

LESSON E-UVI-L2

The Survivor Tree

Unit VI: Remembrance and the Creation of Memory

Grade Levels: 3-5

Time: 30–60 Minutes



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Unit VI: Post 9/11: Challenges and Consequences

Grade Levels: 3–5

Time: 30–60 Minutes

Interdisciplinary Connections

Literacy, literature and poetry, science, character education, nature

Objectives

- Explain why living plants and trees have become symbols of remembrance and memory.
- 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

- flora
- furrowed
- horticulture
- nursery
- survivor

Lesson Materials

- “A 9/11 Survivor Blossoms in the Bronx” by David W. Dunlap, New York Times City Room blog entry, April 30, 2009 (found at <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/04/30/a-911-survivor-blossoms-in-the-bronx/> or at <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?a=242828&c=50209>)
- photograph of the survivor tree at the 9/11 memorial site today (found at <http://www.911memorial.org/blog/tags/survivor-tree>)
- Photo Analysis Worksheet from the National Archives (found at http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/photo_analysis_worksheet.pdf or at <http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?a=242828&c=50209>)
- “Trees” by Joyce Kilmer (found at <http://www.poetry-archive.com/k/trees.html>)

Lesson Plan

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

For 1st-grade, 2nd-grade, and 3rd-grade students

- Ask the students to describe what they see in the photograph of the tree.
- Ask, “Do you think this tree had a chance to survive and grow?”
- Then show them the second photograph of the tree as it appeared in April 2009. Ask the following questions:
 - What do you think of how the tree appears in this photograph?
 - How has its appearance changed?
 - Would you 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 tree now?
- Finally, show the students the photograph of the Survivor Tree at the 9/11 memorial site in March 2012.

For 4th-grade and 5th-grade students

- Distribute copies of the Photo Analysis Worksheet from the National Archives web site. Working individually or in pairs, have the students complete Steps 1A & 1B, 2, and 3A to analyze the photograph of the tree at the time it was selected and moved to the Arthur Ross Nursery in Van Cortlandt Park.
- Then have the students complete a second worksheet answering the same questions to analyze the photograph of the tree as it appeared in April 2009.
- Finally, show the students the photograph of the Survivor Tree at the 9/11 memorial site in March 2012.

Evidence of Understanding

Explain to students that the callery pear tree is a beautiful tree but it is not unusual or rare. Have them 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 their written work.

Additional Activities and Resources

- Have the students research the flora at the plaza of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum at the World Trade Center. Ask:
 - What are some of the other flora and objects in and around the plaza?
 - What do the flora and other objects symbolize?
- Read the poem “Trees,” by Joyce Kilmer. Then relate the words of the poem to the story of the 9/11 Survivor Tree. Ask the students, “Why does flora hold such an important position in world cultures as a symbol of so many things—important events, memorials, and gifts?”
- Have the students research the poet Joyce Kilmer. Have each student prepare and present a short presentation about his life and accomplishments, memorials that have been created in his honor, etc. The students may use the following web sites to gather information and resource materials:
 - <http://www.poetry-archive.com/k/trees.html>
 - <http://www.westernncattractions.com/JKMF.htm>

- Have students research the Oklahoma Survivor Tree (found at <http://www.oklahomacitynationalmemorial.org/secondary.php?section=5&catid=120>)
- Have the students read about the Rowan tree, a Celtic symbol of resilience (found at <http://www.treesforlife.org.uk/tfl.rowan.html>,
or http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/media/migration/forestry/publications/Rowan_low.pdf,
or http://cartin.co.uk/main4/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=29&Itemid=39)

Taking Action and Giving Service

- Have the students visit the Living Memorial Project web site from U.S. Forest Service (found at http://www.livingmemorialsproject.net/ABOUT/livingmem_greeningres2.htm).
- Ask the students to consider creating a living memorial in their community, or have them determine if there is a living memorial already in the community.
- Ask, “How and what can you do to contribute to a community garden?”