

LESSON M-UVII-L1

Why Does Tragedy Bring Us Together?

Unit VII: Building Better Futures: Narrative, Recovery, and
Responsibility

Grade Levels: 6–8

Time: 90 minutes



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Objective

- Describe the importance of personal narrative.
- Understand how a tragedy can bring people together.

Key Terms

- narrative
- testimony

Lesson Materials

- *The Day Our World Changed: Children’s Art of 9/11* by Robin F. Goodman
- background information on Lt. Victor J. Navarra (found at <http://www.artaid.org/fire/navarra/navarra.html>)

Lesson Plan

- As a warm-up for the lesson, have the students respond to the following question in a journal entry: “Do you believe that tragedy brings people together? Why or why not?” Have volunteers share their responses. Then discuss situations in the lives of the students where this may have occurred.
- Have the students read “A New Friend at the Firehouse” (page 83) from *The Day Our World Changed: Children’s Art of 9/11* by Robin F. Goodman. Then ask the students:
How did Juliana respond to 9/11?
Why do you think it was important for her to reconnect with Lt. Navarra?
- Have the students read “A Firefighters New Friend” (page 90) from Robin F. Goodman’s book. Then ask:
How did Juliana’s gift affect Lt. Navarra?
What does this quote, “Through their eyes, we gain our strength,” mean?
- Then have the class discuss the following questions:
How did tragedy bring Lt. Navarra and Juliana Hatkoff together?
How did compassion and an act of kindness make Juliana a hero in the eyes of the firefighter?
How did Juliana’s wish to be a firefighter for Halloween impact Lt. Navarra?
- Have the students read the background information on Lt. Victor J. Navarra from the web site or read it aloud to the class. Then discuss these questions:
What accomplishments did Lt. Navarra achieve?
What words can be used to describe Lt. Navarra?
- Have the students revisit their journal entries from the beginning of the lesson, and answer the original prompt again. When students complete their writing, ask: What did you add after reading about and discussing the lives of Juliana and Lt. Navarra?

Evidence of Understanding

Evaluate the students based on their journal entries and participation in the classroom discussions.

Additional Activities and Resources

- Discuss the importance of writing personal testimony. Ask the students: “Have you ever kept a diary or journal? If so, was putting your thoughts and feelings in writing beneficial? If not, what may be the benefits of keeping track of thoughts and feelings in writing?”
- If students have read *The Diary of Anne Frank*, ask: “How did the journal of a young girl make such an impact on future generations?”
- Read the e-book, *Ladder 35 Engine 40* by Juliana Lee Hatkoff and Craig M. Hatkoff with the students (PDF download available for purchase at <http://www.ebookmall.com/ebook-search?searchterms=Ladder+35+Engine+40>). Then ask:
After reading the e-book, have your feelings about who is the real hero changed?
Why do you think it was important for this book to be written?

Taking Action and Giving Service

- Have students interview a community leader or leader of an organization who is able to recollect what happened on 9/11. Guide them to ask the following questions:
How did the tragedy of 9/11 bring together members of your community (or organization)?
In what ways did this happen?
Did you have any specific experiences on 9/11 or any other time that support the saying “tragedy brings us together?”
Has anything like this happened since that time?
- Based upon their personal interviews, have the students write a primary source narrative and submit it for publication in their local newspaper, the organization newsletter, or on an online news web site.