

9/11 MEMORIAL

UNIT: Individuals and 9/11

GRADE LEVEL/S: 3-5

TIME NEEDED: 1-2 sessions

TEACHER: Tina M. von Dohlen

LESSON TITLE:

SURVIVORS' STAIRWAY

Common Core Standards

R 7 Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

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

Key Questions/ Issues Addressed

How do you think it would have felt to walk down the "Survivors' Stairway" on 9/11?

Why might it be important for the original stairway to be in the museum?

What stairs do you use regularly and where do they take you?

Why is it important to walk up and down stairs in an orderly manner?

Lesson Goals/ Objectives

Students will be able to put themselves in the shoes of survivors who traveled down the Vesey Street Stairs on 9/11.

Students will be able to observe and discuss photographs of the stairs on 9/11 and during reconstruction.

Students will be able to identify stairs they use in their everyday lives and where the stairs take them.

Key Terms

Evacuate, Safety, Survivor

Materials

Photos of Vesey Street Stairs and Vesey Street Stair Transfer (See [Appendix A](#))

Photo (taken by Shannon Stapleton) of workers evacuating via the Vesey Street stairway: <http://shannonstapleton.com/#/911/sept3>

Audio link of Bruno Dellinger describing going down a stairway on 9/11 (1:08-1:25 & 1:58-2:14): www.911memorial.org/oral-histories-0

Art materials

**Background
for lesson**The Vesey Street Stairs:

This artifact, known as the “Survivors’ Stairway,” remains as an authentic “silent witness” to the events of 9/11.

During 9/11, this stairway served as a vital route to safety for many people. The stairs remained mostly intact immediately after 9/11 but they were significantly damaged during the nine-month recovery period. The stairway provides a powerful reference to the survivors’ story as well as a commemoration of the recovery period.

The stairs have already been installed in the 9/11 Memorial Museum alongside the final descending pathway leading visitors to the primary exhibitions.

The stair remnant originally weighed 175 tons and stood 22 feet tall. To prepare the remnant for transfer, work crews created steel bracing beneath the stairs, extracted the connector plate and transferred it to temporary storage. Rising 21 feet high and 64 feet long and weighing approximately 58 tons, the full run of stairs, along with its supportive bracing, was first lifted and moved to an interim location along Vesey Street at Greenwich Street before being lowered into the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

- Background courtesy of the 9/11 Memorial Museum

**Instructional
Activity/
Procedures**Part 1

1. Display and discuss Shannon Stapleton’s evacuation photo: <http://shannonstapleton.com/#/911/sept3>. *What do you notice? What can you infer from those observations?*

Possible answers include: Facial expressions, dusty vs. clean clothes, full arms vs. empty arms, etc.

2. Using the background information listed above, discuss the specifics about the Vesey Street Stairs and its importance on 9/11 and today.
3. Have students choose to be one of the people in the photograph taken by Shannon Stapleton, and write a description of what it might have been like to walk down those stairs on 9/11.

Part 2

4. Play Bruno Dellinger’s oral history about evacuating the North Tower on 9/11 (1:08-1:25). Discuss who might have been going “up” stairs that day, when everyone else was coming down (i.e. firefighters). Play next segment of Bruno Dellinger’s oral history (1:58-2:14).
5. Tell students that the firefighters were carrying over 50 pounds of gear up over 70 stories. Ask: *Why were the firefighters taking the stairs?*
6. Tell students: Many firefighters and other first responders, such as members of the New York City Police Department and Port Authority Police Department, lost their lives on 9/11 trying to save others.

**Instructional
Activity/
Procedures
(continued)**

7. As a final activity, create an artwork that relates and honors those first responders, incorporating stairs in any way you would like. The artwork can take any form, but should somehow include, no matter how abstractly, the idea and imagery of 'stairs.'
 8. Display the class' work in an exhibition, working with students to develop the wall text explaining the exhibition.
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**Evidence of
Understanding**

Students will display understanding through their participation, observation skills, and written description of "putting themselves in someone else's shoes."

**Extension
Activities**

Students can time themselves walking up or down one flight of stairs and then calculate how long it would have taken people on 9/11 to get down 20, 30, or even 80 flights of stairs.

APPENDIX A



Vesey Street Stair Remnant
www.911memorial.org/photo-albums/vesey-street-stairway



Vesey St. Stairway Transfer. Courtesy of 9/11 Memorial Museum
www.911memorial.org/photo-albums/vesey-street-stairway-transfer