

Topic: The impact of a traumatic event on three different people's lives.

Abstract: What happened on September 11th affected three different people in different ways. Many emotions were felt due to this horrible tragedy. Different views and experiences were shared because of the World Trade Center and connected three people. Even though it was a horrible day in history it brought peace and a stronger bond between a friendship.

Key Words: Americans, Three people, Monumental Day, Tuesday Morning, World Trade Center, New York, Terrorist, September 11th, Sadness, California, Ground Zero Memorial, Afghanistan, U.S. Army.

When Tragedy Struck A Nation

On September 11, 2001 the world of millions of Americans drastically changed along with my own and my two best friends. This day altered many lives more than any us could have expected. Millions of Americans were affected and have stories to share. Three different people, three different places in their lives; that all were changed on this very monumental day, in different ways than one. My story starts when I was nine years old.

When you're nine you have no real responsibilities, you don't realize what's out there in the real world. All that's on your mind is getting to run around with your friends and schoolmates and how you want the next coolest thing that is coming out. But on that Tuesday morning I woke up, got out of bed and walked down the hallway which lead me straight to the bright television, which was repeating the news of the twin towers. Since I was so young and had no idea what was happening I just watched the news silently wondering what was exactly going on. I knew it was New York but I didn't understand why it was happening. Terrorist, hijackers, plane crashes, and people jumping to their deaths all caught my attention. A million questions ran through my head. Where was my best friend in New York? Was he and his family safe? Why was this horrible tragedy happening to all these people? Who were these people flying these planes into these skyscrapers? I wanted to know more about what was happening; I wanted

answers. I knew this event was huge because the television in the living room was never on in the morning when I'd wake up. It caught my attention and made my mind wonder while watching the horrible picture on the screen with my family.

As my family and I watched one tower collapse it was time for us to leave the house for the day. My mom dropped me and my brother off at school as she went to work. Walking into school was different that day. People were talking everywhere about what happened to the World Trade Center and discussing what they heard about it. Rumors and different stories spread over all the states but in Hollister the only place I knew, was worried that day. I walked into my fourth grade classroom with the rest of my classmates, with the same questions in their head waiting for class to start. As my teacher started class, all my classmates including myself started talking about what they saw or heard about the twin towers collapsing. The interesting thing was all these nine year old children knew what was happening three thousand miles away from where we were and our teacher didn't. Since she was a nun she doesn't have a television or computer to be aware of what was going on in the world. As soon as she heard all the information that came out of our rambling mouths she realized that it affected her too. She realized she had to pray for all of the people who were put in this situation and their families. My teacher was caring and wanted peace in the world and would always pray for the people in need. So as a whole class we folded our hands and prayed for all those people who were involved in that horrible tragedy.

Everyone had a different story to share that morning. Even though my classmates and I were young we each experience that Tuesday morning differently. One girl in my class had a family member who was supposed to be a flight attendant for one of the planes that hit the World Trade Center. I had another classmate who had family in New York and it took her and her

parents awhile to get in contact with her. It all affected us in different ways because it hit us hard out of left field. We all took it in and faced it together as a country.

One of my best friends that I've known forever had a different perspective of September 11th. He actually lives in New York and experienced it differently than me over here in California. He faced it when it was actually happening. He was only an hour away from it as I was three thousand miles away. It was hard seeing that happening on the television because I knew he was over there dealing with all the chaos. He went straight to my mind and I panicked for him. My parents ended up getting a hold of them later that night. I got to talk to him and he told me how it seemed unreal at the time. It was like someone died but it wasn't real to him yet. He is three years older than me so he was twelve when it happened. He was at school when the first plane hit at 8:46 am. I knew his father worked in the city but I didn't know where exactly. Thankfully everyone in his family was not caught up in that mess.

The first phone conversation was a hard one because I didn't know what was okay to say or ask him? He told me that it was a total shock and how it happened so fast and how he couldn't just run home to his family. The teachers and principal had to keep all the students calm when they found out the news. He felt trapped in the school and felt powerless. It did end up hitting him sooner than later because he would call me to just talk about the situation. I could tell in this voice he didn't know how to comfort the people around him that lost someone. He felt overwhelmed with all the sadness that was all around him. It was hard for him because he is such a happy person. He loves making jokes and making people around him laugh. But after, he kind of held it in and wasn't sure how to act towards people about this horrible event that took place. I always used to tell him it's okay to be happy. I told him to stay strong and let his happiness help heal the people around him. It took time but slowly things went back to normal for him.

I keep in good contact with him still. We try to talk every week but it's hard with our busy schedules to catch each other at the right time. But last January I finally saved enough money to take a trip over there for a week. That last time I actually spent time with him was four years ago. He usually comes to California since he has family over here. When I arrived it was so different over there. Everything was plastered with snow and I've never seen anything like it. He took me everywhere. I went to the city, time square, statue of liberty, the empire state building, and ground zero.

When we arrived at the ground zero memorial I didn't know what exactly to expect. There were many trees and two fountains where the towers used to stand. All the names of the people who died are engraved around the fountains. The scenery was so peaceful just like a garden. We took our time looking around and taking it in together; remembering that day together. I just pictured it happening there and it was so real. I couldn't imagine seeing it in person. With him there with me I realized we are lucky to be alive today. We have come so far together with having to deal with the distance but that day we were finally in the same place at the same time. We took it in together and both left at peace with what had happened.

As the years past and I grew older, we remember that day and all the people who died for our country. It's always been a sensitive day as I went moving up grade by grade. As I moved up to junior high then to high school that's when I met my other best friend. We had English class together and were assigned a paper that had to do with September 11th. I remember we had to write about how it affected us or how it changed our view of the world. We had to share our papers and that's when I learned her story.

Her paper wasn't exactly about the day it actually happened. It focused on her only cousin that decided to join the U.S. army to fight for our country. When she heard the news that he decided he wanted to go into the army she was really upset. She didn't want him to go because she was scared for him. Because of family problems she felt trapped without him. He is the only closest thing she has to a sibling and she didn't want to lose him. I remember her paper being really personal and I could tell by the way she read it she was trying not to break down.

She went on about how he had a great future in front of him and how he got a scholarship to San Diego State to play soccer. She didn't understand what made him change his mind. He went into training and that's when she had to face it and accept it. Even though it was a scary thing, she is proud that her cousin is serving our country. She realizes that he isn't just doing it for us but for those innocent people who died that day.

When it was time for him to go over to Afghanistan, her and her family had many scares and didn't know if he was alive at times. One day she got the news that a helicopter went down and killed everyone that was on board. For a couple of days she didn't know if he was on that one or not but thankfully he wasn't. It's hard having a family member or someone close to you that's in the army because all we can do is hope and pray that they'll make it through the day. He is still over there and my best friend and I hear from him every once in a while. She is thankful for the time she gets to spend with him and always makes the best of it.

Between my two best friends and me we are all connected because of this tragedy. We have each other to move forward and except how the world is. My best friend from California and I are planning another trip to New York in January of 2012. Since she hasn't been there she gets to experience another world unlike ours over here in California. The three of us come from

diverse backgrounds but we come together because of our long lasting friendships and the stories we have to share about that day.