

American History

9/11: The Flight That Fought Back

Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 9–12

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: Two class periods

Program Description

September 11, 2001, was the day that changed modern America, and the passengers on Flight 93 played a significant and unforgettable role. Watch as a momentous event in American history was captured on a fateful flight.

Onscreen Questions

Part 1, "Cleared for Takeoff"

- How did staying calm and thinking fast help the passengers aboard Flight 93?
- What advantages did the passengers have over the terrorists?

Part 2, "Citizens Take a Stand"

- Why would passengers aboard Flight 93 decide to fight armed terrorists?
 - How did the feeling of unity and the need to take action affect the mentality of the passengers aboard Flight 93?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Understand the political objectives of al Qaeda and possible reasons for the September 11 terrorist attacks.
- Understand the influence of American foreign policy and culture on international relations.
- Understand the role of ethnicity and religious beliefs in political conflicts.
- Understand causes and consequences of economic imbalances around the world.
- Write a letter to a student 50 years from now, describing the events of September 11, possible reasons behind the attacks, and what they hope the long-term response will be from Americans and U.S. and international leaders.

Materials

- 9/11: The Flight That Fought Back video
- Computer with Internet access

Procedures

1. After watching the video, review what students know about al Qaeda, the group responsible for the attacks of September 11. Who are they? Who is Osama bin Laden? (*The Council on Foreign Relations describes al Qaeda as “an international terrorist network led by Osama bin Laden. It seeks to rid Muslim countries of what it sees as the profane influence of the West and replace their governments with fundamentalist Islamic regimes.”*) In your discussions, make sure students understand that while al Qaeda may be a militant Islamic group, they – and Bin Laden – in no way speak for all Muslims. The Koran, the holy book of Islam, explicitly condemns the killing of another person and considers this act a sin.
2. Ask students to share what they believe are some of the reasons behind the September 11 attacks. Why would al-Qaeda want to hurt Americans? Encourage students to express their opinions and listen respectfully as others share their viewpoints. Their reasons might include:
 - Resentment of American power and oppressive policies around the world
 - American support for Israel
 - Dominance of American companies around the world
 - “Corruption” of American culture
3. Next, tell students they will be exploring some of the possible causes proposed by the Council on Foreign Relations. Explain that the CFR is an independent, nonpartisan organization whose mission is “to better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other governments.” The site below provides links to articles about nine different topics. Divide the class into nine small groups and assign each a different topic.

Causes of 9/11: Possible Explanations

<http://www.cfrterrorism.org/causes/index.html>

- Muslim militant extremists
- U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia
- U.S. support for repressive regimes
- U.N. sanctions on Iraq
- U.S. support for Israel
- Arab politics
- A clash of civilizations
- U.S. power and arrogance
- World poverty

4. Have groups read and summarize e their assigned articles for the class. After each group has spoken, give other students time to ask questions. Keep a list of unanswered questions on the board and give students time to find answers to share with the class.
5. In the final part of this lesson, ask students to consider how the events of September 11 might be remembered 50 years from now. You could discuss how September 11 has been compared to Pearl Harbor. (Pearl Harbor was the U.S. naval base in Hawaii that was attacked by the Japanese air force on December 7, 1941. This attack pulled the United States into World War II.) How are these events similar? How were they different? What do they think it would have been like to live through those events as a teenager?
6. The final assignment is for students to write a letter describing the events of September 11 to a teenager fifty years from now. The letter should describe:
 - Their personal reaction to the events: Where they were on September 11, 2001, how they heard about the attacks, how they felt after it happened.
 - Our understanding of why it happened: Possible reasons for the attacks (pulling from their research above).
 - Their hope for the future: What they hope the long-term response will be from Americans and U.S. and international leaders.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students shared several details about the political objectives of al Qaeda and possible causes of the September 11 attacks; article summary reflected a thorough, clear, and accurate understanding of factors behind the attacks, such as American foreign policy and culture, the role of ethnicity and religion, and economic imbalances in the world; students wrote a thoughtful letter about September 11 that included all of the assigned elements.
- 2 points: Students shared some details about the political objectives of al Qaeda and possible causes of the September 11 attacks; article summary reflected a complete and mostly accurate understanding of factors behind the attacks, such as American foreign policy and culture, the role of ethnicity and religion, and economic imbalances in the world; students wrote a clear letter about September 11 that included most of the assigned elements.
- 1 point: Students shared few or no details about the political objectives of al Qaeda and possible causes of the September 11 attacks; article summary reflected an incomplete or inaccurate understanding of factors behind the attacks, such as American foreign policy and culture, the role of ethnicity and religion, and economic imbalances in the world; student wrote an incomplete or unclear letter about September 11 that did not include the assigned elements.

Vocabulary

al Qaeda

Definition: An international terrorist network begun in the 1980s by a group of Muslims in Afghanistan; it seeks to rid Muslim countries of what it sees as the profane influence of the West and replace their governments with fundamentalist Islamic regimes

Context: The 40 passengers and crew frustrated al Qaeda's plan, and by risking and losing their own lives, they saved the lives of countless others.

cockpit

Definition: The section in the front of an airplane where the pilots and other crew members sit

Context: The recordings pick up a violent struggle outside the cockpit.

hijack

Definition: To take control of a moving vehicle, such as an airplane, take the passengers hostage, and change the vehicle's destination

Context: The two remaining hijacked planes are now heading for the nation's capital.

terrorist

Definition: A person who uses violence to achieve goals, such as to intimidate or persuade for political reasons

Context: The passengers aboard Flight 93 realized they had an opportunity to stop another terrorist attack.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- U.S. History – Contemporary United States (1968 to the present): Understands economic, social, and cultural developments in the contemporary United States
- U.S. History – Contemporary United States (1968 to the present): Understands developments in foreign policy and domestic politics between the Nixon and Clinton presidencies
- World History – The 20th Century Since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes: Understands the search for community, stability, and peace in an interdependent world

- World History – The 20th Century Since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes: Understands major global trends since World War II

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
 - Power, Authority, and Governance
 - Global Connections
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How To Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video—This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index—Here the video is divided into sections indicated by video thumbnail icons; brief descriptions are noted for each one. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. Brief descriptions and total running times are noted for each part. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units—These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running



times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. Boarding Flight 93

Stepping aboard United Flight 93 on September 11, 2001, passengers and crewmembers had no way of knowing that they were about to play a historic role.

II. Hijacked

After United Flight 93 was hijacked, its passengers desperately tried to telephone for help. They were unaware that their plane was part of an organized terrorist mission.

III. Flight 93: A Suicide Mission

Once they learned about the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, passengers and crew members decided to fight the hijackers, despite the horrifying odds stacked against them.

IV. Fighting Terrorism in the Skies

Piece together the final moments of Flight 93. See how passengers and crewmembers will be remembered as heroes in the war against terrorism.

Curriculum Units

1. Preparing for Takeoff

Pre-viewing question

Q: How do you prepare for a trip or vacation?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Do you think anyone could have known that terrorists were aboard Flight 93?

A: Answers will vary.

2. Flight 93 Takes Off

Pre-viewing question

Q: What do you like or dislike about flying in an airplane?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What might have happened if Flight 93 had not been cleared for take off?

A: Answers will vary.

3. The Hijacking Begins

Pre-viewing question

Q: What fears have you faced?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How did the passengers react when they realized their plane had been hijacked?

A: Answers will vary.

4. Passengers Make Outside Contact

Pre-viewing question

Q: What do you recall about first learning of the 9/11 terrorist attacks?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Why do you think most passengers chose to call family members instead of the authorities?

A: Answers will vary.

5. Confusion and Chaos

Pre-viewing question

Q: Whom would you turn to for help in an emergency situation?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Should the military have been notified earlier about the hijacking of Flight 93?

A: Answers will vary.

6. Passengers Formulate a Plan

Pre-viewing question

Q: Have you ever been manipulated into doing something?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How did the passengers react when they learned of the terrorists' intentions?

A: Answers will vary.

7. Attacking the Terrorists

Pre-viewing question

Q: What accomplishments have you made when working in a group?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Do you think the terrorists knew of the passengers' plot against them?

A: Answers will vary.

8. Flight 93 Comes Down

Pre-viewing question

Q: What examples of bravery have you witnessed?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How might history have changed if the passengers had not foiled the hijackers' plans?

A: Answers will vary.

9. Honoring the Passengers of Flight 93

Pre-viewing question

Q: How do people honor the dead?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What might be a fitting memorial honoring those who died aboard Flight 93?

A: Answers will vary.

Credit

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