

# 9/11 MEMORIAL

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UNIT: Individuals and 9/11

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GRADE LEVEL/S: 9-12

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TIME NEEDED: 2 sessions

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TEACHER: Arlene Shenkus

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LESSON TITLE:

## PERSONAL STORIES THROUGH INTERVIEWS

### Common Core Standards

**SL 3** Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

**SL 4** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**W 7** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

### Key Questions/ Issues Addressed

Why are personal stories important for recording and interpreting historical events?

### Lesson Goals/ Objectives

Students will be able to understand 9/11 through the stories and insights of those who experienced it.

### Key Terms

Oral History

### Materials

Interview suggestions adapted from:

Ferguson, Cynthia, Melissa J. Greenwald and Randall M. Miller. "Some Characteristics of A Good Interview." *Is There A Dream for Today?* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 1998. pp. 296-98, 304): See [Appendix A](#)

Interview sample questions: See [Appendix B](#)

StoryCorps September 11 Initiative interviews: [storycorps.org/september-11th/](http://storycorps.org/september-11th/)

### Background for lesson

For basic background of 9/11, see [9/11 FAQ](http://www.911memorial.org/faqabout911): [www.911memorial.org/faqabout911](http://www.911memorial.org/faqabout911).

**Instructional  
Activity/  
Procedures**

1. Have students brainstorm reasons why it is important to gather firsthand information from those who experienced an historical event, such as 9/11.
2. Introduce the idea of interviewing someone who either witnessed, survived, or followed 9/11 as the day unfolded. *What do you want to know? What could they tell you?*
3. Read the StoryCorps page on the 9/11 Memorial website: [www.911memorial.org/share-your-story](http://www.911memorial.org/share-your-story) to learn how interviews were conducted and gathered for survivors of 9/11. Listen to excerpts from the initiative. Students should gather ideas for constructing questions for their own interviews.
4. Students develop questions to use for their interview.
5. In groups, students review and edit their questions.
6. Break students into pairs. Each pair will practice conducting an interview using their list of questions to further refine and modify their questions.
7. Students then conduct their own interview with someone, using the guidelines for an interview (see [Appendix A](#)) and the questions they have developed, edited and practiced.
8. Students present their findings in an oral presentation to the class.
9. Students will also present a written form of their interview in one of these suggested forms: story, journalistic report, news article, interview format (interviewer's question then interviewee's response).

**Extension  
Activities**Formative:

Students will provide an overview of the person they interviewed and the outline of their questions.

Teacher will assess the group work throughout the process.

Summative:

Students will be evaluated on the oral report and their ability to answer questions about their interviewee and his/her experience and/or recollection of the events of 9/11. This may include news articles, quotes and insights from the person interviewed.

**Evidence of  
Understanding**

Students may assemble their written presentations from their interviews into a booklet for the class. These may also be put in the school library for access by other students.

**APPENDIX A**     **Interview Suggestions**

1. Learn all you can about the subject and the particular area you are researching, i.e. emergency worker, first responder, survivor, etc.
2. Conduct a pre-interview to gather biographical information about the person to be interviewed, establish rapport with that person and identify interview topics.
3. Based on the pre-interview and your research, develop questions and a sequence for asking these questions.
4. Select a comfortable location for the person being interviewed.
5. The interviewer should arrive on time and introduce himself/herself and state why the interview is being conducted.
6. The interviewer should set up a tape recorder (with the permission of the interviewee) so that both parties can be recorded.
7. Ask the interviewee if he/she is ready to begin and, if yes, start the interview.
8. State the name of the person being interviewed, the name of the person conducting the interview, the topic, the place, date and time of the interview first.
9. Begin the interview with a few simple, open-ended questions that the person being interviewed can answer easily and that will put him at ease.
10. Ask many open-ended questions so that the person will find it easier to tell his story rather than give brief yes or no answers.
11. Speak clearly so that the narrator can hear and understand you easily.
12. Do not rush the narrator. Silence can be productive. Time to think will give the narrator a chance to recall incidents and details. Try to pause at least 10 seconds before asking the next question after an answer.
13. Be well-prepared but do not limit the interview to the prepared questions. Engage in active listening.
  - Always listen to the narrator's response and ask a follow-up question if it will provide more information.
  - If a thought shared is a sad or painful memory respond by pausing for a moment. Out of sensitivity give recognition to the story just shared before moving on to the next question.
  - Always ask follow-up questions when the information given mentions a significant event to bring out more detail and description.
14. Feel free to ask challenging questions.
15. Never challenge or correct a narrator. They are recounting their memories as best as they can.

**APPENDIX A**  
(continued)

**Interview Suggestions (continued)**

16. Props such as pictures, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, maps, etc can be used during the interview to jog the narrator's memory and bring out more stories and details.
17. Have a good closing question to summarize or end the interview.
18. Always thank the person you interviewed for his/her time and for sharing his/her memories and experiences.
19. Have the narrator sign and date a prepared interview release form that gives the person who conducted the interview permission to use the information for educational purposes.
20. Write a personal thank-you note to the narrator. Mail it within a week of the interview.

Note: Be sure to have an introduction for the interview stating information such as who the person is and what role he/she played in the events of 9/11 or what the narrator witnessed and/or experienced.

Adapted from:

Ferguson, Cynthia, Melissa J. Greenwald and Randall M. Miller. "Some Characteristics of a Good Interview." Is There A Dream for Today? Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt Publishing Company, 1998. pp. 296-98, 304.

**APPENDIX B**      **Sample Interview Questions**

1. What was your job on 9/11?
2. Why were you at that location? Why did you follow the news as the events unfolded? (depending on the person you are interviewing)
3. What do you remember about the events of the day?
4. What happened to others you saw, heard about, read about, etc.?
5. Is there a specific incident that you remember that you would like to relate? Describe.
6. What was your immediate response when you first realized what was happening?
7. How did you follow the news as the events unfolded?
8. What did you experience in the first few days after 9/11?
9. What happened as a reaction to 9/11 in the area where you live/ lived?
10. How do you view the events of 9/11 today? How do you view our response?