

Resources for Culturally Responsive 9/11 lessons

Compiled by Amaarah DeCuir, Ed.D. and Justin Blanc

American University, School of Education

Updated August 25, 2021

*To contribute additional online resources to this list, send hyperlinks to authors at ADeCuir@american.edu.

Recommended Lesson Resources

- <https://www.911memorial.org/> has a number of grade specific lesson plans. Some highlights with a potentially culturally responsive approach include the following:

A 9/11 themed lesson for grades 3-5 that focuses on local heroes, including ones from diverse cultural identities.

<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/lesson-plans/lesson-plans/local-heroes>

A series of lesson plans for grades 9-12 that include an analysis of identity and stereotypes, the rise of anti-Muslim sentiment after 9/11, and various elements of the experience of Muslims in America after 9/11

<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/lesson-plans/muslims-america-after-911-part-i>

<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/lesson-plans/muslims-america-after-911-part-ii>

<https://www.911memorial.org/learn/students-and-teachers/lesson-plans/muslims-america-after-911-part-iii>

- The Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility offers lesson ideas for grades K-12, with an emphasis on deepening student understanding and developing critical thinking skills. Includes a teaching guide for the 9/11 anniversary.
<https://www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment/lessons/911-anniversary-teaching-guide-updated>
- Smithsonian Institute links to further lesson plans and educational resources aligned with K-12 standards:
<https://amhistory.si.edu/september11/education/>
- Bringing 9/11 in the Classroom - Useful Lessons

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/bringing-9-11-in-the-classroom-useful-lessons>

- Educators 4 Social Change - Teaching resources about 9/11
<https://educators4sc.org/topic-resources/teaching-about-9-11/>
- U.S. Department of Education 9/11 Teaching Resources [911 Materials for Teachers | U.S. Department of Education](#)

Available Lesson Content

- Brain Pop’s resources for teaching 9/11 are adaptable to standards in grades 3-12. There is a over-emphasis on detailing the hijackers and defining terms associated with the crimes of 9/11. <https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ushistory/september11th/>
- Scholastic offers a collection of personal stories and firsthand experiences, told through children’s voices with themes of empathy and empowerment. Of particular note is a personal a essay about growing up Muslim in post-9/11 America.
https://scope.scholastic.com/issues/2016-17/090116/From-Terror-to-Hope.html?promo_code=8655&esp=CM/ib/20180901//other/Teachers-blog#1010L
- Facts and worksheets that explain the events of 9/11. Avoid the worksheets that examine Al Qaida closely, this is not consistent with culturally responsive teaching because it risks reproducing anti-Muslim stereotypes through an over-simplification of content.
<https://kidskonnnect.com/history/september-11>
- Patriot Day lesson plans that encourage service, empathy, and awareness
<https://911day.org/lesson-plans>

Brief articles or reflections that can be incorporated into lessons

- A Muslim U.S. Marine who was serving during 9/11 reflects on the experience of discrimination afterwards.
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/09/10/opinions/muslim-us-marine-9-11-shams/index.html>
- NY Times resource about the experience of American Muslims: “Generation 9/11”
<https://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/08/us/sept-11-reckoning/muslims.html>

- Overview of a recent study of American Muslims since 9/11
<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/american-muslims-911>
- VA Superintendent's Memo: House Joint Resolution No. 91 (2020) Regarding the Civil Rights and Dignity of All Virginians
https://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2020/276-20.docx
- A number of relevant reflections from Learning for Justice: Commemorate 9/11 by confronting Islamophobia
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/commemorate-911-by-confronting-islamophobia>
- Combating Anti-Muslim Bias
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/spring-2011/combating-antimuslim-bias>
- Debunking Stereotypes about Muslims and Islam
<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/debunking-stereotypes-about-muslims-and-islam>

Multimedia/Arts

- My Fellow American: a brief online film that shows images of Muslims as Americans, contrasted with audio excerpts of Islamophobic rhetoric.
<https://www.upf.tv/films/my-fellow-american/>
- A discussion of 9/11 poetry with examples that could be creatively incorporated into culturally responsive lesson plans
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/69737/beyond-grief-and-grievance>

Interfaith Initiatives

- The Center for Christian and Muslim Understanding at Georgetown University offers a rich selection of teaching resources on topics such as: world religions, Islamic beliefs, contemporary issues, Islamic arts, culture, history, and more.
<https://acmcu.georgetown.edu/outreach/k14/teaching-resources/>
- Video interview of an Episcopal pastor explaining interfaith initiative to commemorate the 15th anniversary of 9/11
<https://www.pbs.org/video/wpbt-issues-commemorating-911-through-interfaith-dialogue/>

- Description of an interfaith meeting in NY between an imam, a rabbi, and a cardinal
<https://www.911memorial.org/connect/blog/911-museum-program-focuses-interfaith-dialogue-rabbi-imam-cardinal>

Lists of Additional Resources

- Bridge: A Georgetown University initiative that offers analysis and commentary on issues related to Islamophobia.
<https://bridge.georgetown.edu/about-us/what-is-islamophobia/>
- TeachMideast: An Educational Initiative of the Middle East Policy Council
This site provides a variety of resources on 9/11.
https://teachmideast.org/lesson_plans/teaching-about-911/

Approaches to be avoided

- Advice on how to teach kids about 9/11 without scaring them. Note that allocating instructional time to an examination of Al Qaida is not consistent with culturally responsive teaching practices.
<https://kidskonnnect.com/articles/how-to-teach-kids-september11/>
- Framing the issue as a “clash of civilizations.” For example, the lesson plan linked below has an extension activity based on Huntington’s clash of civilization theory, namely, that the primary source of conflict in the post-9/11 world will be people’s religious and cultural identities. Depending on how it’s conducted, this conversation could lead to a feeling of alienation of Muslim students in U.S. schools, as it may suggest that the culture of Muslim students is incompatible with U.S. society.
<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/lesson-plans/teaching-content/encountering-history-911-lesson-plan/>
- Using instructional time to compare / contrast / examine definitions of terrorism. This lesson is absent the humanization of 9/11 experiences and the social impacts stemming from 9/11. [Microsoft Word - Document10 \(texasdeafed.org\)](#)