



Understanding 9/11 through First Person Dialogue

*Kathleen Menake, Passaic Valley Regional High School,
Little Falls, New Jersey*

Grade level: 11-12

Number of class periods: 6

Objective

To sustain the memory of September 11, 2001 through a videoconferencing dialogue with people directly impacted by the attacks – a family member and a first responder.

- The main thrust of this course is for students to interact with their peers, experts, and people from all over the world while discussing current events. To commemorate 9/11 my students engage in a videoconference with survivors of the 9/11 tragedy.
- My course's mission is:
"Through a vital global perspective, Contemporary Issues through Videoconferencing allows students to gain skills necessary for productive problem solving and decision-making. The refinement of these skills is aimed at preparing students to become effective and responsible contributors at the individual, community, state, national and international levels."
- The students gained knowledge and comprehension of this historical event since they prepared for and sensitively conducted these two videoconferences.

Common Core Standards

Comprehensive Common Core Alignments at end of lesson plan.

- Reading Standards for Literacy in History/ Social Studies 2, 3, 7, 9
- Writing Standard 6
- Speaking and Listening Standards 1, 3

Resources

- [Primary Sources and Research Collection, 9/11 Tribute Center](#)
- ["Conducting and Oral History, Teacher Guide and Student Questions," 9/11 Tribute Center](#)

Preparation

3 class periods were spent preparing. I introduced the students to the history of 9/11 through articles, books and films listed on 9/11 Tribute Center resource list.

I encourage analysis of the facts they are reading since during the videoconference the students will have the ability to question the speakers and gather information that they want to know. Our preparatory discussions help student growth in emotional areas because they have to be sensitive to the first responders/survivors/family members as well as deal with the visceral impact of this tragic national event.

Aiding my students in exhibiting reflective attitudes towards their personal values, the values of others, and the values of their nation are all extremely important parts of this course. Students engage in synthesis and evaluation throughout the lesson because after the videoconferencing dialogues, they produce written, shared reflections on the experience by creating a journal page online.

Activity

Videoconference with survivors/first responders/family members from 9/11. After contacting the 9/11 Tribute Center, two Skype connections were arranged for my students with the volunteer education guides from the



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Tribute Center: one was with Brenda Berkman who told my students about her experiences as a fire fighter on the scene that fateful day and the other was with Ann Van Hine who spoke to my students about the loss of her husband, a fire fighter, on 9/11.

Assessment/Reflection

My students are expected to maintain a Google Site in order to keep a portfolio page of our videoconferences and activities throughout the year in the course. I encourage them to embrace global citizenship by becoming knowledgeable and pro-active through reflecting on the experiences and dialogues we have in class. Here is a sample of the writing which shows of how deeply the dialogues affected the students:

- *The stories of the two women who spoke to the class impacted us in a way that is not seen very often.*
- *We were all too little to realize what was going on that day.*
- *Speaking with people who survived....links the physical facts with an emotional depth that we empathize with as human beings.*
- *This video conference matured us as young adults.*
- *Learning more about this event helped stitch a bit more of the puzzling confounding ideas that exist in me and has expressed in words the nightmare that can be humanity. These women have rejuvenated my hope in it as they are brave enough to relive their past to educate us.*

Common Core Alignments

These were written for the 11th-12th grade level. However, this lesson can easily be adjusted for use lower grade levels and corresponds to the following Common Core Standards. Student assessments and expectation may vary depending upon grade level and ability.

Reading Standards for Literacy in History/ Social Studies

Key Ideas and Details (Grades 11-12)

Standard 2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

- Students will be studying background texts to determine the origin and impact of September 11th and will need to be able to accurately summarize these background texts to prove they have understanding of the origins of 9/11.

Standard 3: Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

- The background information will present different opinions on certain topics related to the origins and impact of September 11th and students will need to evaluate these different opinions and explanations in order to form an equitable judgment.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (Grades 11-12)

Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

- Students will be using different sources of background information as well as videoconference interviews with two primary source speakers to explain how September 11th has come to affect Contemporary Americans and what its legacy on the American Psyche is.

Standard 9: Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.



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- Students will be utilizing a diverse array of sources both as background knowledge and during the videoconference in order to have a more thorough and seasoned understanding of the events of September 11th and their impact on American Society.

Writing Standards

Production and Distribution of Writing (Grades 11-12)

Standard 6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

- Students will be keeping a Google Drive folder with their own reflections and thoughts on the topics covered in class.

Speaking and Listening Standards

Comprehension and Collaboration (Grades 11-12)

Standard 1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- Students will be participating in collaborative discussions with their interviewee's through the videoconferencing part of the lesson, and will have collaborative discussions about what they heard and learned in the videoconference with each other.

Standard 3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used

- Students will be evaluating and comparing the reports given by the two or more people with whom they videoconference and will assess how each makes his or her point.