

English & Drama – How was 9/11 represented in the media and other accounts?

Different responses to 9/11

Extract 1

Terrorists unleashed an astonishing air assault on America's military and financial power centers yesterday morning, hijacking four commercial jets and then crashing them into the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon and the Pennsylvania countryside.

There were no reliable estimates last night of how many people were killed in the most devastating terrorist operation in American history. The number was certainly in the hundreds and could be in the thousands.

It was the most dramatic attack on American soil since Pearl Harbor, and it created indelible scenes of carnage and chaos. The commandeered jets obliterated the World Trade Center's twin 110-story towers from their familiar perch above Manhattan's skyline and ripped a blazing swath through the Defense Department's imposing five-sided fortress, grounding the domestic air traffic system for the first time and plunging the entire nation into an unparalleled state of anxiety...

The terrorists hijacked four California-bound planes from three airports on the Eastern Seaboard; the airliners were loaded with the maximum amount of fuel, suggesting a well-financed, well-coordinated plot. First, two planes slammed into the World Trade Center. Then an American Airlines plane out of Dulles International Airport ripped through the newly renovated walls of the Pentagon, perhaps the world's most secure office building. A fourth jet crashed 80 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, shortly after it was hijacked and turned in the direction of Washington.

None of the 266 people aboard the four planes survived. There were even more horrific but still untallied casualties in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which together provided office space for more than 70,000 people. At just one of the firms with offices in the World Trade Center, the Marsh & McLennan insurance brokerage, 1,200 of its 1,700 employees were unaccounted for last night.



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Extract 2

For the United Nations and individual nations, decisive action is needed to stop terrorism from ever orphaning another child. That's for nations. For individuals, the most effective course of action they can take to aid our recovery is to be determined to go ahead with their lives. We can't let terrorists change the way we live, otherwise, they will have succeeded. In some ways, the resilience of life in New York City is the ultimate sign of defiance to terrorists.

We call ourselves the capital of the world, in large part, because we're the most diverse city in the world and we're the home of the United Nations. So that spirit of unity, amid all our diversity, has never, ever been stronger.

On Saturday night, I walked through Times Square. It was crowded, it was bright, it was lively. Thousands of people were visiting from all parts of the United States and all parts of the world. And many of them came up to me and they shook my hand and patted me on the back and said, "We're here because we want to show our support for the city of New York. And that's where there's never been a better time to come to New York City."

I say to people across the country and around the world, if you were planning to come to New York sometime in the future, come here now. Come to enjoy our thousands of restaurants, the museums and sporting events and shopping and Broadway, but also come to take a stand against terrorism.

We need to heed the words of a hymn that I and the police commissioner and the fire commissioner and--have heard over and over again at the many funerals and memorial services that we've gone to in the last week, two weeks. The hymn begins "Be not afraid."

Freedom from fear is a basic human right. We need to reassert our right to live free from fear, with greater confidence and determination than ever before. Here in New York City, across America and around the world, with one clear voice, unanimously, we need to say, we will not give in to terrorism.

Surrounded by our friends of every faith, we know this is not a clash of civilizations. It's a conflict between murderers and humanity. This is not a question of retaliation or revenge, it's a matter of justice leading to peace. The only acceptable result is the complete and total eradication of terrorism.

New Yorkers are strong and they are resilient. We are unified and we will not yield to terror. We do not let fear make our decisions for us. We choose to live in freedom.

Thank you and God bless you.



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Extract 3

It was not a street anymore but a world, a time and space of falling ash and near night. He was walking north through rubble and mud and there were people running past holding towels to their faces or jackets over their heads. They had handkerchiefs pressed to their mouths. They had shoes in their hands, a woman with a shoe in each hand, running past him. They ran and fell, some of them, confused and ungainly, with debris coming down around them, and there were people taking shelter under cars. The roar was still in the air, the buckling rumble of the fall. This was the world now. Smoke and ash came rolling down streets and turning corners, busting around corners, seismic tides of smoke, with office paper flashing past, standard sheets with cutting edge, skimming, whipping past, otherworldly things in the morning pall.

He wore a suit and carried a briefcase. There was glass in his hair and face, marbled bolts of blood and light. He walked past a Breakfast Special sign and they went running by, city cops and security guards running, hands pressed down on gun butts to keep the weapons steady.

Things inside were distant and still, where he was supposed to be. It happened everywhere around him, a car half buried in debris, windows smashed and noises coming out, radio voices scratching at the wreckage. He saw people shedding water as they ran, clothes and bodies drenched from sprinkler systems. There were shoes discarded in the street, handbags and laptops, a man seated on the sidewalk coughing up blood. Paper cups went bouncing oddly by.

The world was this as well, figures in windows a thousand feet up, dropping into free space, and the stink of fuel fire, and the steady rip of sirens in the air. The noise lay everywhere they ran, stratified sound collecting around them, and he walked away from it and into it at the same time.

There was something else then, outside all this, not belonging to this, aloft. He watched it coming down. A shirt came down out of the high smoke, a shirt lifted and drifting in the scant light and then falling again, down toward the river.

They ran and then they stopped, some of them, standing there swaying, trying to draw breath out of the burning air, and the fitful cries of disbelief, curses and lost shouts, and the paper massed in the air, contracts, resumes blowing by, intact snatches of business, quick in the wind.

He kept on walking. There were the runners who'd stopped and others veering into side streets. Some were walking back-wards, looking into the core of it, all those writhing lives back there, and things kept falling, scorched objects trailing lines of fire.



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Extract 4

I work at the Woolworth building in New York City, just 3 blocks from the WTC. On that beautiful morning I was in the server room when the first plane hit and heard nothing. When I came out one of my co-workers told me that something had happened at the WTC, but he wasn't sure exactly what. I looked out a window and the first thing that I saw was papers floating everywhere I then looked at the towers and saw the gaping hole... I was trying to get CNN on the tv in the office when the second plane hit. Building management told us to evacuate and we all went down in elevators... We were then told to head north. As I walked I passed people with standing around cars that had radios on. I still couldn't fathom what had happened...

When I was about 10 blocks north of my building... I turned around. To this day I don't know why I turned around, but I assume I heard the first tower fall. What I saw as a huge cloud of dust roiling up Broadway. This was the first real mass panic I saw as everyone just started running blindly up Broadway... We got onto one of the last subway trains leaving Manhattan, that goes over the Manhattan bridge. We had already heard that one of the towers had collapsed. All around us people were crying and comforting each other - strangers and friends alike - we were all in this together.



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Extract 5

Well, it seems we're finally getting a taste of what it's like to live in a war zone, right here in New York. Thank God we are all safe, and so far, we don't know of any close relatives or friends who were touched by the World Trade Center/Pentagon disaster.

How has the news coverage been where you are? It's pretty shocking over here. I can stand at a bridge near my job and look over the water, and see the smoking skyline where the World Trade Center used to stand. Billows of smoke fill the sky as if a sniper simply blew out those two buildings. I guess that's really what happened.

In some ways, I think it's good for us Americans to be reminded of what many parts of the rest of the world deal with almost every day. This is an important wake-up call for us, to remind us to be aware of the rest of the world, because we are all connected. Perhaps this will make Americans more conscious of global politics. I wonder if this event will breed a whole new generation of political science students.

We still don't know who's responsible for this, but I hope that we Americans don't become hateful toward whatever ethnic group the terrorists belonged to; after all, they were terrorists, not necessarily representative of the views of their fellow countrymen. I suppose only time will tell.

It's a little slow and quiet here at the office; it was hard to get to work, and a lot of roads are closed. Whenever we hear planes, we tend to get scared because there are no commercial jets flying right now, so we know that the jets we hear must be military. We only hope that they are friendly planes, not foreign.

I was supposed to fly to Chicago on Friday, but now, my mom wants me to cancel. I don't think it'll be unsafe, but if nothing else, there will be a very long wait at the airport. I suppose she's right: don't fly immediately after a national air disaster.

On my way to work, there was a lot of debris on the highway. I think it was ash and detritus carried back by police and rescue vehicles that had been at the scene of the disaster; it must have fallen off the cars.



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Extract 6

You have picked me out.
Through a distant shot of a building burning
you have noticed now
that a white cotton shirt is twirling, turning.
In fact I am waving, waving.
Small in the clouds, but waving, waving.
Does anyone see a
soul worth saving?
And when will you come?
Do you think you are watching, watching
a man shaking crumbs
or pegging out washing?
I am trying and trying.
The heat behind me is searing, searing,
but the white of surrender is not yet flying.
I am not at the point of launching, leaving.
A bird goes by.
The depth is appalling. Appalling
that others like me
should be wind-milling, wheeling, spiralling, falling
Are your eyes believing,
believing?
Here in the gills
I am still breathing.
But tiring, tiring.
Sirens below me are wailing, firing.
My arm is numb and my nerves are sagging.
Do you see me, my love. I am flagging. Flagging.



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Extract sources

(Remove this sheet before giving the extracts to students.)

Extract 1

From *Washington Post* article by Michael Grunwald, 12 September 2001
www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2001/09/12/AR2005033107980.html

Extract 2

From Mayor Giuliani's speech to the United Nations, 17 September 17 2001
www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/giulianitext_100101.html

Extract 3

Opening pages of *Falling Man* by Don DeLillo (Picador, 2007) pp.3–4

Extract 4

Edited from eyewitness report by Valerie Christopher
<http://old.911digitalarchive.org/smithsonian/details/455n>

Extract 5

Email to friends in Croatia from Jamie Kiffel
(The September 11 Digital Archive, 12 September 2001)
<http://old.911digitalarchive.org/lc/911-full-email/27>

Extract 6

From the poem *Out Of The Blue* by Simon Armitage (Enitharmon, 2008)