

September 11th Primary Source Accounts Analysis Activity

For each source, read the accounts or background information, analyze the account, and answer the questions that follow.

Source 1

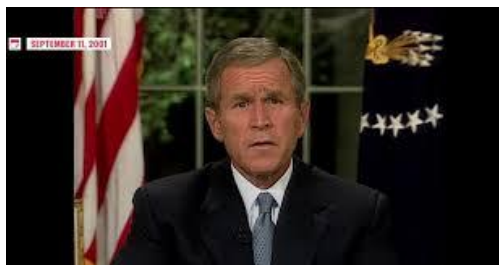
This excerpt is from President George W. Bush's address to the nation concerning the September 11 attacks, given from the Oval Office in Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001"

"Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors.

Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong.

A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining.

Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America — with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could. Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts. Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks."



1. What is the tone of this speech? What do you believe President Bush would be thinking and feeling in this moment?
2. What message is President Bush trying to convey to the American public? What do you believe the response would be at the time to this speech?
3. What priorities does President Bush outline for the country moving forward?

Source:

G. W. Bush, ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS, (White House Archives, 2001), https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf.

Source 2

This excerpt is from a speech given by President Bush explaining the War on Terror on October 11, 2001:

“The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, the first, and we hope the only one, of the 21st century. A war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them.”



1. Who does President Bush explain this war will be fought against?
2. According to President Bush how did this war impact the American public?
3. What do you believe would be the top priority or goal of this form of warfare?

Source:

George W. Bush, *President Holds Prime Time News Conference*, (Washington D.C.: White House Archives, 2001), <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011011-7.html>.

Source 3

These excerpts are from a speech given by Jon Stewart to Congress on behalf of first responders of the September 11th attacks seeking healthcare due to the effects of the attacks, about 18 years later on June 11, 2019:



"The official FDNY response time for 9/11 was five seconds, five seconds. That's how long it took for FDNY, for NYPD, for Port Authority, for EMS to respond to an urgent need from the public, five seconds. Hundreds died in an instant. Thousands more poured in to continue to fight for their brothers and sisters.

The breathing problems started almost immediately, and they were told they weren't sick, they were crazy. Then as the illnesses got worse and things became more apparent, "Well, okay, you're sick, but it's not from the pile." Then when the science became irrefutable, "Okay, it's the pile, but this is a New York issue. I don't know if we have the money." And I'm

sorry if I sound angry and undiplomatic, but I'm angry and you should be too, and they're all angry as well.”

1. What does Mr. Stewart outline as the effects of the attacks on first responders?
2. What had been the political response to the health issues 9/11 first responders have faced?

“Setting aside that no American in this country should face financial ruin because of a health issue. Certainly 9/11 first responders shouldn't have to decide whether to live or to have a place to live. The idea that you can only give them five more years of the VCF because you're not quite sure what's going to happen five years from now, well I can tell you, I'm pretty sure what's going to happen five years from now. More of these men and women are going to get sick, and they're going to die. And I am awfully tired of hearing that it's a 9/11 New York issue.

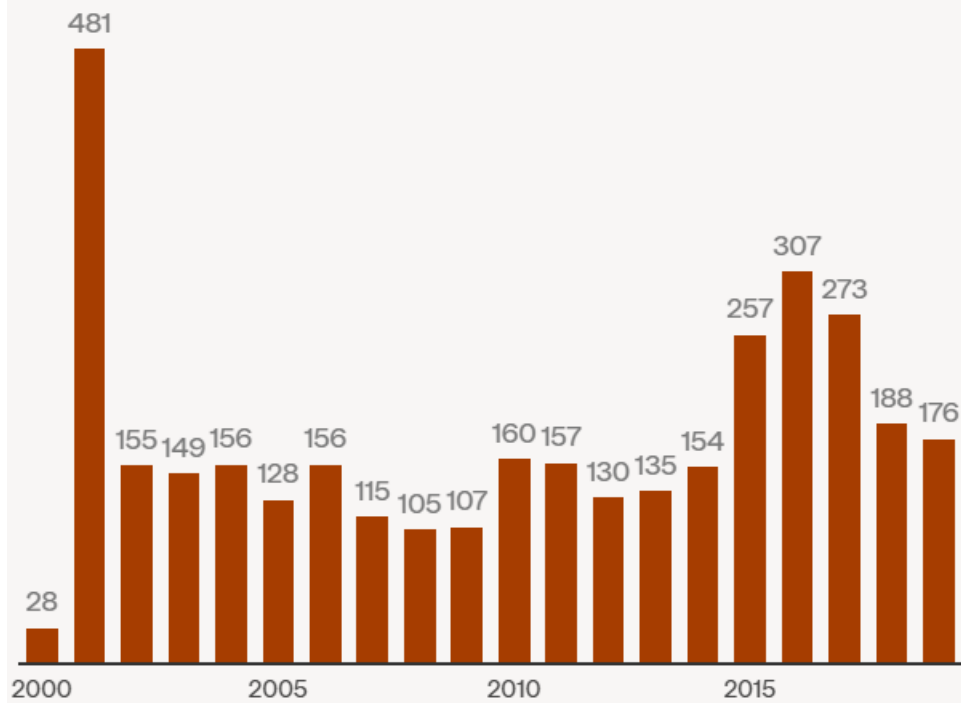
Al Qaeda didn't shout 'death to Tribeca!'. They attacked America, and these men and women, and their response to it is what brought our country back, it's what gave a reeling nation a solid foundation to stand back upon, to remind us of why this country is great, of why this country is worth fighting for, and you are ignoring them.”

3. What does the future look like for many 9/11 first responders?
4. What is the message that Mr. Stewart is leaving Congress with concerning our American heroes from that event?

Source: Jon Stewart, "Speech to Congress on the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund" (speech, Congressional Session, Congress, June 11, 2019), <https://abcnews.com/Politics/angry-jon-stewart-demands-congress-compensate-911-responders/story?id=63632523>.

Sources 4 and 5

Reported hate crimes against Muslims in the U.S.



Source: FBI.



According to the Pew Research Center American Muslims composed 1.1 percent of the population in the United States in 2017. The FBI defines a hate crime as “a traditional offense like murder, arson, or vandalism with an added element of bias.” While collecting statistics they further define a hate crime as a crime motivated in whole or partly by the offender’s bias against things such as their race or religion. Per direct data received and analyzed by the FBI Anti-Muslim hate crimes rose significantly in 2001, and once again beginning in 2016.

1. Define “hate crime” in your own words.

2. Why would there be a correlation between the year 2001, and a rise in Anti-Muslim hate crimes?

Source:

FBI, "Hate Crimes," fbi.gov, accessed February 3, 2026,
<https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes>.

On June 4, 2009 President Barack Obama gave a speech in Cairo, Egypt, proposing a new relationship between the United States and Muslims around the world:

"I've come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based on mutual interest and mutual respect, and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles -- principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings."



3. What does President Obama state this new relationship should be built upon?
4. What impact could this speech have had for the Muslim minority in the United States?

Source:

Barack Obama, "The President's Speech in Cairo: A New Beginning" (speech, Obama White House Archives, Cairo, Egypt, June 4, 2009),

<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/issues/foreign-policy/presidents-speech-cairo-a-new-beginning>.

Source 6

This excerpt comes from President Bush's remarks at the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, PA on September 11, 2021:



“It would be a mistake to idealize the experience of those terrible events. All that many people could initially see was the brute randomness of death. All that many could feel was unearned suffering. All that many could hear was God’s terrible silence. There are many who still struggle with a lonely pain that cuts deep within.

In those fateful hours, we learned other lessons as well. We saw that Americans were vulnerable, but not fragile – that they possess a core of strength that survives the worst that life can bring. We learned that bravery is more common than we imagined, emerging with sudden splendor in the face of death. We vividly felt how every hour with our loved ones is a temporary and holy gift. And we found that even the longest days end.”

1. How does President Bush describe the American response to the attacks, 20 years later?

“After 9/11, millions of brave Americans stepped forward and volunteered to serve in the Armed Forces. The military measures taken over the last 20 years to pursue dangers at their source have led to debate. But one thing is certain: We owe an assurance to all who have fought our nation’s most recent battles. Let me speak directly to veterans and people in uniform: The cause you pursued at the call of duty is the noblest America has to offer. You have shielded your fellow citizens from danger. You have defended the beliefs of your country and advanced the rights of the downtrodden. You have been the face of hope and mercy in dark places. You have been a force for good in the world. Nothing that has followed – nothing – can tarnish your honor or diminish your accomplishments. To you, and to the honored dead, our country is forever grateful.”

2. What message does President Bush convey concerning the debates around the military response in the War on Terror?
3. In your opinion, what do we as Americans owe to our veterans and service members in the memory of 9/11 and the War on Terror?

Source:

George W. Bush, "Remarks by President George W. Bush at the Flight 93 National Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania" (speech, Shanksville, PA, September 11, 2021), <https://www.bushcenter.org/newsroom/remarks-by-president-george-w-bush-at-the-flight-93-national-memorial-in-shanksville-pennsylvania>.

Source 7

Veteran's Account

Lieutenant Colonel Brian D. Perry, Sr. was a member of the U.S. Army Reserve when he was sent on a classified mission to Afghanistan shortly after the events of September 11th. This excerpt is from his accounts of that mission to Afghanistan and his impressions upon his arrival:



"Mines, I thought, beware of the mines. This was why the Marine had hesitated. We had been forewarned that the place was full of them. Stay on the hardstand. The airplane took up most of the width of the runway and there was no place for us to go. Darkness surrounded us. I pulled a small flashlight from my pocket and, aware of the need for light discipline, lit the area around us only for a split second. We were right on the edge of the cement. The minefield lay just beyond where we stood, out there in the darkness. The Marine was standing next to me but I could barely see him.

Above, a million stars shone. The sight was overwhelming. In that moment I felt totally alone but surprisingly at peace. I knew I was where I was supposed to be. I thought of my

wife and family, left behind with my closed law practice. I was comforted knowing that they, too, believed I was where I needed to be. Here in the fight..."

1. What danger does Col. Perry describe in his account?
2. What sacrifices did soldiers and other service members like Col. Perry have to make while serving in the War on Terror?
3. How would life have changed for those in the military during the war and after returning home to civilian life?

Source: Col. Perry's personal narrative, "In Country," by Brian Perry, 2006, from *Operation Homecoming: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families*

Final Task:

Reflecting on the guided notes, discussions, activities, and the primary sources analysis answer this essential question with one complete paragraph:

What were the consequences of the War on Terror globally and domestically within the United States?