From Terror to Hope
One 12-year-old’s experience of September 11, 2001

Preview: On the 15th anniversary of September 11, 2001, we bring you the story of a girl who was in school just a few blocks from the World Trade Center when the planes hit. A personal essay about growing up Muslim in post 9/11 America follows the article.

Learning Objective: to explain how the article’s title applies to both the article and the personal essay

Key Skills: author’s craft, interpreting text, text structure, central ideas, synthesis, key ideas, inference

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan
Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

Preparing to Read
Watch a video.
(15 minutes, activity sheet online)
Project or distribute the Video Discussion Questions. Show our “Behind the Scenes” video. Then answer the discussion questions.

Preview vocabulary.
(3 minutes, activity sheet online)
• Project or distribute the Vocabulary Words and Definitions for students to refer to as they read.
Highlighted words: cacophony, convened, converged, hijacked, iconic, ideology, liaison, reeling, tenet, terrorism. Clarify that Islam is a religion and a Muslim is a person who practices Islam.

Reading the Article
(35 minutes, activity sheet online)
Read “From Terror to Hope” as a class, starting on page 5 with the “As You Read” box. Then discuss the following questions.
The title “From Terror to Hope” suggests a journey. What journeys does Lewis describe? (text structure, central ideas) Lewis describes the journeys of Helaina Hovitz and of New York City starting from the attacks of September 11 through the struggle to return to normalcy to today, when both have largely recovered. Lewis weaves Helaina’s personal story into the larger story of 9/11 to show how both Helaina and New York have journeyed from terror to hope.

In the remarks on page 9, President Obama gives examples of people who showed heroism on September 11 as well as those who have shown “a more quiet form of heroism” in the years since. What does he mean by “a more quiet form of heroism”? Has Helaina shown this kind of quiet heroism? (interpreting text, synthesis) President Obama means that showing resilience after a tragedy is a form of heroism, even if it doesn’t receive the same kind of attention as rescuing people from a burning building. Strength, courage, and perseverance are required to continue on after a devastating event. Helaina definitely shows the kind of quiet heroism to which Obama refers; she suffered from PTSD for years but worked hard to recover and is now a writer.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS
What is heroism?  
How do people find hope after a tragedy?  
How can we cultivate tolerance?

3 Reading the Pairing  
(15 minutes, activity sheets online)  
• As a class, read RJ Khalaf’s personal essay and answer the following questions.

Close-Reading Questions
According to RJ Khalaf’s essay, how did the September 11 attacks affect Muslim Americans? (key ideas, inference) The attacks affected Muslim Americans the same way they affected all Americans: They caused sadness and fear. In addition, the attacks led to an increase in prejudice against Muslims.

According to Khalaf, what can all of us do to help eliminate prejudice? (key ideas) We can get to know people who are different from us.

Critical-Thinking Questions
(5 minutes, activity sheet online)  
Consider the targets of the September 11 attacks: the Twin Towers, the Pentagon, and possibly the White House. Why might Al Qaeda have targeted these buildings in particular? All four buildings were symbolic of America’s power, success, and way of life. The terrorists probably wanted to target buildings that were both symbolic and familiar to make a statement and to make the attacks feel personal to many people.

How might Helaina’s news agency help people struggling to cope in the aftermath of a terrorist attack? Headlines for the Hopeful publishes articles about positive change. Reading such articles may remind people who are struggling to find hope after an act of terror that there is in fact much goodness in the world. The articles might even inspire people to take action, which could give them a sense of purpose and a positive focus.

Khalaf says he realized that a lot of people were not going to understand that the terrorists behind the 9/11 attacks were not like him. Why wouldn’t people understand this? That is, what do you think caused people to stereotype Muslims after the attacks? Fear, a lack of information (and the spread of misinformation), and a desire for someone to blame may all have contributed to the stereotyping Muslims have faced since September 11. The media, by continuing to portray Muslims in a negative light, is likely a factor too, as Khalaf points out.

4 Skill Building  
Central Ideas and Details and Text Structure  
(15 minutes, activity sheets online)  
Distribute the activity sheet Analyzing the Title: From Terror to Hope, which will prepare students to respond to the prompt on page 10.
Differentiation

For Struggling Readers
In a well-organized paragraph, describe how the title “From Terror to Hope” relates to the article. Use text evidence to support your answer.

For Advanced Readers
Discuss the effects of the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. Consider the effects on individuals, New York City, the United States, and the world. Support your ideas with details from “From Terror to Hope” and “Growing Up Muslim in Post 9/11 America.”

Complexity Factors
See how these texts will challenge your students.

Purpose: The story describes one girl’s experience of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as well as the causes and effects of the attacks. It’s accompanied by a personal essay by a young Muslim man who grew up in the U.S. after 9/11.

Structure: The article weaves together narrative and informational passages and contains a large amount of descriptive language.

Language Conventionality and Clarity:
• Vocabulary: challenging academic and domain-specific words (cacophony, converged, iconic, ideology, terrorism)
• Figurative Language: metaphors, other figures of speech

Knowledge Demands: The text mentions several terrorist attacks and numerous locations (e.g., Cairo, Sudan, Tokyo).

Lexile: 1010L

Literature Connections
Texts that explore resilience:
• “If” by Rudyard Kipling (poem)
• A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park (novel)
• Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood by Ibtisam Barakat (memoir)

ONLINE RESOURCES
 AUDIO: Hear the article and the essay read aloud.
 VIDEO: “Behind the Scenes”

ACTIVITIES TO PRINT OR PROJECT:
• Close-Reading and Critical-Thinking Questions*
• Vocabulary*
• Read, Think, Explain: Identifying Nonfiction Elements (two levels)
• Quiz (two levels)
• Video Discussion Questions*
• Analyzing the Title: From Terror to Hope*
• Contest Entry Form
• Core Skills:
  • Central Ideas and Details (two levels)*
  • Summarizing (two levels)
  • Tone (two levels)
  • Text Structure

*Supports the lesson plan