

LESSON H-UIV-L2

Interviews and Personal Stories

Unit IV: 9/11: A Case Study in Contemporary Terrorism

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Grade Levels: 9–12

Time: 80–160 minutes



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Objectives

- Interview a survivor, emergency care worker, first responder, etc., or search the Internet for personal stories from 9/11.
- Gather information and share a story with the class.
- Select a person and his or her story to put a face on the events of 9/11 and to identify on a personal level with those who experienced that day in New York City, Washington, D.C., or Shanksville, PA.

Lesson Materials

- Student Assignment: Interviews and Personal Stories (one for each student; see below)
- interview form (use a school-developed/sanctioned form or develop a form for this activity)
- interview release form (use a school-developed/sanctioned form or develop a form for this activity)
- sample interview questions (see the Student Assignment: Interviews and Personal Stories)
- interview questions written by students
- Internet stories from 9/11 (found at <http://www.nabe.com/am2001/fishmankiss.htm> and <http://www.nabe.com/am2001/bergman.htm>)
- Other survivor stories and videos from 9/11 found on the Internet (Note to Teacher: There are many survivor stories and videos on the Internet. The history channel web site (<http://www.history.com/content/9-11>) has a whole section devoted to 9/11 that is very well done and provides photographs, interviews, etc., regarding New York City, the Pentagon, and Shanksville, PA. Also, there is the video interactive production, “102 Minutes That Changed America.” This is only one suggestion of the many valuable web sites available.)

Lesson Plan

- Introduce the idea of collecting stories through interviews or research of sources on the Internet.
- Have the students research and select an area they wish to concentrate on (survivor, firemen, police, EMTs, first responders, survivors, rescue dog handlers, etc.).
- Guide the students to research information about the category they selected and develop questions for the category.
- Have each student select a person to interview and refine his interview questions based on their knowledge of the person and his or her experiences in the events of 9/11.
- Organize the students into groups to refine their interview questions and get group feedback on their list of questions.
- Then have students partner with a fellow student and practice interviewing. Have them practice using their questions with their partner to further refine the questions and to add any new questions.
- Have each student conduct the interview using the guidelines for an interview and the questions he has developed, refined, and practiced. Remind students to remember the release form for the person to read and sign.

- Have the students prepare an oral presentation from their interview to share the information and the experiences with their classmates.
- Ask each student to write their person’s story in one of the following formats: story, journalistic report, interview format (interviewer’s question, then narrator’s answer).

Evidence of Understanding

Formative Assessment

- Have each student give an overview of the person they researched/interviewed and the method they used to gather information about this person.
- Evaluate students’ group work throughout the lesson.

Summative Assessment

Evaluate students’ oral reports, which they have prepared from the person they interviewed, telling his or her role and story as well as his or her insights. This may also include pictures, news reports, quotes the person shared in telling the story, and background information.

Taking Action and Giving Service

- Students may want to use the articles, interviews, and stories they have written and put them into a booklet of their collected writings. The booklet can server as a record of the personal stories, the people, and the events of 9/11 to which they developed a connection through their project.
- Have the students create a service project in honor of someone who died on 9/11. Visit 9/11: Day of Service (<http://911dayofservice.org>) to volunteer service as a living memorial to a person or all those who perished on 9/11. Or have the students plan a service project in memory of someone special to the students as a living memorial to the person’s life.

Student Assignment: Interviews and Personal Stories

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Name _____ Date _____

Period/Class _____

Interview Assignment and 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. Arrive to the interview on time, introduce yourself, and state why the interview is being conducted.
6. Set up a tape recorder (with the permission of the interviewee) so that you can record the questions and comments from both parties.
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, the 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 her/him at ease.
10. Ask many open-ended questions so that the person will find it easier to tell her/his story rather than give brief “yes” or “no” answers.
11. Speak clearly so that the person can hear and understand you easily.
12. Do not rush the interviewee. Silence can be productive. Giving the person time to think will allow him/her 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 person’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. Follow this suggestion out of sensitivity, giving recognition to the story just shared before moving on to the next question.
 - To bring out more detail and description, always ask follow-up questions when the information given mentions a significant event.
14. Feel free to ask challenging but respectful questions.
15. Never challenge or correct interviewees. They are recounting their memories as best as they can.
16. Use props such as pictures, scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, maps, etc. during the interview to jog the person’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 her/his time and for sharing her/his 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. (See your teacher for a school-developed/sanctioned form or a form developed for this activity.)
20. Write a personal thank-you note to your interviewee. Mail it within a week of the interview.

Note to Student: When writing your report about the interview, be sure to include an introduction for the interview stating who the person is and what role he/she played in the events of 9/11 or what the person witnessed and/or experienced.

Sample Interview Questions

1. What was your job?
2. Why were you there?
3. What did you see?
4. What happened to you, specifically?
5. What was it like for others you saw?
6. Is there any specific incident that you remember that you would like to elaborate on with details?
7. What was your immediate response to the events around you?
8. When and how did you learn exactly what was happening that day?
9. What happened to you in the first days after 9/11?
10. Do you have any reaction to the events of the day that you can share with us today?