



**A LESSON ON TEACHING ABOUT 9-11 :
SOME CULTURAL RESPONSES AND THEIR MEANING**

Paul Dickler

Paul Dickler, a Senior Fellow of FPRI's Wachman Center, has taught AP U.S. History and International Relations at Neshaminy High School. He has been an adjunct professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education, and is a consultant whose clients include the University of Pennsylvania, Camden County College, the College Board, the Educational Testing Service, and the European Union.

Grades: 7-12

Time: 2-4 days

Objectives:

- To assess the impact of the events of 9-11 on the United States' culture during the past decade.
- To reexamine the emotions and actions of people on 9-11.
- To speculate what it would have been like to be a passenger on one of the hijacked planes (with viewing the film UNITED 93).
- To develop an awareness of the literature now available on the terrorist attacks of 9-11 and the "war on terrorism."

National Standards: Era 10 Contemporary United States:
Standard 2: Economic, social, and cultural developments.

Background:

The terrorist attacks of 9-11 obviously had a profound effect on the United States -- the loss of life, the property and economic destruction, the shift in foreign policy, and the subsequent shift in military policy. The cultural and societal effects have taken form over a somewhat longer period of time. Dozens of songs have been written concerning the attacks. Numerous films have been produced about 9-11 and terrorism. This lesson seeks to focus on these two types of responses. Teachers, of course, could choose just one form—music or film. The lyrics of four of the better known songs about 9-11 are reproduced below, as is a list of many other songs. The film involved in this lesson is also described below.

Procedures:

- Teachers must use their personal judgment as to which songs might best suit their teaching needs and classroom circumstances. Nearly all of these songs can be heard on-line; their lyrics can similarly be downloaded. This lesson can be done as an individual student assignment or with groups of students doing either the same, or different songs. Several steps are involved in this lesson:
1. First, ask the students where they were on 9-11 and to describe their immediate reactions to the events. This can be done as a group in class or privately as a written assignment.
 2. Next, the student(s) should listen to the preapproved songs and carefully read the lyrics.
 3. A "College Board" style SOAPStone analysis should then proceed for each song. S=subject, O=occasion, A=audience, P=purpose, S= speaker, T=tone. In what ways are the songs different with regard to these dimensions?
 4. Which songs are the most effective in reaching the audience? Explain your reasoning.
 5. Describe what, if anything, can be learned about the terrorist attacks and their effects from these songs.
 6. Meeting together as a class, share different students reactions to these songs and discuss the responses.
 7. Ask students what changes to their original perceptions of 9-11 have occurred, if any, over time. Discuss.
 8. Examine the bibliography at the end of this lesson to learn more about the events on 9-11.

Bruce Springsteen / Empty Sky

I woke up this morning
I could barely breathe
Just an empty impression
In the bed where you used to be
I want a kiss from your lips
I want an eye for an eye
I woke up this morning to the empty sky

Empty sky, empty sky
I woke up this morning to an empty sky
Empty sky, empty sky
I woke up this morning to an empty sky

Blood on the streets
Yeah blood flowin' down
I hear the blood of my blood
Cryin' from the ground

Empty sky, empty sky
I woke up this morning to an empty sky
Empty sky, empty sky
I woke up this morning to an empty sky

On the plains of Jordan
I cut my bow from the wood
Of this tree of evil
Of this tree of good
I want a kiss from your lips
I want an eye for an eye
I woke up this morning to an empty sky

Empty sky, empty sky
I woke up this morning to an empty sky
Empty sky, empty sky
I woke up this morning to an empty sky
Empty sky, empty sky
I woke up this morning to an empty sky

Alan Jackson / Where Were You (When The World Stopped Turning)

Where were you when the world stopped turning that September day
Out in the yard with your wife and children
Working on some stage in LA
Did you stand there in shock at the site of
That black smoke rising against that blue sky
Did you shout out in anger
In fear for your neighbor
Or did you just sit down and cry

Did you weep for the children
Who lost their dear loved ones
And pray for the ones who don't know
Did you rejoice for the people who walked from the rubble
And sob for the ones left below

Did you burst out in pride
For the red white and blue
The heroes who died just doing what they do
Did you look up to heaven for some kind of answer
And look at yourself to what really matters

I'm just a singer of simple songs
I'm not a real political man
I watch CNN but I'm not sure I can tell you
The difference in Iraq and Iran
But I know Jesus and I talk to God
And I remember this from when I was young
Faith hope and love are some good things he gave us
And the greatest is love

Where were you when the world stopped turning that September day
Teaching a class full of innocent children
Driving down some cold interstate
Did you feel guilty cause you're a survivor
In a crowded room did you feel alone
Did you call up your mother and tell her you love her
Did you dust off that bible at home
Did you open your eyes and hope it never happened
Close your eyes and not go to sleep
Did you notice the sunset the first time in ages
Speak with some stranger on the street
Did you lay down at night and think of tomorrow
Go out and buy you a gun
Did you turn off that violent old movie you're watching
And turn on "I Love Lucy" reruns
Did you go to a church and hold hands with some stranger
Stand in line and give your own blood
Did you just stay home and cling tight to your family
Thank God you had somebody to love

I'm just a singer of simple songs
I'm not a real political man
I watch CNN but I'm not sure I can tell you
The difference in Iraq and Iran
But I know Jesus and I talk to God
And I remember this from when I was young
Faith hope and love are some good things he gave us
And the greatest is love

I'm just a singer of simple songs
I'm not a real political man
I watch CNN but I'm not sure I can tell you
The difference in Iraq and Iran
But I know Jesus and I talk to God
And I remember this from when I was young
Faith hope and love are some good things he gave us
And the greatest is love

The greatest is love
The greatest is love

Where were you when the world stopped turning that September day

Darryl Worley / Have You Forgotten

I hear people sayin'. We Don't need this war.
I say there's some things worth fightin' for.
What about our freedom, and this piece of ground?
We didn't get to keep 'em by backin' down.
They say we don't realize the mess we're gettin' in
Before you start preachin' let me ask you this my friend.

Chorus:

Have you forgotten, how it felt that day?
To see your homeland under fire
And her people blown away
Have you forgotten, when those towers fell
We had neighbors still inside goin through a livin hell
And you say we shouldn't worry bout Bin Laden
Have you forgotten?

You took all the footage off my T.V.
Said it's too disturbin for you and me
It'll just breed anger is what the experts say
If it was up to me I'd show it everyday
Some say this country just out lookin' for a fight
Well after 9/11 man I'd have to say right.

Chorus:

Have you forgotten, how it felt that day?
To see your homeland under fire
And her people blown away
Have you forgotten when those towers fell
We had neighbors still inside goin' through a livin' hell
And we vow to get the ones behind Bin Laden
Have you forgotten?

I've been there with the soldiers
Who've gone away to war
you can bet they remember just what they're fightin' for

Have you forgotten
All the people killed
Yes some went down like heroes
In that Pennsylvania field
Have you forgotten
About our Pentagon
All the loved ones that we lost
And those left to carry on
Don't you tell me not to worry 'bout Bin Laden

Have you forgotten?
Have you forgotten?
Have you forgotten?!

Yellowcard / Believe

Think about the love inside the strength of heart
Think about the heroes saving life in the dark
Climbing higher through the fire
Time was running out
Never knowing you weren't going to be coming down alive

But you still came back for me
You were strong and you believed
Everything is gonna be alright
Everything is gonna be alright
Everything is gonna be alright
Be strong believe
Be strong believe

Think about the chance I never had to say
Thank you for giving up your life that day
Never fearing only hearing voices calling out
Let it all go the life that you know

Just to bring them down alive

And you still came back for me
You were strong and you've believed
Everything is gonna be alright
Everything is gonna be alright
Everything is gonna be alright
Be strong believe
[radio voice]
again today,
we take into our hearts and mind
Those who perished on this site one year ago
and also,
those who came to toil in the rubble
To bring order out of chaos,
to help us make sense of our despair

Wanna hold my wife when I get home
Wanna tell the kids they'll never know
How much I love to see them smile
Wanna make a change right here right now
Wanna live a life like you somehow
Wanna make your sacrifice worthwhile

Everything is gonna be alright
Everything is gonna be alright
Everything is gonna be alright
Be strong believe
(background voice): Think about the love inside the strength of heart
Think about the heroes saving lives in the dark

Everything is gonna be alright
Everything is gonna be alright
Everything is gonna be alright
Be strong believe
(background voice): Think about the chance I never had to say
Thank you for giving up your life that day
(radio voice): The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.

A Listing of the Most Popular Songs Which Reference 9-11:

- [Ryan Adams](#) - "My Blue Manhattan" (*Love Is Hell*)
- [Lily Allen](#) - "Him" (*It's Not Me, It's You*)
- [Tori Amos](#) - "I Can't See New York" (*Scarlet's Walk*)
- [Autopilot Off](#) - "The 12th Day" (*Make A Sound*)
- [Black Eyed Peas](#) - "Where Is the Love?" (*Elephunk*)
- [Bloc Party](#) - "Hunting for Witches" (*A Weekend In The City*)
- [Blue Man Group](#) - "Exhibit 13" (*The Complex*)
- [Bon Jovi](#) - "Undivided" (*Bounce*)
- [Box Car Racer](#) - "Elevator" (*Box Car Racer*)
- [Camel](#) - "For Today" (*A Nod and a Wink*)
- [The Charlie Daniels Band](#) - "This Ain't No Rag, It's A Flag" (*Live!*)
- [Leonard Cohen](#) - "On that Day" (*Dear Heather*)
- [The Cranberries](#) - "New New York" (*Stars: The Best of 1992-2002*)
- [Bo Diddley](#) - "We Ain't Scared Of You" (aka "My Eagle Is Pissed")
- [Ani DiFranco](#) - "Self-Evident" (*So Much Shouting, So Much Laughter*)
- [DJ Sammy](#) - "Heaven" (9/11 remix)
- [Dream Theater](#) - "Sacrificed Sons" (*Octavarium*)
- [Melissa Etheridge](#) - "Tuesday Morning" (*Lucky*)
- [Linda Eder](#) "If I Had My Way" & "If I Should Loose My Way"
- [Evanescence](#) - "My Last Breath" (*Fallen*)

- [Sage Francis](#) - "Makeshift Patriot" (*Makeshift Patriot EP*)
- [Good Charlotte](#) feat. [Mest](#) & [Goldfinger](#) - "The Innocent"
- [Amy Grant](#) - "I Don't Know Why" (*Simple Things*)
- [Iced Earth](#) - "When the Eagle Cries" (*The Glorious Burden*)
- [Immortal Technique](#) - "Bin Laden"
- [Immortal Technique](#) - "The Cause of Death" (*Revolutionary Vol. 2*)
- [Alan Jackson](#) - "Where Were You (When the World Stopped Turning)" (*Drive*)
- [James](#) - "Hey Ma" (*Hey Ma*)
- [James LaBrie](#) - "Smashed" (*Elements of Persuasion*)
- [Toby Keith](#) - "Courtesy of the Red, White, & Blue (The Angry American)" (*Unleashed*)
- [Paul McCartney](#) - "Freedom" (*Driving Rain*)
- [Ministry](#) - "Lieslieslies" (*Rio Grande Blood*)
- [Moby](#) - "Harbour" (*18*)
- [My Chemical Romance](#) - "Skylines and Turnstiles" (*I Brought You My Bullets, You Brought Me Your Love*)
- [Paris](#) - "What would you do?" (*Sonic Jihad*)
- [Tom Paxton](#) - "The Bravest" (*Looking for the Moon*)
- [David Rovics](#) - "Reichstag Fire"
- [Rush](#) - "Peaceable Kingdom" (*Vapor Trails*)
- [Scarling](#) - "Alexander The Burn Victim" (*Sweet Heart Dealer*)
- [Slayer](#) - "Jihad" (*Christ Illusion*)
- [Bruce Springsteen](#) - "Into the Fire" (*The Rising*)
- [Bruce Springsteen](#) - "Empty Sky" (*The Rising*)
- [Bruce Springsteen](#) - "The Rising" (*The Rising*)
- [Bruce Springsteen](#) - "You're Missing" (*The Rising*)
- [Tactical Sect](#) - "American Me" (*Syncope*)
- [Testament](#) - "The Evil Has Landed" (*The Formation of Damnation*)
- [Thrice](#) - "Broken Lungs" (*The Alchemy Index Vols. III & IV*)
- [Thriving Ivory](#) - "Angels on the Moon" (*Thriving Ivory*)
- [Velvet Revolver](#) - "Messages" (*Libertad*)
- [Scott Walker](#) - "Jesse" (*The Drift*)
- [Darryl Worley](#) - "Have You Forgotten?"
- [Yellowcard](#) - "Believe" (*Ocean Avenue*)
- [Neil Young](#) - "Let's Roll" (*Are You Passionate?*)
- [Jay-Z](#) and [Alicia Keys](#) - "Empire State Of Mind"

This list was posted in Wikipedia. There are dozens of additional 9-11 related songs on the web, most of them not nearly as well known as those above.

The Film Portion of this Lesson:

One film is highlighted in this lesson:

UNITED 93, directed by Paul Greengrass, was released on April 28, 2006.

This film comes as close as possible to recreating, in live time from take-off, what it was liked to be on Flight 93 on the morning of September 11, 2001. Many of the film participants, such as traffic controllers and military personnel, play themselves in the film. Exhaustive research tried to recreate the actual events that occurred on the flight on its way to destruction in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. United's Flight 93 was originally intended to strike the Capitol Building in Washington, DC, just 20 minutes later. The film is gripping and terrifying, even though the outcome is well known. If teachers choose to use this film, it could be seen independently by students, watched in its entirety as a class, or be viewed in excerpts. Again, teachers must be warned of the language and violence in this film.

Discussion questions may include the following:

1. Assess the motivations of hijackers [Ahmed al-Nami](#), [al-Haznawi](#), United 93's skyjacking leader [Ziad Jarrah](#), and [Saeed al-Ghamdi](#), as postulated in this film.
2. Determine what additional measures air traffic controllers and the military POTENTIALLY could have taken.
3. Describe the circumstances of the passengers aboard the flight.
4. Identify the heroic actions of the passengers and crew on board.
5. Identify the ways that the behavior of those on board has influenced future actions on U.S. aircraft?
6. List the security lessons learned from the experience of United 93.
7. In what ways have these events entered American culture?
8. Examine the bibliography below to learn more about the events on September 11, 2001.

Resources

- [FPRI e-notes and footnotes](#). Discussions of nearly every dimension of terrorism.
- Richard Bernstein and the Staff of the New York Times. *Out of the Blue: A Narrative of September 11, 2001* (2002)
- Stephen Gale, Michael Radu, and Harvey Sicherman, eds. *The War on Terrorism: 21st Century Perspectives* (Transaction, 2008).
- Mary Habeck. *Knowing the Enemy: Jihadist Ideology and the War on Terror* (2007)
- Alan Luxenberg. *Radical Islam* (Mason Crest, 2009), specifically for middle and high school students.
- Michael Radu. [Europe's Ghost. Tolerance, Jihadism, and the Crisis of the West](#). (Encounter Books, 2010).
- Jonathan Randal. *Osama: The Making of a Terrorist* (2004). .
- Marc Sageman. *Understanding Terrorist Networks* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)
- Lawrence Wright. *The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/* (2007). Written by a New Yorker magazine writer, this book reads like a novel.
- *The 9/11 Commission Report: The Full Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States* (2004) [full report online](#)

FPRI, 1528 Walnut Street, Suite 610, Philadelphia, PA 19102-3684

For more information, contact Alan Luxenberg at 215-732-3774, ext. 105, email fpri@fpri.org, or visit us at www.fpri.org.