

# The 9/11 Museum: Memorial or Theme Park?

On September 11, 2001 the World Trade Center in New York City was attacked. At least 3,000 people died that day. In commemoration, The National September Eleventh Memorial Museum is opening with a ceremony led by President Obama. There are mixed feelings about the new memorial. The following excerpt provides a detailed description of the new monument along with the objections from several families of 9/11 victims.

[ESL Voices Lesson Plan for this post](#) with Answer Key.



— The exterior skin of the museum's irregularly shaped entry pavilion is banded with alternating stripes of polished and matte finish stainless steel, which meet an angular wall of clear glass. (Floto+Warner for TIME).

Excerpt: The 9/11 Story Told at Bedrock...By Holland Cotter, The New York Times

*“After a decade marked by deep grief, partisan rancor, war, financial boondoggles and inundation from Hurricane Sandy, the National September 11 Memorial Museum at ground zero is finally opening ceremonially on Thursday, with President Obama present, and officially to the public next Wednesday. It delivers a gut-punch experience — though if ever a new museum had looked, right along, like a disaster in the making, this one did, beginning with its trifurcated identity.*

*Was it going to be primarily a historical document, a monument to the dead or a theme-park-style tourist attraction? How many historical museums are built around an active repository of human remains, still being added to? How many cemeteries have a \$24 entrance fee and sell souvenir T-shirts? How many theme parks bring you, repeatedly, to tears?*

— The “Survivors’ Stairs” were an escape route used by many people on 9:11. (Floto+Warner for TIME).

*Because that’s what the museum does. The first thing to say about it, and maybe the last, is that it’s emotionally overwhelming, particularly, I expect, for New Yorkers who were in the city on that apocalyptic September day and the paranoia-fraught weeks that followed, but almost as certainly for the estimated two billion people around the globe who followed the horror unfolding on television, radio and the Internet.*

*Anguished, angry questions about the museum, raised by families of some of the 2,983 people who died on Sept. 11, 2001, and in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center, have been widely reported. Debates over purpose, propriety and protocol are still in the air. At times, they have threatened to derail the project, or delay it indefinitely.*



— A teddy bear, a flag proclaiming “We will survive,” and a model of the twin towers are among the objects collected from a post-Sept. 11 vigil that are now on display at the 9:11 Memorial Museum. (Floto+Warner for TIME)

*While the accompanying National September 11 Memorial — two granite basins of cascading water that fill the twin tower footprints — is viewable from a street-level plaza, the museum is almost entirely subterranean. The bulk of it, some 10,000 square feet of gallery space, is 70 feet below ground, where the foundations of the towers met raw Manhattan schist...The drama starts, low key, on the plaza level with an aboveground entry pavilion midway between the memorial fountains. Designed by the Norwegian architectural firm Snohetta, it's a glass box set at a sharp, dizzy tilt, like a tipping building or a listing ship...Among other things, the fraught global politics of Sept. 11 and the World Trade Center are hinted at here in an astonishing quotation, emblazoned on a wall, by Minoru Yamasaki, the architect of the towers, in which he declares the buildings “a monument to world peace.”*



— The National September 11 Memorial Museum will open to the public May 21.  
Photo- Boston.com

*Suffice it to say, not everyone bought this utopian gloss. To many people, these quarter-mile-high structures were at best two cold, giant vertical bars of silver bullion, at worst obscene gestures of capitalist might. ..You emerge from the corridor's close, oppressive aural cloud onto a platform overlooking a yawning space and an archaeological monolith: a 60-foot-high exposed section of the World Trade Center's slurry wall. This thick, foundational barrier of poured concrete, laid before construction began in 1966, was, and is, the bulwark between the trade center and the Hudson River. When the twin towers collapsed, there was fear that the wall would give, flooding the site. It didn't give. It cracked, but held, and was quickly claimed as an emblem of indomitability and resilience. Read more.”*

ESL Voices Lesson Plan for this post

**Level:** Intermediate – Advanced

**Language Skills:** Reading, writing, speaking and listening. Vocabulary and grammar activities are included.

**Time:** Approximately 2 hours.

**Materials:** Student handouts (from this lesson) access to news article, and video clip.

**Objective:** Students will read and discuss the article with a focus on improving reading comprehension and learning new vocabulary. At the end of the lesson students will express their personal views on the topic through group work and writing.

## I. Pre-Reading Activities

KWL Chart

**The K-W-L chart is used to** activate students' background knowledge of a topic in order to enhance their comprehension skills.

**Directions:** Have students use the KWL chart from [Michigan State University](#) to list the information they already know about the events of September 11, 2001. Later in the Post-Reading segment of the lesson, students can fill in what they've learned about the topic.

What do we <b>KNOW</b> about this already?	What do we <b>WANT</b> to know about this?	What did we <b>LEARN</b> about this?

## II. While Reading Tasks

### Vocabulary

#### Word Inference

**Directions:** Students are to infer the meanings of the words in bold taken from the article. They may use a dictionary, thesaurus, and Word Chart for assistance.

1. After a **decade** marked by deep grief, the National September 11 Memorial Museum opening on Thursday.
2. The new museum looked like a disaster in the making, beginning with its **trifurcated** identity.
3. How many historical museums are built around an active **repository** of human remains?
4. It's emotionally overwhelming for those who were in the city on that **apocalyptic** September day.
5. Was it going to be primarily a historical document or a **monument** to the dead?
6. How many cemeteries have a \$24 entrance fee and sell **souvenir** T-shirts?
7. A **descent** into darkness is the stuff of suspense.
8. On the plaza level there is an aboveground entry **pavilion** midway between the memorial fountains.
9. It cracked, but held, and was quickly claimed as an **emblem** of indomitability and resilience.
10. Still, within its narrow **perspective**, maybe because of it, the museum has done something powerful.



#### Discussion/Writing Exercise

**Directions:** Place students in groups and have them answer the following questions. Afterwards, have the groups share their thoughts as a class. To reinforce the ideas, students can write an essay on one of the following discussion topics.

1. The article states, "At times, they have threatened to derail the project, or delay it indefinitely. But the work inched forward, and the museum that emerged is true to its initial and literally fundamental goal: to tell the Sept. 11 story at ground zero bedrock." Restate this idea using your own words.
2. What are some of the protests the families of some victims have against the museum?
3. After reading the article make a list of your personal reasons for liking or disliking the new museum.
4. What are the most important ideas in this article?

#### 3-2-1-Writing Activity

**Directions:** Allow students 5 minutes to write down at least three new ideas they've learned about 9-11 from the reading. Ask them to write down two things they did not understand in the reading. Then have them write one thing they would like to know that the article did not mention. Review the responses as a class. Note: For the lower levels allow more time for this writing activity.

### **IV. Listening Activity**



**Video Clip:** September 11th Memorial Museum Dedication Today 9/11 Families Disgusted!



Video Link

**While Listening Questions**

Sentence Fill-ins

**Directions:** Students listen for the correct word or phrase to complete the sentences taken from the video. They are to choose from the options presented.

1. It's expected to be an emotional/emotion day tomorrow at the dedication of the National September 11, Memorial Museum.
2. Thousands of artificial/artifacts will be on display some of them sparking controversy.
3. Seven stories below ground/grown zero and its as if September 11, 2001 just happened.
4. It was never much doubt/dubious a memorial museum would be built after 9/11.
5. For 13 years, three longer than planned, agreements/arguments have slowed down the progress of the National September 11, Memorial Museum.
6. Many 9/11 families are angry that thousands of unidentified body parts/parks are being stored this far under ground.

7. Another corner/concern is a six-minute video called "*The Rise of Al-Qaeda*".
8. An Interfaith clergy advisory/advises committee found most of the exhibits in the museum to be inspirational, but said they had a problem with the film.
9. Twenty-four dollars per ticket, six-figure salaries for museum executives, and trinkets/tickets on sale at inflated prices are all criticisms the museum's management faces.
10. It's unlikely the critics will be silenced anytime soon, but despite it all, for now at least, the US has a new focus/focal for mourning those lost on 9/11.

#### Questions for Discussion

**Directions:** Place students in groups and have them discuss the following questions.

1. After listening to this video has your personal idea of the National September 11, Memorial Museum changed in any way? If yes, describe in what way. If no, describe your original opinion.
2. Explain why some of the families are upset with the museum.
3. With your group members, make up questions that you would like to ask the museum representatives, or family members.

**Related Article:** 9/11 Museum Opens to a Somber Crowd By Stephen Farrell, May 21, 2014-New York Times.

ANSWER KEY: The National September 11, Memorial Museum

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