



## Connecting Literature & Poetry to Current Events

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**Grade level: 7**

**Length: 2-5 class periods**

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### Introduction

One way to explore a topic like September 11th is by allowing students to explore their emotions creatively. As demonstrated in this excerpt from the HBO documentary What Happened on September 11, students can create beautiful works of art using sadness, empathy, and hope to express what they have learned in constructive and critical ways.

Watch the Exploring 9/11 In Creative Arts excerpt, then review this lesson plan to see how your students can explore 9/11 in a creative way.

### Objective

Students learn how 9/11 transformed people's lives by thinking of the actions of first responders on 9/11, thinking about the personal and professional issues they faced, and looking at the idea of choice through the lens of Greek mythology.

### Common Core Standards

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

Reading Standards for Literature: 2, 7, 9, 11

English Language Arts Standards for Writing: 3, 9, 11

English Language Arts Standards for Language: 1, 2

### Resources

- Exploring 9/11 in Creative Arts Excerpt
- "What Happened on September 11", HBO
- "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

### 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 a 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 videos/photographs of the day that show the height of the buildings and talk about the 25,000 people inside 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 should discuss the following key ideas they have learned in their study of mythology:

- Boy to man
- Metamorphosis
- Workers in the morning, heroes by night
- Silence
- Fear
- What is a man?
- Different types of courage

Students will 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 return to their families.

Students will sketch a drawing of responders on 9/11. Students write a poem on the same page as their drawing.

### **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 based on the key ideas of Greek mythology.

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### **Common Core Alignments**

These alignments were written for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade level. However, this lesson can easily be adjusted for use in other grades and corresponds to the following Common Core Standards. Student assessments and expectation may vary depending upon grade level and ability.

#### **Reading Standards for Literature**

##### **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.

##### **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).
- 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.

##### **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.

#### **ELA Standards for Writing**

##### **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.

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

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

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

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



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### ELA Standards for Language

#### 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.