

**LESSON M-UIV-L3**

# Looking Back: What Happened Before September 11

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

**Grade Levels:** 7-8

**Time:** 90-120 Minutes



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## Objectives

- Recognize that September 11 was not an isolated event.
- Understand the chain of events that led to the formation of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden’s role in terror attacks.

## Key Terms

- al-Qaeda
- Extremist
- Fatwa
- Osama bin Laden

## Lesson Materials

- “Brief History of al-Qaeda” in Bill Moyers Journal and the timeline found at <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/07272007/alqaeda.html>
- al-Qaeda timeline and information found at [http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/osamabinladen/alqaeda\\_timeline.html](http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/osamabinladen/alqaeda_timeline.html) and <http://www.history.com/topics/al-qaeda>

## Lesson Background

September 11 was not a random or isolated attack on America. Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda had been growing in strength since the late 1980s. Their opposition to the United States was defined through multiple terror attacks prior to the attacks on September 11. A timeline will assist the students in understanding these events and the history of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda prior to 9/11.

## Lesson Plan

- Build a foundation for this lesson by defining the key terms.
- Assign students the reading from the PBS web site and other web sites which give a brief history of the events which led to 9/11.
- Explain that the development of al-Qaeda is a substantial amount of information. To enhance the understanding of the sheer number of violent incidents, instruct the students (working in groups) to record an incident and its description on sheet of paper. Then have the students create a large timeline around the perimeter of the classroom.

## Evidence of Understanding

Evaluate students based on their discussion of the complexity, magnitude, and the length of time of events that led to the attacks of September 11, 2001.

## Taking Action and Giving Service

- As the students increase their awareness of the events that led to September 11, encourage them to share information by discussing what they learned in the lesson with others. Suggest the following activities:
  - Have the students identify three incidents in the timeline and share them with an adult.
  - Place the students in small groups and ask them to select one of the events and interpret it using the work of a poet, artist, or musician (consider Bruce Springsteen’s *The Rising*; *9/11 The Book of Help* by Cart, Aronson, and Carus; and so on).
  - Ask the students to discuss how using artistic expressions can help people understand tragic events.
- Research the changes in safety regulations that have been implemented since 9/11. Have the students discuss how they affect our lives and whether or not they agree with them. Have the students share their observations with a family member or a friend.