



**9/11  
TRIBUTE  
CENTER**

## 9/11 Choices Made: Connecting Literature and Poetry to Current Events

*Thomas Buxton, IS259, Brooklyn, NY*

**Grade level: 7**

**Number of class periods: 2 – 5**

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### Objective

Students learn how 9/11 transformed people’s lives by reading stories of the actions of first responders on 9/11 and thinking about the personal and professional issues they faced.

### Common Core Standards

*Comprehensive Common Core Alignments at end of lesson plan.*

- Reading Standards for Literature 2, 7, 9, 11
- Writing Standards 3, 9, 11
- Language Standards 1, 2

### Resources

- [Book of Greek Myths, D’Aulaires](#)
- [In Memoriam, HBO](#)
- [News articles and photographs from week of September 11, 2001](#)
- [“The Road Not Taken,” Robert Frost](#)
- [First responder from the community \(optional 3<sup>rd</sup> day\)](#)

### Preparation

The class has already explored Greek mythology and discussed the concepts of “the hero” and “metamorphosis.” Over two class periods, the students watch HBO’s In Memoriam, narrated by Rudolph Giuliani, to see and hear what happened on September 11, 2001. They read two newspaper articles that describe the work of firefighters and police officers at the World Trade Center on 9/11.

### Activity

In class period, students discuss the facts of 9/11 and the activities of the first responders who attempted to get people out of the buildings and away from the area. Students look at video/photographs of the day that show the height of the buildings and talk about the 25,000 people who were inside and who were trying to get out. Students talk about the disaster the first responders faced and the challenges to putting out the fire and rescuing people.

Students discuss the following key ideas they have learned in their study of mythology:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Boy to man                              | 5. Fear                       |
| 2. Metamorphosis                           | 6. What is a man?             |
| 3. Workers in the morning, heroes by night | 7. Different types of courage |
| 4. Silence                                 |                               |

Students then read the poem “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost, and discuss choices people make in their lives. Students think about the choices firefighters had to make – going into the building knowing they might not get out or returning to their families.



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Students sketch a drawing of responders on 9/11.

### *Second day*

Students write a poem on the same page as their drawing. They incorporate some of the 7 key ideas discussed above.

### *Optional third day*

A first responder from the community discusses the mission of their job and a difficult choice they have made.

### **Assessment/Reflection**

Students share their poems with others in the class. They talk about how they understood the choices first responders made on 9/11.

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### **Common Core Alignments**

This lesson was written for 7<sup>th</sup> grade English, however, this lesson can easily be used with other grade levels.

#### **Reading Standards for Literature Grade 7**

##### **Key Ideas and Details**

Standard 2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

- Students will be determining the theme of several literary and visual texts, including **D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths**, the film *In Memoriam*, the news articles and photographs from September 11, the poem "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost and possibly even the original account of a first responder. In addition to summarizing these texts and discussing their meaning, students will be tracing the themes of masculinity/ manhood, metamorphosis and transformation, silence, fear, and courage throughout the several different texts.

##### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

Standard 7: Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).

- If students have the opportunity to hear a firsthand account from a first responder, they can compare and contrast his or her story with the depiction in photographs, news articles, and the HBO documentary in *Memoriam*.

Standard 9: Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

- Students will be using several different texts to compare treatment of the same topics and will explore and analyze how accounts differ in different mediums.

##### **Responding to Literature**

Standard 11: Recognize, interpret, and make connections in narratives, poetry, and drama, ethically and artistically to other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events, and situations.

- Students will be comparing how several texts address the themes of masculinity, metamorphosis and transformation, silence and fear and will be making connections between those texts and well as comparing the treatment of these themes with the firsthand account of a first responder.

#### **Writing Standards**



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### Text Types and Purposes

Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

- Students will be utilizing the several texts they have studied in order to create their own poem describing and honoring the actions of the first responders on September 11<sup>th</sup>. They will be using their understanding and analysis of the several themes to help form their poems.

### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

Standard 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- Students will be drawing evidence from both literary and information texts including mythology, Robert Frost's poetry as well as newspaper articles and documentary films to support a rich and substantive analysis and reflection on the actions of the first responders on 9/11.

### Responding to Literature

Standard 11: Create a presentation, art work, or text in response to a literary work with a commentary that identifies connections.

- Students will be creating both a drawing and a poem in response to both literary and information texts that will show an understanding of the literature they have studied as well as an understanding of the underlying themes connecting those works.

## Language Standards

### Conventions of Standard English

Standard 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking

Standard 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- Students will be expected to adhere to the conventions of standard English both in their writing and presentation

**Adjustments:** As mentioned previously, this lesson can easily be adjusted for work in upper level English courses. For High School Grades 9-10, the following standards could be applied, with the same justifications as above. However, the complexity of the literature used and the standard to which you hold student performance may be adjusted depending on grade level and ability.

## Reading Standards for Literature (Grades 9-10)

### Key Ideas and Details

Standard 2: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Standard 7: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment

Standard 9: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work.

### Responding to Literature

Standard 11: Interpret, analyze, and evaluate narratives, poetry, and drama, aesthetically and ethically by making connections to: other texts, ideas, cultural perspectives, eras, personal events and situations.



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### **Writing Standards (Grades 9-10)**

#### **Text Types and Purposes**

Standard 3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

#### **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

Standard 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.  
Language Standards (Grades 9-10)

#### **Conventions of Standard English**

Standard 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking

Standard 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.