

From Terror to Hope

One 12-year-old's experience of September 11, 2001

Preview: On the 15th anniversary of September 11, 2001, we bring you the story of a girl who was in school just a few blocks from the World Trade Center when the planes hit. A personal essay about growing up Muslim in post 9/11 America follows the article.

Learning Objective: to explain how the article's title applies to both the article and the personal essay

Key Skills: author's craft, interpreting text, text structure, central ideas, synthesis, key ideas, inference



Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1 Preparing to Read

Watch a video.

(15 minutes, activity sheet online)

Project or distribute the **Video Discussion Questions**. Show our **“Behind the Scenes”** video. Then answer the discussion questions.

Preview vocabulary.

(3 minutes, activity sheet online)

• Project or distribute the **Vocabulary Words and Definitions** for students to refer to as they read. Highlighted words: *cacophony, convened, converged, hijacked, iconic, ideology, liaison, reeling, tenet, terrorism*. Clarify that Islam is a religion and a Muslim is a person who practices Islam.

2 Reading the Article

(35 minutes, activity sheet online)

Read “From Terror to Hope” as a class, starting on page 5 with the “As You Read” box. Then discuss the following questions.

TEACHING TOUGH TOPICS

Go to our website for expert advice on teaching this sensitive topic.

Close-Reading Questions

▶ How does author Kristin Lewis develop the idea that the Twin Towers were special buildings?

(author's craft) *On page 6, Lewis writes, “Perhaps nothing symbolized the power and possibilities of New York City more than [the Twin Towers]. . .” She notes that they were the tallest buildings in New York and describes them as “silver skyscrapers,” making them sound beautiful. On page 7, she writes that the towers were “iconic” and notes that they symbolized America's economic power. On page 8, Lewis calls the towers “two of the most recognizable buildings in the world.”*

▶ On page 8, Lewis writes, “And sadly, the word *terrorism* is now part of our everyday vocabulary.” What does she mean? (interpreting text) *Lewis means that the attacks started an era of terrorism in the West, and that since September 11, Americans have worried more about the threat of terrorist attacks on our home soil.*

▶ **The title “From Terror to Hope” suggests a journey. What journeys does Lewis describe?** (text structure, central ideas) *Lewis describes the journeys of Helaina Hovitz and of New York City starting from the attacks of September 11 through the struggle to return to normalcy to today, when both have largely recovered. Lewis weaves Helaina’s personal story into the larger story of 9/11 to show how both Helaina and New York have journeyed from terror to hope.*

▶ **In the remarks on page 9, President Obama gives examples of people who showed heroism on September 11 as well as those who have shown “a more quiet form of heroism” in the years since. What does he mean by “a more quiet form of heroism”? Has Helaina shown this kind of quiet heroism?** (interpreting text, synthesis) *President Obama means that showing resilience after a tragedy is a form of heroism, even if it doesn’t receive the same kind of attention as rescuing people from a burning building. Strength, courage, and perseverance are required to continue on after a devastating event. Helaina definitely shows the kind of quiet heroism to which Obama refers; she suffered from PTSD for years but worked hard to recover and is now a writer.*

3 Reading the Pairing

(15 minutes, activity sheets online)

• As a class, read RJ Khalaf’s personal essay and answer the following questions.

Close-Reading Questions

▶ **According to RJ Khalaf’s essay, how did the September 11 attacks affect Muslim Americans?** (key ideas, inference) *The attacks affected Muslim Americans the same way they affected all Americans: They caused sadness and fear. In addition, the attacks led to an increase in prejudice against Muslims.*

▶ **According to Khalaf, what can all of us do to help eliminate prejudice?** (key ideas) *We can get to know people who are different from us.*

• Still working as a class, respond to the following critical-thinking questions, which refer to both texts.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes, activity sheet online)

▶ **Consider the targets of the September 11 attacks: the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and possibly the White House. Why might Al Qaeda have targeted these buildings in particular?** *All four buildings were symbolic of America’s power, success, and way of life. The terrorists probably wanted to target buildings that were both symbolic and familiar to make a statement and to make the attacks feel personal to many people.*

▶ **How might Helaina’s news agency help people struggling to cope in the aftermath of a terrorist attack?** *Headlines for the Hopeful publishes articles about positive change. Reading such articles may remind people who are struggling to find hope after an act of terror that there is in fact much goodness in the world. The articles might even inspire people to take action, which could give them a sense of purpose and a positive focus.*

▶ **Khalaf says he realized that a lot of people were not going to understand that the terrorists behind the 9/11 attacks were not like him. Why wouldn’t people understand this? That is, what do you think caused people to stereotype Muslims after the attacks?** *Fear, a lack of information (and the spread of misinformation), and a desire for someone to blame may all have contributed to the stereotyping Muslims have faced since September 11. The media, by continuing to portray Muslims in a negative light, is likely a factor too, as Khalaf points out.*

4 Skill Building

Central Ideas and Details and Text Structure

(15 minutes, activity sheets online)

Distribute the activity sheet **Analyzing the Title: From Terror to Hope**, which will prepare students to respond to the prompt on page 10.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What is heroism?
.....

How do people find hope after a tragedy?
.....

How can we cultivate tolerance?

Differentiation

For Struggling Readers

In a well-organized paragraph, describe how the title “From Terror to Hope” relates to the article. Use text evidence to support your answer.

For Advanced Readers

Discuss the effects of the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. Consider the effects on individuals, New York City, the United States, and the world. Support your ideas with details from “From Terror to Hope” and “Growing Up Muslim in Post 9/11 America.”

Complexity Factors

See how these texts will challenge your students.

Purpose: The story describes one girl’s experience of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as well as the causes and effects of the attacks. It’s accompanied by a personal essay by a young Muslim man who grew up in the U.S. after 9/11.

Structure: The article weaves together narrative and informational passages and contains a large amount of descriptive language.

Language Conventionalty and Clarity:

- **Vocabulary:** challenging academic and domain-specific words (*cacophony, converged, iconic, ideology, terrorism*)
- **Figurative Language:** metaphors, other figures of speech

Knowledge Demands: The text mentions several terrorist attacks and numerous locations (e.g., Cairo, Sudan, Tokyo).

Lexile: 1010L

Literature Connections

Texts that explore resilience:

- “If” by Rudyard Kipling (poem)
- *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park (novel)
- *Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood* by Ibtisam Barakat (memoir)

ONLINE RESOURCES

AUDIO: Hear the article and the essay read aloud.

VIDEO: “Behind the Scenes”

ACTIVITIES TO PRINT OR PROJECT:

- Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions*
- Vocabulary*
- Read, Think, Explain: Identifying Nonfiction Elements (two levels)
- Quiz (two levels)
- Video Discussion Questions*
- Analyzing the Title: From Terror to Hope*
- Contest Entry Form
- Core Skills:
 - Central Ideas and Details (two levels)*
 - Summarizing (two levels)
 - Tone (two levels)
 - Text Structure

*Supports the lesson plan