

Rescue at the Water's Edge

The story of the 9/11 attacks and the largest boat rescue in history

About the Story

Lexile: 920L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: to write an essay about the hope, courage, and heroism that can be found in a story about September 11, 2001

Key Skills: key ideas and details, figurative language, text structure, author's craft, mood, supporting a claim

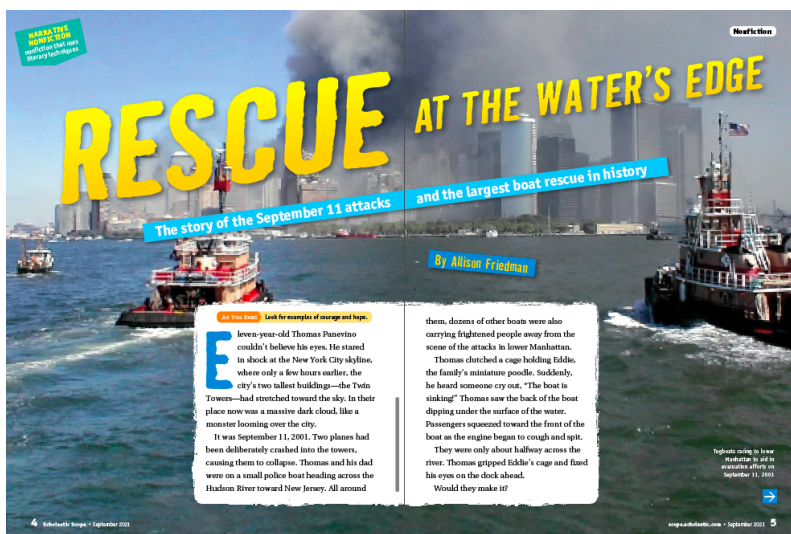
Essential Questions:

- What is heroism?
- How do we make sense of a tragedy?
- Why is it important to learn about the past?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.1, W.2, SL.1, L.4, L.5, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at scope.scholastic.com.

Audio:

- Author read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Video:

- Beyond the Story

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- Narrative Nonfiction: "From Terror to Hope"
- Essay: "Growing Up Muslim in Post 9/11 America"

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Preparing to Write: Courage and Hope
 - Close Reading and Critical Thinking
 - Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
 - Video Discussion Questions
 - Nonfiction Elements*
 - Core Skills Workout: Summarizing*
 - Choice Board
 - Quiz*
 - Contest Entry Form
- *Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

20 minutes

Preview Teacher Resources

- Review these [10 Tips for Talking With Students About Tragedy](#). It will help you prepare to answer students' questions, facilitate meaningful class discussions, and find additional resources.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions as a class. (Optionally, have students complete the practice activity for homework.) Highlighted words: *billowing*, *coalition*, *converged*, *extremist*, *mariners*, *maritime*, *throttle*

Watch a Video (15 minutes)

- Watch the **Beyond the Story** video. Then discuss the **Video Discussion Questions** together as a class.

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 4 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the story once through as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the **lower-Lexile version** of the article with students who may need it.*) Optionally, have students listen to author Allison Friedman read the story while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Break students into groups to discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions.

Close-Reading Questions (15 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

- 1. How does author Allison Friedman develop the idea that the Twin Towers were special buildings?** (key ideas and details) *Friedman notes that the 110-story towers could be seen for miles and describes them as “glittering skyscrapers” that “stretched toward the sky,” making them sound beautiful. In the photo caption “The Towers,” she writes that the towers “were two of the tallest, most recognizable buildings in the world.” She also notes that Thomas’s mom used to tell him that if he ever got lost, he could look for the World Trade Center and find his way home. This anecdote shows what an important landmark the towers were to New Yorkers. But the towers weren’t iconic only to those who lived in New York: Friedman explains that Al Qaeda targeted buildings that symbolized America’s government, military, business, and culture, and you can infer that the Twin Towers, in the heart of New York City’s financial district, were among such buildings.*
- 2. Consider this line from the introduction: “Earlier that morning, but what felt like a lifetime ago, Thomas had walked by the Twin Towers on the way to his second day of seventh grade.” What does Friedman mean when she writes “but what felt like a lifetime ago”?** (figurative language) *Friedman uses this expression to illustrate that what transpired on the morning of September 11 was so horrifying and shocking, and had such a profound effect on Thomas, that it made the time before the attacks seem like long ago, even though in reality it was only hours earlier. Writing that earlier that morning “felt like a lifetime ago” also suggests that the attacks seemed to separate Thomas’s life into a “before” and “after.”*
- 3. Sometimes a work of narrative nonfiction focuses on the experience of just one person. In “Rescue at the Water’s Edge,” Friedman alternates between the experiences of two people: Thomas Panevino and Carlos Perez. Why might she have made this choice?** (text structure, author’s craft) *By focusing on two people instead of one, Friedman was able to give readers a broader view of what it was like to be in New York City that day. Perhaps Friedman wanted to show how various people’s experiences were alike and different and help readers better understand the rescue by presenting the experiences of both a rescuer and a person who was rescued.*
- 4. How does the mood shift in the section “The Only Way”?** (mood) *The mood at the beginning of the section is terrifying and hopeless. Readers learn that people weren’t able to make calls, that all tunnels, bridges, and trains were shut down, and that roads were “snarled” with traffic. Thomas describes waiting at the waterfront as feeling “like he was on board the sinking Titanic, waiting desperately for a lifeboat.” Meanwhile, Perez was feeling overwhelmed, as no matter how many boatfuls of people his team evacuated, the crowd at the waterfront kept growing larger. But after the lines “Then he looked out over the water. And that’s when he saw it,” the mood shifts,*

becoming more hopeful and even inspiring. Perez and Thomas recount the sight of dozens and eventually hundreds of boats converging to help evacuate lower Manhattan. Friedman writes that the boats were “all speeding to the seawall, frothy white wakes trailing behind them like ribbons”—a sharp contrast to the imagery she uses at the beginning of the section.

Critical-Thinking Questions

(15 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. Fred Rogers, host of the children’s television show *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*, once said, “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” Who were the helpers in “Rescue at the Water’s Edge”? Why is it important to remember the helpers in the story of 9/11—or in any tragedy? Answers will vary. Students will likely cite examples of people who helped keep others safe: Thomas’s teacher Jorge, officer Perez and his Coast Guard crew, the hundreds of mariners who converged on the harbor to help with the evacuation, those running makeshift hospital centers in New Jersey, Staten Island, and Brooklyn, and the countless firefighters and police officers who rushed into the burning towers to save people. Students may also note the leaders of our own country as well as other countries, and those in the armed forces who worked to weaken the Taliban. Students may offer that in times of tragedy, it’s important to recognize and remember the people who help others because it can help us feel safe and help us recognize the power that lies in unity and in our love and concern for fellow human beings.
2. Do you think future generations of students should learn about 9/11? Why or why not? Answers will vary.

3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Courage and Hope**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 10 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page. Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

Other texts about 9/11 from the Scope archives:

- Narrative Nonfiction: [“From Terror to Hope,”](#) September 2016
- Essay: [“Growing Up Muslim in Post 9/11 America,”](#) September 2016