



9/11 CHANGED THE WORLD



Frequently Asked Questions



SINCE 9/11
ANSWERING THE
QUESTIONS

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HELPING TEACHERS EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED on September 11th 2001

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1. WHAT HAPPENED on September 11th 2001

What happened on 9/11?

"9/11" is shorthand for four coordinated terrorist attacks carried out by al-Qaeda, an Islamist* extremist group, that occurred on the morning of September 11, 2001 in America.

Nineteen terrorists from al-Qaeda hijacked four commercial airplanes, deliberately crashing two of the planes into the upper floors of the North and South Towers of the World Trade Centre complex and a third plane into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. The Twin Towers ultimately collapsed because of the damage sustained from the impacts and the resulting fires. After learning about the other attacks, passengers on the fourth plane, Flight 93, attempted to overthrow the terrorists and take control of the plane and it was crashed into an empty field in western Pennsylvania about 20 minutes by air from Washington, D.C.

The attacks killed 2,977 people from 93 nations: 2,753 people were killed in New York; 184 people were killed at the Pentagon; and 40 people were killed on Flight 93.

*Islam is a major world religion practiced by over a billion people across the globe. Islamist terrorism, however, refers to the actions of a small proportion of organisations and individuals who endorse violence and terrorism to achieve political goals.



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1. WHAT HAPPENED on September 11th 2001

What happened on 9/11?

The TV breaking news film on the link below will show your students how the world first received the news of 9/11 - and also importantly subsequent major terrorist attacks - both Islamist and white supremacy terrorism.

PLEASE REVIEW THE FILM BEFORE SHOWING, AS SOME AUDIENCES MAY FIND IT UPSETTING

[CLICK HERE](#)



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2. WHAT HAPPENED AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTRE on September 11th 2001

What happened at the World Trade Centre on 9/11?

The hijacked Flight 11 was crashed into floors 93 to 99 of the North Tower (1 WTC) at 8:46 a.m. The hijacked Flight 175 struck floors 77 to 85 of the South Tower (2 WTC) 17 minutes later at 9:03 a.m. When the towers were struck, between 16,400 and 18,000 people were in the WTC complex. Of those, the vast majority evacuated safely. As they rushed out, first responders rushed in trying to save those still trapped or injured.

The fires from the impacts were intensified by the planes' burning jet fuel. They weakened the steel support trusses, which attached each of the floors to the buildings' exterior walls. Along with the initial damage to the buildings' structural columns, this ultimately caused both towers to collapse. The five other buildings in the WTC complex were also destroyed because of damage sustained when the Twin Towers fell.

The collapse of the buildings left the site devastated. Thousands of volunteers came to Ground Zero to help with the rescue, recovery, and clean-up efforts, and on May 30, 2002, the last piece of WTC steel was ceremonially removed.

412 emergency workers, mainly firefighters, died when the buildings collapsed.



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3. WHAT was THE WORLD TRADE CENTRE on September 11th 2001

What was the World Trade Centre on 9/11?

The World Trade Centre (WTC) was a 16-acre commercial complex in lower Manhattan that contained seven buildings, a large plaza, and an underground shopping mall that connected six of the buildings. The centrepieces of the complex were the Twin Towers. On September 11, 2001, the entire complex was destroyed in a terrorist attack that has come to be referred to as "9/11."



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4. WHAT were the twin towers on September 11th 2001

What were the Twin Towers on 9/11?

The Twin Towers were the tallest buildings in New York City. At 110 stories each, 1 WTC (North Tower) and 2 WTC (South Tower) provided nearly 10 million square feet of office space for about 35,000 people and 430 companies. For a brief period upon their completion in 1973, they were the tallest buildings in the world. They attracted roughly 70,000 commuters and tourists daily.

The towers were massive. The North Tower rose 1,368 feet—1,730 feet with a large antenna—and the South Tower stood 1,362 feet high. Views extended 45 miles or more from the top of the towers in every direction—far enough to see all five New York City boroughs, New Jersey, and Connecticut. Each weighed more than 250,000 tons and contained 99 elevators and 21,800 windows. Each floor was an acre in size and there was enough concrete in the towers to build a five-foot-wide sidewalk from New York City to Washington, D.C.

The towers had been the target of an attack before 9/11. On February 26, 1993, terrorists with links to an Islamist extremist group detonated explosives in a van parked underneath the WTC. Six people were killed and thousands were injured.



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5. WHAT was al-qaeda on September 11th 2001

What was al-Qaeda on 9/11?

Al-Qaeda is an international Islamist extremist terrorist network that uses an extremely distorted view of the Islamic faith to achieve their objectives. The network was founded in the late 1980s by Osama bin Laden, who was killed in a U.S. military operation on May 1, 2011, and others who were involved in the war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Their aim has been to overthrow governments in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Muslim world, which do not strictly enforce their version of a religiously sanctioned political and social order. Attacks against the United States were intended to reduce American support for many of these governments; U.S. support was viewed by al-Qaeda as a major obstacle to creating a global order under Islamic authority.

They have claimed responsibility for numerous terrorist attacks since the early 1990s, including the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania, the 2000 attack on the USS Cole, and the 9/11 attacks. They have also aligned themselves with and inspired other terrorist groups who have carried out attacks, including the 2002 Bali bombing, the 2004 Madrid train bombing, the 2005 London bombings, and the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks, among many others.



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6. WHAT DOES AFGHANISTAN HAVE TO DO WITH September 11th 2001

What does Afghanistan have to do with 9/11?

Al-Qaeda was based in Afghanistan. They operated training camps there, and openly lived in the country with the support of the Taliban, an Islamist group that ruled the country.

On September 20, 2001, in a speech to a joint session of Congress, former President George W. Bush asserted: “Any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” No distinction was made between a harbouring state and the terrorists it was harbouring. The U.S. government insisted that the Taliban immediately hand over the terrorists and close the training camps or face an attack from the United States. When they refused, “Operation Enduring Freedom” was launched on October 7, 2001, less than a month after the attacks of 9/11.



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7. Why did the terrorists attack the wtc and pentagon on September 11th 2001

Why did the terrorists attack the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon?

The terrorists did not have the capacity to destroy the United States militarily, so they set their sights on symbolic targets instead. The Twin Towers, as the centrepieces of the World Trade Centre, symbolized globalization and America's economic power and prosperity.

The Pentagon, as the headquarters for the U.S. Department of Défense, serves as a symbol of American military power. It is thought that Flight 93 was headed to the Capitol building, the centre of American legislative government.

Al-Qaeda hoped that, by attacking these symbols of American power, they would promote widespread fear throughout the country and severely weaken the United States' standing in the world community, ultimately supporting their political and religious goals in the Middle East and Muslim world.



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8. What are the conspiracy theories about September 11th 2001

CONSPIRACY THEORY #1

THE OFFICIAL EXPLANATION OF HOW THE TWIN TOWERS COLLAPSED IS FALSE (I.E. THERE WERE BOMBS IN THE BUILDINGS)

This conspiracy theory is false The causes of the building collapse have been extensively researched. The impact of the hijacked flights into the Twin Towers caused immense damage within the buildings. The crashes of the commercial planes severed and damaged many of the buildings' columns, sparked fires on multiple floors, and dislodged much of the spray-on fireproofing in the impact zone that protected the steel from heat.

Exacerbated by the lack of fireproofing, these fires, fuelled by the jet fuel intended for the planes' cross-country flights, rapidly heated and significantly weakened the steel floors that connected the inner core columns to the outer perimeter columns. As metal heats, it get weaker. As the floors weakened, they sagged, pulling in on the perimeter and core columns, causing them to bend inward. Ultimately, they buckled, causing the top of the building to fall, instigating a collapse of the entire building. The five other buildings in the WTC complex were also destroyed because of damage sustained when the Twin Towers fell.



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8. What are the conspiracy theories about September 11th 2001

CONSPIRACY THEORY #2

7 WTC WAS INTENTIONALLY DEMOLISHED (I.E. IT WAS DESTROYED USING EXPLOSIVES)

This conspiracy theory is false. 7 World Trade Centre was a 47-story high-rise building located approximately 370 feet north of the North Tower. It collapsed at 5:20 p.m. on September 11. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) investigated the collapse and released its final report in 2008. NIST determined that the collapse of the North Tower ignited fires on the lower floors in 7 WTC. On some floors, these fires burned out of control, as the sprinkler systems had become disabled. After burning unchecked for over six hours, a series of floors collapsed. Without these floors providing lateral support, a key column in the core of the building became unstable and buckled. The failure of this column initiated the progressive collapse of the entire building. NIST ruled out a controlled demolition, finding no evidence of any residue or sounds which would have accompanied a blast. Using video analysis, the investigation also determined that the top 18 stories of the building took 40% longer to descend than a free fall descent consistent with a controlled demolition.



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CONSPIRACY THEORY #3

A PLANE DIDN'T IMPACT THE PENTAGON (I.E. A MISSILE HIT THE BUILDING)

This conspiracy theory is false. Hijacked Flight 77 struck the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m. on September 11, 2001. Numerous, independent, eyewitnesses confirmed that they saw a large commercial airliner strike the building. Their recollections are corroborated by security footage from three different cameras stationed at the Pentagon, a nearby gas station, and a DoubleTree Hotel. In addition, photographs from dozens of different media outlets clearly show various plane parts strewn across the Pentagon lawn in the aftermath of the impact. The 9/11 Memorial Museum displays some of these fragments in our Historical Exhibition. Additional scepticism stemmed from the size of the hole that the plane created in the Pentagon, which was substantially smaller in diameter than the 124-foot wingspan of a Boeing 757. Members of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) concluded that the hole was consistent with the impact such a plane would make, noting that the wings wouldn't be strong enough to cut through a concrete-reinforced structure like the Pentagon—only the body of the plane and landing gear would have enough mass to penetrate



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