your students. Compare the two stories. How are the stories similar? Different?
- Take a trip on the Staten Island Ferry and ask the students to notice the different kinds of boats in the harbor and the variety of work that goes on there. Students could do research about boats - and especially about tugboats and fireboats and the work they do.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL

Lesson 1 is designed to take place before the weekend in which September 11 occurs this year (2011). Lesson 2 is designed to take place early in the week after September 11.

LESSON 1

Objectives

Students will:

- share knowledge, experiences, feelings, and questions about September 11
- correct misinformation and increase their understanding
- prepare a questionnaire they can use for interviewing a parent or another adult about 9/11
- practice their interviewing and note-taking skills by interviewing their teacher

Materials needed

- Agenda posted on chart paper
- Chart paper and markers

GATHERING

(5 minutes)

Ask students to talk with a partner about something new and good in their lives. After a minute or two, give several students a chance to share their "new and good" with the group.

CHECK AGENDA

(5 minutes)

Ask if the students know what important anniversary is coming up this weekend. Some of them will probably be aware that it's the tenth anniversary of September 11. Lead the class in a brief review of what happened on September 11, 2001, eliciting as much of the story from the students as possible.

An overview of the basic facts is provided below. Use your judgment about how much of this overview it makes sense to share with your students at this point:

A group of men hijacked two planes and flew them into the World Trade Center, a pair of skyscrapers in downtown Manhattan (New York City). After several enormous explosions, both buildings collapsed, killing almost 3,000 people. On that same day, two additional planes were hijacked by members of the same group. One was flown into the Pentagon in Washington, DC, killing 125 people, while the other crashed in a field in Pennsylvania killing all on board. Though it was never proven, that last plane was thought to be on its way to the White House or the Capitol.

People throughout the United States were shocked by these attacks on American soil. They came together, asking how this could have happened and what it meant. In New York City people consoled and supported each other. They set up impromptu memorials to remember the victims, including some that called for peace and no war. People from other parts of the country, including children and young people, sent cards and gifts, and some came to the city to help out.

It was a difficult time for Muslims and Arab-Americans, because the men who carried out the attacks were Arabs and Muslims (most of them citizens of Saudi Arabia) who said they were waging a holy war against the United States. As a result, some people took out their anger on Muslims and Arab-Americans who had nothing to do with the attacks: some children were teased or harassed in school; some Muslims and Arab-Americans were threatened; in Texas three Muslims were killed. Political leaders, including then President George W. Bush, cautioned that 9/11 should not be an excuse for discriminating against anybody.

The site where the Twin Towers came down has been known as Ground Zero ever since. It has become a place for people to go and honor and remember those who were killed that day.

The September 11th attacks changed the course of history. They led to other events that affect our lives today. Airport security has been tightened. Congress passed laws aimed at preventing further acts of terrorism, which critics say have infringed on our civil liberties. And as a result of 9/11 the United States initiated two wars - in Afghanistan and Iraq - in which hundreds of thousands have died.

Explain that today's class and another class next week will focus on September 11. Students will have a chance to share what they know, ask questions, and deepen their understanding of this important event.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

(5 minutes)

At the beginning of a school year, and whenever you introduce a potentially controversial and emotional topic, it's appropriate to establish "community agreements" - guidelines for creating a safe space for sharing opinions and feelings. It is especially important to do this when discussing 9/11. You may have students in your class who have been deeply affected by 9/11. For instance, they may have family members who were killed on 9/11, have family

members who were part of the 9/11 rescue/recovery/cleanup effort (and who may be ill as a result), have family members who are serving in Iraq or Afghanistan or were killed or injured in those wars, or have family members who were targeted after 9/11 because they are Muslim or for some other reason. These students may need special support before and after the tenth anniversary observances. Before doing a lesson on 9/11, you may want to tell your students that anyone who fits into the above categories - or is sensitive about the topic for any reason - should feel free to talk with you privately. You should mention that because some students may have been personally affected by 9/11, it's essential that the class establish and abide by some community agreements.

Ask the students to reflect for a moment about what they need so that they can participate freely in class and be fully present. Then ask them to share ideas for guidelines they'd like the students in the class to agree to. Chart their ideas. Your list might look something like this:

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- One mike (speak one at a time)
- No put-downs, verbal or nonverbal
- Listen respectfully
- Agree to disagree
- Speak from your own experience; avoid sweeping generalizations about groups of people
- Use I-statements, not you-statements

Once you've completed your list, take each item in turn and ask the students to raise their hands if they're willing to agree to it. If some students balk at any of the proposed agreements, discuss it and try to come to agreement. Post the agreements and remind students of them each time you meet. You can add additional agreements as needed throughout the year.

WEB: SEPTEMBER 11

To give students a chance to share what they know about September 11, write September 11 in the middle of a piece of chart paper and ask students to free associate, sharing any words, thoughts, images that come to mind when they think of September 11. There are no wrong answers. As they share their free associations, chart them, eventually drawing lines from "September 11" in the middle to students' associations, forming a web, as illustrated below:



Continue for a few minutes, as long as interest remains high. When you come to a stopping point, correct any misinformation students have shared through their associations, e.g. "Just so you know, Afghanistan is not in Africa. Let's find it on the world map." Ask, Do any of you have questions about September 11th? Is there something you'd like to know more about?

COLLECTING 9/11 STORIES: DEVELOPING A QUESTIONNAIRE

(15 minutes)

Explain that from time to time a major event occurs that makes a big impression on all those who live through it. 9/11 was one of those events. Most adults are likely to remember where they were when they got the news, what they did, how they felt.

The students' homework assignment is to interview an adult (a parent or other adult) to get their 9/11 story. Reporters (for newspapers, TV, and the Internet) interview people all the time to get information. The students are going to act like reporters and see what they can learn. They have several days to do this assignment. They'll have a chance to share the results of their interviews in class during the week after the 9/11 tenth anniversary ceremonies (on Sunday, September 11, 2011).

To prepare for the interviews, lead the students in developing a questionnaire of six or so questions. Remind them of the distinction between open-ended questions and questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Explain that the best interview questions are open-ended ones because they provide more information. Chart the questions you and

the students come up with. A typical set of questions for the questionnaire might be

- Ten years ago on September 11, how did you learn about the attacks?
- What were you doing at the time and what were your first reactions?
- What was the rest of that day like for you?
- What feelings did you have?
- What are the images that have stayed in your mind from that day?
- Ten years later what do you want to say about September 11?

Tell the students that after the interview, they should be sure to thank the person for their time.

Once you've agreed on the questions, choose one of the students to interview you using the questionnaire, and share your own September 11 story. Ask the rest of the students to listen carefully and jot down notes of the interview. When the interview is over, ask students to summarize what they heard. They can refer to their notes if they want to.

Finally, give students time to copy down the questions, leaving space between each question for notes. Or you may prefer to type up the questions to create an interview form, make copies, and hand it out to your students the next day.

EVALUATION AND CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Ask students to talk in pairs about one thing they're taking away from the lesson today. Give a couple of students a chance to share what they learned with the class.

Tell the students that on Sunday, the tenth anniversary of September 11, there will be ceremonies to remember that day. Encourage them to watch these ceremonies on TV or the Internet or read about them in the newspaper.

LESSON 2

Objectives

Students will:

- share the 9/11 stories they got from the interviews with a parent or another adult
- practice their presentation skills

Materials Needed

- The agenda on chart paper
- The chart of "Community Agreements" from Lesson 1

GATHERING

(5 minutes)

Ask students to talk in pairs about something they did over the weekend. If any experienced September 11th tenth anniversary ceremonies, encourage them to talk about what they saw and heard. Give a couple of students a chance to share one of their weekend activities with the class.

CHECK AGENDA AND REVIEW COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

(5 minutes)

Explain that today they'll share with their classmates the 9/11 stories they got by interviewing adults. Review the community agreements you made in Lesson 1, referring to the chart.

SHARING 9/11 STORIES

(30 minutes)

- 1) Have students meet in groups of four (10 minutes). Ask students in each group to refer to their notes as they take turns sharing with each other the 9/11 stories they got from the interviews. Each group should choose one of the stories to share with the whole class.
- 2) Reconvene the class for group reports (10 minutes). One student from each small group shares an adult's 9/11 story with the class. Lead the class in applause after each student presents.
- 3) Facilitate a class discussion (10 minutes)

Here are some questions to guide the discussion:

- What do you want to say about the stories?
- How was it to interview an adult?
- What did you learn about September 11th by doing this?

EVALUATION AND CLOSING

Ask students to talk in pairs about one thing they want to remember from these two lessons about September 11 even if they forget everything else. Give a couple of students a chance to share with the class.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

CREATING A BOOK OF 9/11 STORIES

Work with your students to turn their interview notes into drafts and then finished pieces. Gather the finished pieces into a book with illustrations by students.

THINK DIFFERENTLY

This is an activity you can use throughout the year to encourage students to share their opinions on a variety of topics and listen respectfully to each other's points of view. Students love it, and it sharpens their thinking. It uses controversy to increase engagement with learning.

Remind the students that in our classroom we want to respect each other's needs and opinions. Ask, what is an

opinion? Elicit that it's a strong belief that people have, sometimes based on fact and sometimes not.

Designate one corner of the room for "strongly agree," the opposite corner for "strongly disagree," and the middle for "not sure." Make signs if necessary. Tell the students that you'll say a statement. They are to go to the appropriate place according to whether they agree with the statement, disagree, or aren't sure. Try to think of statements on which students will have a range of opinions. Once the students have taken their places, ask for volunteers from each location to explain their opinion. Remind them of the rules for talking and listening: no interrupting, no put-downs, pay good attention when someone is speaking. Encourage some dialogue among students with differing opinions. If students change their minds in the course of the discussion, they can change places. If the dialogue gets heated, remind them of the rules and ask them to paraphrase what the other person has said before making their point. Here are some suggested statements you might use to introduce students to the process:

- Vanilla ice cream is the best.
- Spring is the best season of the year.
- Basketball is the best sport.

Once the students have practiced "Think Differently" with these simple issues, you can introduce statements on more important matters, e.g. "The main cause of the American Civil War was slavery" or "Plants make their own food using sunlight" or "Invading Afghanistan was the right thing to do after 9/11."

FIREBOAT

Middle school students enjoy being read to. Consider reading the book [Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey](#) [22] by Maira Kalman to your students. The book (available in many school libraries and from Amazon) tells the dramatic story of the fireboat that served New York City after the 9/11 attacks. For a summary of the story and a discussion and activity guide, see the lesson for Grades 3-5 above.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL

Lesson 1 is designed to take place before the weekend in which September 11 occurs this year. Lesson 2 is designed to take place early in the week after September 11.

LESSON 1

Objectives

Students will:

- share knowledge, experiences, feelings, and questions about September 11
- correct misinformation and increase their understanding

Materials Needed

- Agenda posted on chart paper
- Chart paper and markers

GATHERING

(5 minutes)

Ask students to talk with a partner about something new and good in their lives. After a minute or two, give several students a chance to share their "new and good" with the group.

CHECK AGENDA

(10 minutes)

Ask if the students know what important anniversary is coming up this weekend. Some of them will probably be aware that it's the tenth anniversary of September 11. Lead the class in a brief review of what happened on September 11, 2001, eliciting as much of the story from the students as possible.

Here's an overview of the basic facts:

A group of men hijacked two planes and flew them into the World Trade Center, a pair of skyscrapers in downtown Manhattan (New York City). After several enormous explosions, both buildings collapsed, killing almost 3,000 people. On that same day, two additional planes were hijacked by members of the same group. One was flown into the Pentagon in Washington, DC, killing 125 people, while the other crashed in a field in Pennsylvania killing all on board. Though it was never proven, that last plane was thought to be on its way to the White House or the Capitol.

People throughout the United States were shocked by these attacks on American soil. They came together, asking how this could have happened and what it meant. In New York City people consoled and supported each other. They set up impromptu memorials to remember the victims, including some that called for peace and no war. People from other parts of the country, including children and young people, sent cards and gifts, and some came to the city to help out. It was a difficult time for Muslims and Arab-Americans, because the men who carried out the attacks were Arabs and Muslims (most of them citizens of Saudi Arabia) who said they were waging a holy war against the United States. As a result, some Americans took out their anger on Muslims and Arab-Americans who had had nothing to do with the attacks. Some children were teased or harassed in school; Muslims and Arab-Americans were threatened; in Texas three Muslims were killed. Political leaders, including then President George W. Bush, cautioned that 9/11 should not be an excuse for discriminating against anybody.

The site where the Twin Towers came down has been known as Ground Zero ever since. It has become a place for people to go and honor and remember those who were killed that day.

The September 11th attacks changed the course of history. They led to other events that affect our lives today. Airport security has been tightened. Congress passed laws aimed at preventing further acts of terrorism, which critics say have infringed on our civil liberties. And as a result of 9/11 the United States initiated two wars - in Afghanistan and Iraq - in which hundreds of thousands have died.

Explain that today's class and one that will follow next week will focus on September 11. Students will have a chance to share what they know, ask questions, and deepen their understanding of this important event.

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

(5 minutes)

At the beginning of a school year, and whenever you introduce a potentially controversial and emotional topic, it's appropriate to establish "community agreements"- guidelines for creating a safe space for sharing opinions and feelings. It is especially important to do this when discussing 9/11. You may have students in your class who have been deeply affected by 9/11. For instance, they may have family members who were killed on 9/11, have family members who were part of the 9/11 rescue/recovery/cleanup effort (and who may be ill as a result), have family members who are serving in

Iraq or Afghanistan or were killed or injured in those wars, or have family members who were targeted after 9/11 because they are Muslim or for some other reason. These students may need special support before and after the tenth anniversary observances. Before doing a lesson on 9/11, you may want to tell your students that anyone who fits into the above categories - or is sensitive about the topic for any reason - should feel free to talk with you privately. You should mention that because some students may have been personally affected by 9/11, it's essential that the class establish and abide by some community agreements.

Ask the students to reflect for a moment about what they need so that they can participate freely in class and be fully present. Then ask them to share ideas for guidelines they'd like the students in the class to agree to. Chart their ideas. Your list might look something like this:

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

- One mike (speak one at a time)
- No put-downs, verbal or nonverbal
- Listen respectfully
- Agree to disagree
- Speak from your own experience; avoid sweeping generalizations about groups of people
- Use I-statements, not you-statements

Once you've completed your list, take each item in turn and ask the students to raise their hands if they're willing to agree to it. If some students balk at any of the proposed agreements, discuss it and try to come to an agreement. Post the agreements and remind students of them each time you meet. You can add additional agreements as needed throughout the year.

WEB: SEPTEMBER 11

(10 minutes)

To give students a chance to share what they know about September 11, write September 11 in the middle of a piece of chart paper and ask students to free associate, sharing any words, thoughts, images that come to mind when they think of September 11. There are no wrong answers. As they share their free associations, chart them, eventually drawing lines from "September 11" in the middle to students' associations, forming a web, as illustrated below:



Continue as long as interest remains high. When you come to a stopping place, ask students to look at the web. What do they want to say about it? What are their observations, comments, thoughts?

At this point, if students have shared some associations you don't understand or want to know more about, ask the class or the person who shared the association to say more. Your aim is to provide a safe place for students to share their current understandings, so accept what students have to say at this point.

After clarifying any of the students' associations that need more explanation, correct in a matter-of-fact way any factual misinformation that the web activity has revealed, e.g. "Just so you know, Afghanistan is not in Africa. Let's find it on the world map."

Ask the students if, in thinking about September 11, feelings have come up that they would like to share. Listen while students share their feelings.

ASKING QUESTIONS

(10 minutes)

Explain that a good way to deepen one's understanding of a topic is to think of good questions and then try to find the answers. That's what we'll be doing over the next couple of days on the topic of September 11.

Ask the students to talk in pairs for a minute or two and come up with at least one question about 9/11. What would they like to know more about? Ask each pair to share their question. Chart the questions on chart paper.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

(5 minutes)

Ask what the students think will be happening on Sunday, September 11, 2011. Elicit that there will be ceremonies to remember those who died in the attacks and honor those who did what they could to help during that difficult time.

Explain that their homework is to experience those ceremonies - either by attending in person, watching them on TV or the Internet, watching the news or reading about them in the newspaper. As they experience the ceremonies of remembrance and related news stories, they should keep their question(s) in mind. They are to write a one page response to their experience. First, they should describe what happened as though they were explaining it to someone who hadn't seen it. Second, they should describe what impact it had on them - what thoughts, feelings, and questions came up for them. Next week they'll have a chance to share their responses with their classmates and discuss them.

EVALUATION AND CLOSING

(5 minutes)

Ask students to talk in pairs about one thing they're taking away from the lesson today. Give a couple of students a chance to share what they learned with the class.

LESSON 2

Objectives

Students will:

- share their responses to the 9/11 remembrance ceremonies and/or related news coverage
- discuss 9/11 and the meaning it has for their country and themselves

Materials Needed

- Agenda posted on chart paper
- Chart of "Community Agreements" from Lesson 1
- Chart paper and markers

GATHERING

(5 minutes)

Ask students to talk in pairs for a minute or two about something they did over the weekend that they enjoyed. Give a couple of students a chance to share what they did with the class.

CHECK AGENDA AND REVIEW COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

(5 minutes)

Explain that today they'll work in small groups to share their responses to 9/11 ceremonies. A class discussion will

follow.

Referring to the chart, review the community agreements established in Lesson 1

SHARING 9/11 STORIES

(30 minutes)

1) Divide the class into groups of four. The students will take turns reading their one-page responses to each other in their small groups. (10 minutes)

2) Facilitate a class discussion (20 minutes). Here are some questions to guide the discussion:

- What do you want to say about the remembrance ceremonies you experienced or learned about?
- What seemed to be the main point of these ceremonies?
- Did anything you saw or heard connect with you personally? Were you moved?
- Was there anything missing from the ceremonies that you would like to have seen?
- Did anything you saw or heard shed light on any of the questions we asked last week?

EVALUATION AND CLOSING

Ask students to talk in pairs about one thing they want to remember from these two lessons about September 11 even if they forget everything else. Give a couple of students a chance to share with the class.

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

1) A TIME OF GIFTS

Have your students read and discuss "[*A Time of Gifts*](#)" [25] by Stephen Jay Gould.

On September 26, 2001, the New York Times published an essay by the renowned zoologist Stephen Jay Gould. Gould, who died of cancer in 2002, was a master essayist. This short essay expresses Gould's view, confirmed by his experiences after September 11, that ". . . every spectacular incident of evil will be balanced by 10,000 acts of kindness, too often unnoted and invisible as the 'ordinary efforts of a vast majority.'"

"We have a duty, almost a holy responsibility," Gould asserts, "to record and honor the victorious weight of these inscrutable little kindnesses." In the essay, he tells how he joins with countless others to help out after the destruction of the twin towers. A restaurant offers a gift of 12 apple brown bettys ("our best dessert, still warm") and Gould promises to distribute them to the rescue workers. "Twelve apple brown bettys into the breach," he jokes, at first disparaging their significance when compared with the need. But when he sees the reactions of the weary rescue workers to the gift, he realizes that "these trivial symbols in my initial judgment turned into little drops of gold within a

rainstorm of similar offerings for the stomach and the soul, from children's postcards to cheers by the roadside."

The main message of the essay: ". . .let those few depraved people finally understand why their vision of inspired fear cannot prevail over ordinary decency."

Note: An "apple brown betty" is an American dessert made with layers of spiced and sweetened apples and buttered bread crumbs. It's similar to a cobbler or bread pudding.

Discussion questions:

- What do you want to say about the essay?
- Did any sentences or phrases stand out for you? If so, which ones? Why?
- What does the essay tell us about the mood of the city and what was going on after the September 11 attacks?
- What view of human nature does the essay express?
- Do you agree with Gould's assertion that "every spectacular incident of evil will be balanced by 10,000 acts of kindness"? Why do you agree? If you don't agree, why not?
- In this essay Gould focuses on the ways people came together to help each other in the days and months following the attacks. Now that ten years have passed since 9/11, what does the balance sheet look like? Has that spirit of kindness prevailed? If Gould were alive to write an essay now, would he have such a positive view? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- Gould's essay is widely considered to be an excellent example of the essay form. Why do you think that is? What are the specific qualities that make "A Time of Gifts" a great essay in the view of many people?

2) ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS - AND ANSWERING THEM

a) Developing good questions

Explain that if we're going to use questions to guide our efforts to deepen our understanding, we need to be sure that the questions are good ones. (A main purpose of this exercise is to help students understand that questions are instruments of perception, that the nature of a question determines the nature of an answer, that not all questions are equal, that question-asking and analysis are essential ingredients in critical thinking.)

Lead the students in examining the questions they generated in Lesson 1 above:

- Do any contain assumptions? (e.g. the question Why do Muslims hate the US?)
- Which are questions of fact? (e.g. How many people were killed?)
- Which call for opinions? (e.g. Was it right for the US to invade Afghanistan in response to the attacks?)
- Are there words we need to define before we can answer the question? (e.g. How can we combat terrorism?)
- Are some questions impossible to answer and therefore useless for inquiry? (e.g. When will

we ever learn to stop fighting each other?)

Work with the class to reword some of the questions as necessary to make them into good instruments for inquiry.

b) Research and reporting

Ask the students to consider: How can we get answers to our questions? Where will the facts come from? Whose opinions will be considered? If an expert's, what qualifies this person? What biases may he or she have? Can we assume that everything we read in a newspaper or find on the Internet is true? What are some ways we can decide if an information source is reliable?

Offer special credit for students who want to research the answers to some of the questions and report on their findings to the class.

3) COLLECTING 9/11 STORIES: DEVELOPING A QUESTIONNAIRE

Explain that from time to time a major event occurs that makes a big impression on all those who live through it. 9/11 was one of those events. Most adults are likely to remember where they were when they got the news, what they did, how they felt. This activity involves interviewing adults to elicit their September 11th stories.

Reporters (for newspapers, TV, and the Internet) interview people all the time to get information. The students are going to act like reporters and see what they can learn.

To prepare for the interviews, lead the students in developing a questionnaire of six or so questions. Remind them of the distinction between open-ended questions and questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Explain that the best interview questions are open-ended ones because they provide more information. Chart the questions you and the students come up with. A typical set of questions for the questionnaire might be:

- Ten years ago on September 11, how did you learn about the attacks?
- What were you doing at the time and what were your first reactions?
- What was the rest of that day like for you?
- What feelings did you have?
- What are the images that have stayed in your mind from that day?
- Ten years later what do you want to say about September 11?

Tell the students that after the interview, they should be sure to thank the person for their time.

Once you've agreed on the questions, choose one of the students to interview you using the questionnaire, and share your own September 11 story. Ask the rest of the students to listen carefully and jot down notes of the interview. When the interview is over, ask students to summarize what they heard. They can refer to their notes if they want to.

Finally, give students time to copy down the questions, leaving space between each question for notes. Or you may prefer to type up the questions to create an interview form, make copies, and hand it out to your students the next day.

For homework, the students conduct the interviews.

In a subsequent class, they can share the stories with their classmates in small groups, and each group can select one story to present to the class as a whole. Discussion follows. Here are some suggested questions to guide the discussion:

- What do you want to say about the stories?
- How was it to interview an adult?
- What did you learn about September 11th by doing this?

4) THINK DIFFERENTLY

This is an activity you can use throughout the year to encourage students to share their opinions on a variety of topics and listen respectfully to each other's points of view. Students love it, and it sharpens their thinking. It uses controversy to increase engagement with learning.

Remind the students that in our classroom we want to respect each other's needs and opinions. Ask, what is an opinion? Elicit that it's a strong belief that people have, sometimes based on fact and sometimes not.

Designate one corner of the room for "strongly agree," the opposite corner for "strongly disagree," and the middle for "not sure." Make signs if necessary. Tell the students that you'll say a statement. They are to go to the appropriate place according to whether they agree with the statement, disagree, or aren't sure. Try to think of statements on which students will have a range of opinions. Once the students have taken their places, ask for volunteers from each location to explain their opinion. Remind them of the rules for talking and listening: no interrupting, no put-downs, pay good attention when someone is speaking. Encourage some dialogue among students with differing opinions. If students change their minds in the course of the discussion, they can change places. If the dialogue gets heated, remind them of the rules and ask them to paraphrase what the other person has said before making their point. Here are some suggested statements you might use to introduce students to the process:

- Vanilla ice cream is the best.
- Spring is the best season of the year.
- Basketball is the best sport.

Once the students have practiced "Think Differently" with these simple issues, you can introduce statements on more important matters, e.g. "The main cause of the American Civil War was slavery" or "Plants make their own food using sunlight" or "Invading Afghanistan was the right thing to do after 9/11."

Please give us feedback and share your experiences with other educators!

- post comments on our [Facebook page](#) [15].
- Join our conversation on [Twitter](#) [16].
- email us at [\[17\]lmcclore@morningsidecenter.org](mailto:lmcclore@morningsidecenter.org) [18]

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Links:

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[2] <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/getting-know-you-classroom-activities-starting-school-year>

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[5] <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/oil-saudi-arabia-us-osama-bin-laden-three-lessons-high-school-students>

[6] <http://www.teachablemoment.org/high/oil.html>

[7] <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/civil-liberties-terrorism>

[8] <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/investigating-terrorism-3-lessons>

[9] <http://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/teaching-critical-thinking-believing-game-doubting-game>

[10] <http://morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/responding-death-osama-bin-laden>

[11] <http://www.911memorial.org/lesson-plans>

[12] <https://www.tanenbaum.org/preparenry>

- [13] <http://projectrebirth.org/film/>
- [14] <http://theseconddayfilm.com/film/>
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- [16] <http://twitter.com/#!/MorningsideCtr>
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- [18] mailto:lmcclore@morningsidecenter.org
- [19] http://www.amazon.com/September-12th-Everything-Would-Right/dp/043944246X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1314118915&sr=1-1
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- [24] http://www.amazon.com/Theres-Big-Beautiful-World-There/dp/0142401846/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1314108868&sr=1-1
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