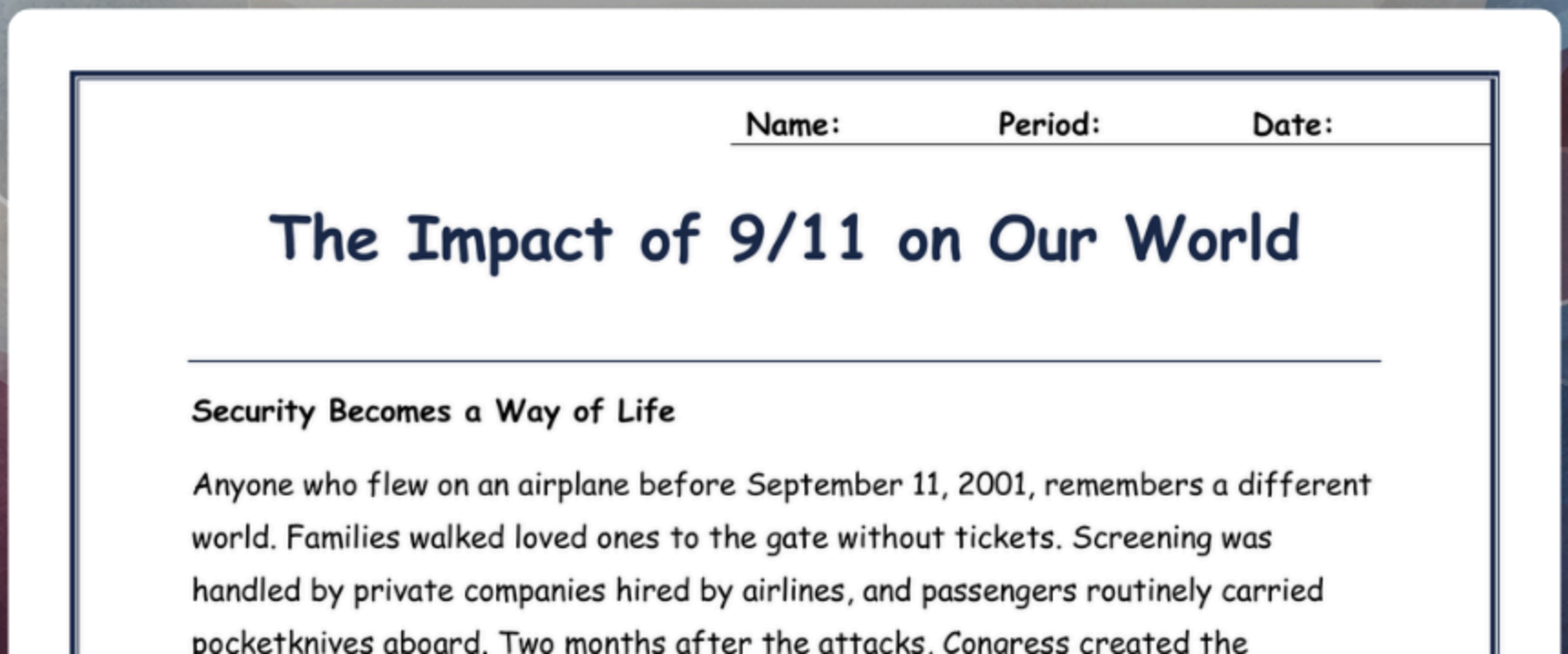
NO PREP

The Impact of 9/11 on Our World

Security Becomes a Way of Life

Includes: Student reading, case study, differentiated questions, teacher key



Name: Period: Date:

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Security Becomes a Way of Life

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Anyone who flew on an airplane before September 11, 2001, remembers a different world. Families walked loved ones to the gate without tickets. Screening was handled by private companies hired by airlines, and passengers routinely carried pocketknives aboard. Two months after the attacks, Congress created the Transportation Security Administration, a federal workforce that took over screening at every commercial airport in the country. Travelers soon adjusted to removing shoes and belts, limits on liquids, hardened cockpit doors, and federal air marshals flying anonymously among them. Security spread far beyond airports: concrete barriers rose around government buildings, bags were searched at stadiums and museums, and surveillance cameras multiplied in public spaces. Even the driver's license changed, after the REAL ID Act of 2005 set federal security standards for the identification cards Americans carry every day. In 2002, the government underwent its largest reorganization in half a century when twenty-two separate agencies, from the Coast Guard to the Secret Service, were combined into the new Department of Homeland Security, a department that today employs roughly a quarter of a million people. The attacks also produced the USA PATRIOT Act, passed six weeks after September 11, which expanded the government's power to monitor communications, search records, and track suspected terrorists. Supporters argued the tools prevented new attacks; critics warned they eroded the privacy and civil liberties of ordinary people. That debate over the balance between security and freedom continues today and remains one of the attacks' deepest legacies.

Two Wars and Their Long Shadow

On October 7, 2001, less than a month after the attacks, the United States and its allies invaded Afghanistan to destroy al-Qaeda's training camps and remove the Taliban government that sheltered the network's leaders. The Taliban fell within weeks, but the war did not end; it evolved into a two-decade struggle to stabilize the country. American forces finally withdrew in August 2021, almost twenty years after they arrived, making Afghanistan the longest war in American history. Roughly 800,000 Americans served there over the course of the conflict. In March 2003, the United States also invaded Iraq, arguing that its dictator, Saddam Hussein, possessed weapons of mass destruction and might supply them to terrorists. No such weapons were ever found, and the war became one of the most controversial decisions in modern American foreign policy. Together the two wars cost trillions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of lives, including more than 7,000 American service members. They reshaped the Middle East, strained alliances, and influenced how Americans debate every proposed military action since. Veterans of both wars, more than three million of them, now form a generation shaped by deployments that began with September 11. Neither war ended cleanly. American combat troops left Iraq in 2011, but the collapse of order there helped a successor movement called the Islamic State seize territory across Iraq and Syria, and American forces returned in 2014 to fight it. That pattern, in which withdrawal produced a new conflict rather than a conclusion, became one of the central arguments in every debate about American military commitments that followed.

The Economic Earthquake

The attacks struck at the heart of the American economy, and the shockwaves were immediate. The New York Stock Exchange closed for four trading days, its longest shutdown since the Great Depression, and lost more than a trillion dollars in value in the week after it reopened. The airline industry, already struggling, was devastated; Congress approved billions in emergency aid to keep carriers flying,

and even so, several of the country's largest airlines were forced into bankruptcy in the years that followed. Lower Manhattan lost roughly 100,000 jobs in the months after the attacks, and the cleanup and rebuilding of the sixteen-acre World Trade Center site would take more than a decade. The long-term economic changes proved even larger. The United States has spent well over a trillion dollars on homeland security since 2001, a category of spending that barely existed before. An entire industry of security technology, screening equipment, and cybersecurity grew from the attacks. At the site itself, rebuilding eventually produced One World Trade Center, completed in 2014 at a symbolic height of 1,776 feet, the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere, alongside the memorial pools and museum that draw millions of visitors each year. Air travel absorbed the most visible change of all. In November 2001 Congress federalized airport screening, replacing private contractors with tens of thousands of government screeners and creating an agency that did not exist before the attacks. Passenger traffic did not return to its year-2000 level until 2004, and the routines invented in those years, the identification checks, the removed shoes, the liquid limits, are now simply what flying means to anyone born since.

A Changed Society

September 11 changed how Americans treated one another, in ways both inspiring and shameful. In the weeks after the attacks, the country experienced a surge of unity: blood banks overflowed, flags appeared on porches across the political spectrum, and Congress members sang together on the Capitol steps. Charitable giving broke records. Yet the same period brought a sharp rise in suspicion, harassment, and violence directed at Muslim Americans, Arab Americans, and Sikhs mistaken for Muslims. Hate crimes against these communities spiked in 2001 and have never returned to their pre-attack levels, forcing a national conversation about prejudice, profiling, and what it means to belong. The first person murdered in that backlash, four days after the attacks, was Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh gas station owner in Arizona killed by a man who mistook his turban for a symbol of the

enemy. The attacks also transformed American culture in quieter ways. A generation of students has now grown up practicing lockdown drills, passing through metal detectors, and studying September 11 as history rather than memory. Phrases like "If you see something, say something" entered everyday language. Anniversary observances each September, with moments of silence at 8:46 a.m. and the reading of victims' names, have become national rituals, and the twin beams of the Tribute in Light installation rise over Manhattan every year on the night of September 11.

Rewiring American Intelligence

Some of the deepest changes happened out of public view, inside the agencies responsible for preventing attacks. The 9/11 Commission, a bipartisan panel that spent nearly two years investigating, concluded in its 2004 report that the government had possessed fragments of warning but no system for assembling them; the CIA and FBI each held pieces of the plot and failed to share them. The report became a national bestseller, a rarity for a government document, and its phrase for the core failure, the inability to "connect the dots," entered the American vocabulary. Congress responded with the largest overhaul of American intelligence since 1947. A new Director of National Intelligence was created to oversee all of the country's intelligence agencies, and a National Counterterrorism Center was built where analysts from rival agencies sit side by side, legally required to share what they know. Information that once died in filing cabinets now moves across agencies by design. Civil liberties advocates continue to debate how much watching a free society should tolerate, but even critics concede the reforms fixed the specific failure that made September 11 possible: the wall that kept one hand of the government from knowing what the other hand had already found. More than two decades later, historians describe September 11 as a hinge in modern history, a single morning that redirected wars, laws, budgets, technology, and daily habits. Some changes, like hardened cockpit doors and better intelligence sharing, are widely seen as necessary lessons learned at terrible cost. Others, like

the Iraq War and expanded surveillance, remain fiercely debated. What is beyond debate is the scale of the transformation: a student passing through an airport scanner, a veteran of Kabul or Baghdad, a Muslim American recalling the fall of 2001, and a family reading a name at the memorial each September are all living with the consequences of the same one hundred two minutes.

Key Information: How 9/11 Changed the World

Fact	Details
TSA created	November 2001; federal screening at every commercial airport
Department of Homeland Security	Formed in 2002 from 22 agencies, largest reorganization in 50 years
USA PATRIOT Act	Passed six weeks after the attacks; expanded surveillance powers
War in Afghanistan	October 2001 to August 2021, the longest war in U.S. history
Iraq War	Began 2003; justified by weapons of mass destruction never found
Economic shock	NYSE closed four days; Lower Manhattan lost about 100,000 jobs
One World Trade Center	Completed 2014 at a symbolic 1,776 feet
Social effects	Surge of unity alongside a lasting spike in anti-Muslim hate crimes

Case Study: Two Lines at the Airport

Sam Okafor joined the TSA in 2002, in the first wave of federal screeners, and worked the morning shift at a midwestern airport for twenty years. He liked to tell trainees about two passengers from the same week. The first, an elderly man flying for the first time since 1999, stared at the bins and body scanner and muttered, "All this because of one day?" The second was a college student who moved through the line on autopilot, shoes off, laptop out, before Sam said a word. "She was born in 2003," Sam told the trainees. "To her, none of this is new. It's just how airports work." He paused at the X-ray monitor. "The old man remembers what we lost. The student never had it. Your job is to be worth the trade, every single shift, because we took something from both of them and we owe them safety in return."

1. Sam says the two passengers represent people who "remember what we lost" and people who "never had it." Using the reading, describe what was lost, and explain why the student's automatic behavior is historically significant.

_____

_____

2. Sam tells trainees the TSA must "be worth the trade." What trade is he describing, and how does the reading show Americans still disagreeing about whether it was worth it?

_____

_____

Multiple Choice

1. What justification for the 2003 invasion of Iraq does the reading say was never substantiated?
    a) Iraq's refusal to allow any weapons inspections
    b) Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction
    c) Iraq's direct role in planning the September 11 attacks
    d) Iraq's invasion of a neighboring country

2. Which statement best describes American society in the weeks after September 11?

a) Unity surged while hate crimes against Muslim Americans also spiked

b) The country remained calm and largely unchanged

c) Americans universally and firmly opposed any new security measures

d) Charitable giving collapsed as the economy shrank

3. According to the reading, which security change is widely viewed as a necessary lesson rather than a debated one?

a) The USA PATRIOT Act's surveillance powers

b) The invasion of Iraq and military conflicts in the region

c) The length of the war in Afghanistan

d) Hardened cockpit doors and better intelligence sharing

Matching

Write the letter of the correct definition on the line next to each term.

Term	Definition
1. ___ TSA	A) Twin beams that rise over Manhattan each year on the night of September 11
2. ___ USA PATRIOT Act	B) 1,776-foot skyscraper completed at the rebuilt site in 2014
3. ___ Department of Homeland Security	C) Federal agency created in November 2001 to screen airline passengers
4. ___ One World Trade Center	D) Law passed six weeks after the attacks expanding surveillance powers
5. ___ Tribute in Light	E) Cabinet department formed in 2002 from twenty-two agencies

Fill-in-the-Blank

1. The war in Afghanistan lasted from October 2001 until August _____.

2. After the attacks, the New York Stock Exchange closed for _____ trading days.

3. One World Trade Center was built to a symbolic height of _____ feet.

Short Answer

Answer each question in 2-4 complete sentences.

1. Summarize the strongest argument on each side of the security versus civil liberties debate.

_____

_____

_____

2. How did 9/11 affect Muslim Americans, and why does the reading call that part shameful?

_____

_____

_____

3. Choose two areas the reading discusses and explain how each still shows the attacks' influence.

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