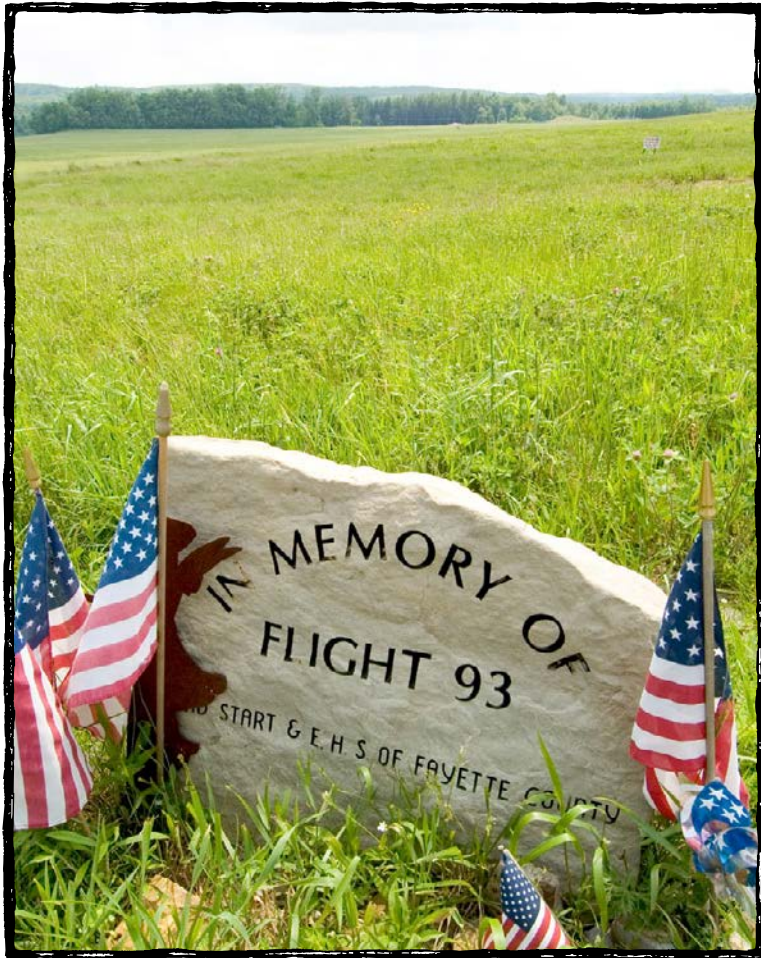


9/11: A Dark Day

A Reading A-Z Level Y Leveled Book

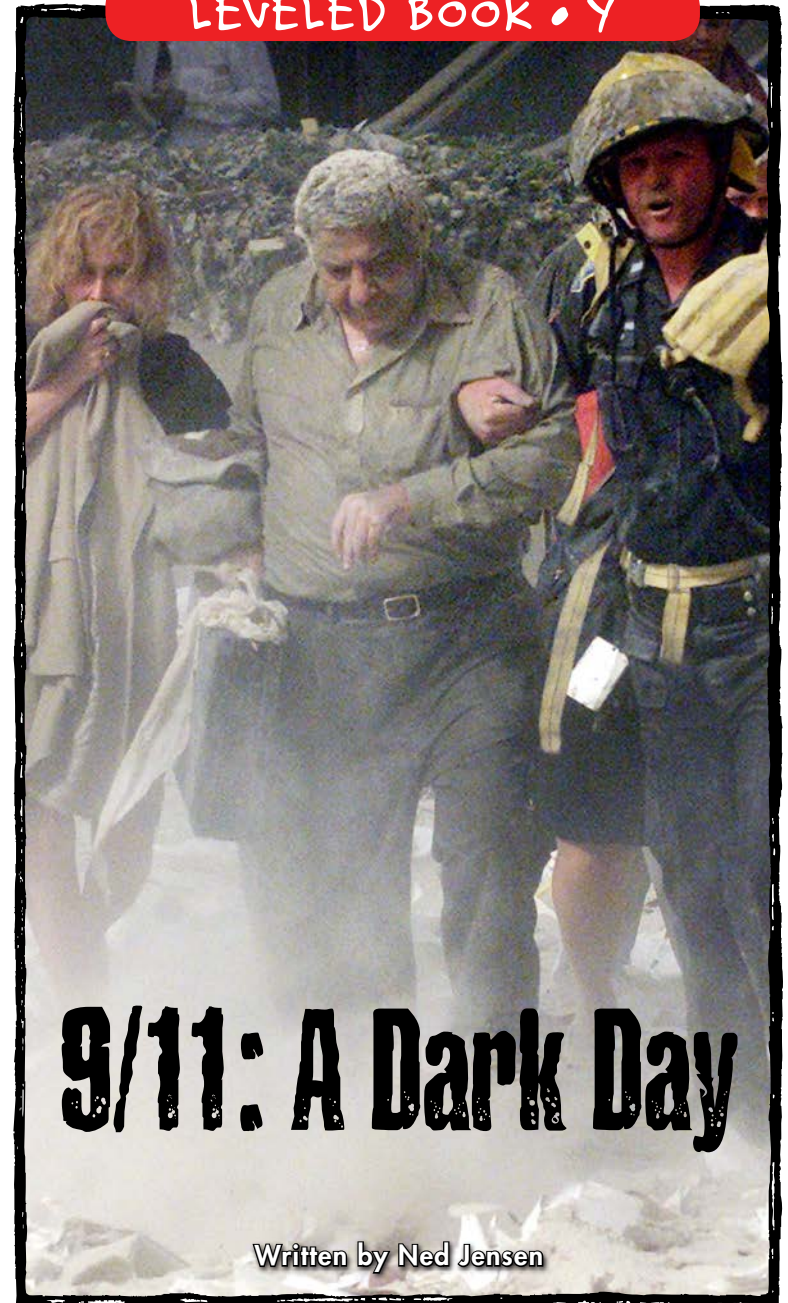
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9/11: A Dark Day

Written by Ned Jensen

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Front cover: People escape the World Trade Center after the attack.

Title page: The Twin Towers stand tall before the attack

Back cover: A field outside Shanksville, Pennsylvania, the crash site of Flight 93

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Level Y Leveled Book
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Emergency workers gaze in awe at the site of the Twin Towers disaster.

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Pedestrians cross 5th Avenue in New York City.

Introduction

The morning of September 11, 2001, was much like any other day in New York City. The streets were choked with traffic, and people filled the sidewalks as they scurried to work. Horns honked, and an occasional siren pierced the noisy air.

At the southern end of Manhattan Island, the twin towers of the World Trade Center stood like proud guards over the city. Thousands of workers exited taxis, buses, and underground subways, making their way to their World Trade Center offices, stacked 110 floors into the sky. High-speed elevators swiftly carried workers upward from the street level to their places of work.

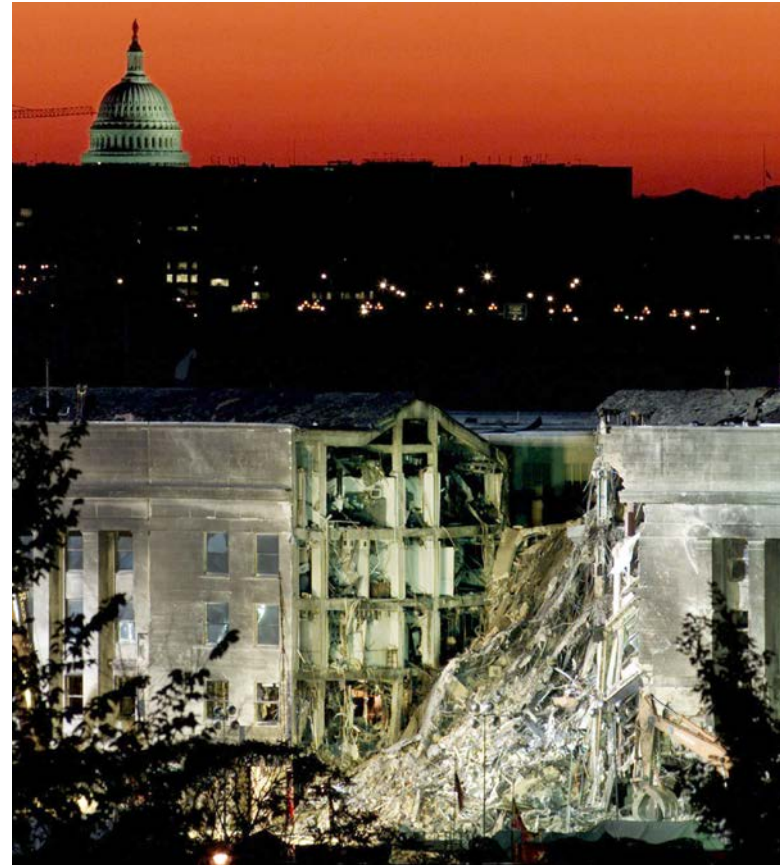
Then, as if out of nowhere, came the roar of jet engines overhead. The skyscraper-walled canyons of the city were used to loud and unusual sounds, but never one like this. As pedestrians looked skyward, they saw a large passenger jet flying unusually low, headed directly toward the World Trade Center.

America Under Attack

Curiosity soon changed to astonished horror and disbelief as American Airlines Flight 11, carrying eighty-seven passengers and crew members, shot like an arrow into upper floors of the North Tower. Seventeen minutes later, a second jet carrying sixty passengers and crew members, United Airlines Flight 175, crashed into the South Tower. Each crash was immediately followed by an enormous explosion as the jets, filled with fuel, erupted into gigantic fireballs.



The Twin Towers burn after being hit by planes on September 11, 2001.



Sunrise at the U.S. Capitol building (background) five days after a jet slammed into the Pentagon (foreground)

Not long after, as Americans were getting news of the Twin Towers tragedy, reports came of another passenger jet crashing into the Pentagon, located across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C. The Pentagon, which houses offices of the United States military, immediately caught fire. All fifty-nine passengers and crew members aboard the plane were killed.

The United States was under attack. It was now clear that these planes had been **hijacked** and intentionally used as missiles to destroy American landmarks. No one knew yet how many planes had been hijacked—perhaps others were still out there. All planes in the air that morning were directed to land, while international flights to the United States were rerouted to airports in Canada and Mexico. All air traffic other than military aircraft was grounded. The skies over the United States fell strangely silent.

In fact, one other plane, United Airlines Flight 93, had been hijacked. Using cell phones, passengers aboard the plane learned from friends and relatives on the ground that three other hijacked planes had been flown into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. Determined not to let their plane be used as a weapon, the passengers and crew mounted a counterattack against the hijackers. In response, the hijackers rolled the plane over. At 10:03, it crashed into the ground outside of Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Many believe the hijackers' target was either the United States Capitol or the White House, both located in Washington, D.C. The brave passengers and crew stopped that attack, but all forty of them died.

American Airlines 11



- **Scheduled Flight:** Boston Logan International Airport to Los Angeles International Airport, departed at 7:59 a.m.
- **Crash:** World Trade Center North at 8:45 a.m.

United Airlines 175



- **Scheduled Flight:** Boston Logan International Airport to Los Angeles International Airport, departed at 7:58 a.m.
- **Crash:** World Trade Center South at 9:05 a.m.

American Airlines 77



- **Scheduled Flight:** Dulles International Airport to Los Angeles International Airport, departed at 8:10 a.m.
- **Crash:** West side of Pentagon, 9:40 a.m.

United Airlines 93



- **Scheduled Flight:** Newark International Airport to San Francisco International Airport, departed at 8:10 a.m.
- **Crash:** Shanksville, PA, at 10:10 a.m.



FBI investigators search the crater left by the crash of United Airlines Flight 93 near Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

President George W. Bush was visiting an elementary school in Florida when the first plane and then the second plane crashed into the Twin Towers. He was soon hustled off to his special plane, then escorted through the air by six fighter jets. Back at the White House that evening, he gave a five-minute television speech to the nation, in which he said, "These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American **resolve**."



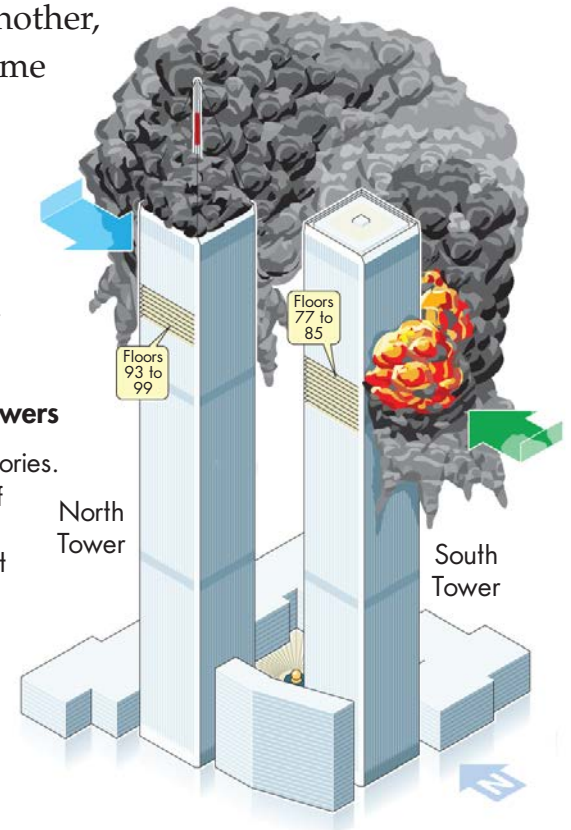
U.S. President George W. Bush is informed of a second plane hitting the World Trade Center.

Twin Towers Collapse

In New York City and Arlington, Virginia, home of the Pentagon, emergency responders were called into action. After the first plane crashed into the North Tower, police and firefighters began **evacuating** more than 14,000 workers from both the North and South Towers. Rescuers were able to quickly remove most of the workers from the floors beneath where the planes struck the towers. At 9:59, 56 minutes after the second plane smashed into the South Tower, one floor collapsed onto another, and the tower came crashing down. Twenty-nine minutes later, at 10:28, the North Tower collapsed.

Escape from Twin Towers

Each tower was 110 stories. In each tower, 99% of those below the crash survived. At the impact area and above, survival was limited to just a handful of people in the South Tower.





Photos 1-2 show the collapse of the South Tower. Photos 3-7 show the collapse of the North Tower 29 minutes later.



The South Tower collapsed after 56 minutes, the North after 102 minutes.

The **debris** from the two towers damaged surrounding buildings and set fires, resulting in the complete destruction of two other buildings nearby. Many other buildings suffered heavy damage, and some were later targeted for **demolition**.



Firefighters charge through the rubble of the Twin Towers.

Many firefighters and police officers died in the buildings while trying to rescue hundreds of people trapped by the fires and heavy smoke. A total of 2,753 victims died as a result of the attack on the Twin Towers. They included citizens of more than 75 countries, both young and old. Even years after the attack on the World Trade Center, the official death toll continues to increase as people die from lung conditions and other diseases brought on by the destruction.

Total Number of Victims Who Died as a Result of the 9/11 Attacks

World Trade Center: 2,753

Source: Associated Press

Pentagon: 184

Source: PBS

Shanksville, PA: 40

Source: USA Today

The Heroes

Through this terrible tragedy emerged thousands of heroes. They include firefighters, police officers, emergency medical workers, ordinary citizens, office workers, ironworkers, and others who went to work removing the rubble and searching for victims. Some of these heroes made the greatest **sacrifice** by giving up their lives while trying to save others.



Firefighters salute during a ceremony at the World Trade Center site.

The heaviest toll for emergency responders was paid by the New York Fire Department, which lost 341 firefighters and two paramedics. Most died when they were trapped inside the collapsing Twin Towers.



A fire helmet found at the World Trade Center site

When officials realized the towers were unstable, they attempted to order the rescuers who had entered the towers to evacuate. But faulty communication systems and all the **chaos** prevented the message from reaching the rescuers. A total of sixty police officers also lost their lives, as well as eight emergency medical responders from private companies.

Numerous stories began to emerge about workers inside the towers leading others to safety. One such hero was Rick Rescorla, whose firm had offices in the World Trade Center. Rick was from Great Britain and moved to the United States at the age of twenty-three. He joined the U.S. Army and served in Vietnam. Shortly after the planes struck the towers, Rick called his wife, who was watching events unfold on TV. He told her that he had to evacuate some people from the tower and not to cry. "If something should happen to me, I want you to know I've never been happier," he said. "You made my life." Many of those whom Rick evacuated survived. But as Rick headed back up the stairs one last time to make sure everyone was out, the tower collapsed and he died.



Rick Rescorla uses a megaphone to help organize and evacuate workers from the World Trade Center before its collapse.

Probably no story of heroism was more compelling than that of the handful of victims aboard United Flight 93. The courage of those passengers and crew members prevented Flight 93 from destroying another target and taking more lives. No one will ever know exactly what happened, but we do know that those passengers were heroes.



An 11-year-old girl adjusts a ribbon at the temporary memorial outside of Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Her father was one of 40 who died on Flight 93.

The Cleanup

Immediately after the collapse of the Twin Towers on 9/11, workers began searching through and removing the smoking rubble in search of survivors and victims. The site became known as Ground Zero. At the Pentagon, similar efforts were taking place to remove debris from the damaged building and search for the bodies of the victims. Rubble from the Pentagon was cleared, and the building was repaired within a year. A **memorial** built next to the Pentagon building opened to the public exactly seven years after the attacks.



Visitors walk among the benches of the Pentagon Memorial in Washington, D.C. The benches represent the 184 victims of the attack on the Pentagon.

The cleanup of the World Trade Center took much longer. An army of ironworkers, heavy-equipment operators, and other workers labored around the clock. They cut apart tangled and



Cleanup at the site of the World Trade Center

twisted steel and hauled it away from the site. They carefully sifted through the debris, searching for the remains of victims. After nearly nine months, they had removed 1.8 million tons of steel and concrete from the site where the Twin Towers once stood.

What remained was a huge

hole that became known as “The Pit.” People began plans to build a new World Trade Center as well as a memorial to the victims.

In Shanksville, Pennsylvania, people quickly cleared away the wreckage. They erected a temporary memorial just 500 yards from the crash site. Years later, a permanent memorial to Flight 93 was built. The Memorial Plaza includes a black granite walkway where visitors can follow part of the flight path along the Wall of Names. The wall is made of forty marble panels that are inscribed with the names of the passengers and crew.

Who Was Responsible

Who was behind the deadly surprise attack? Suspicion quickly fell upon an organization of **terrorists** known as Al-Qaeda (al-KY-duh). This terrorist group began about twenty years prior to the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. It formed to resist the invasion of Afghanistan by what was then the Soviet Union. By 2001, Al-Qaeda claimed that its purpose was to rid the Middle East of the influence of the United States and Western Europe.

It was only a matter of a few hours after the attacks that the FBI released the names of nineteen men suspected of hijacking the airplanes. The suitcase of the hijackers’ leader did not make it aboard the plane he piloted. His suitcase was later found to contain the names of all nineteen hijackers, along



Osama bin Laden in 1998

with other important evidence. Before the end of the day, investigators also discovered evidence that pointed to Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden as the **mastermind** of the attacks.

A Swift Response

Immediately following the September 11 attacks, the U.S. military began preparing plans to seek out and punish those responsible. Less than a month after September 11, the United States and its allies began bombing suspected Al-Qaeda camps in Afghanistan. Attacks were also carried out against the ruling Taliban, a **fundamentalist** Muslim group, some of whose members provided safe spots for Al-Qaeda within the borders of Afghanistan.

President Bush and Congress passed the Homeland Security Act of 2002, which created



a new government department—the Department of Homeland Security. Congress also passed the USA Patriot Act to help find, arrest, and prosecute terrorists.

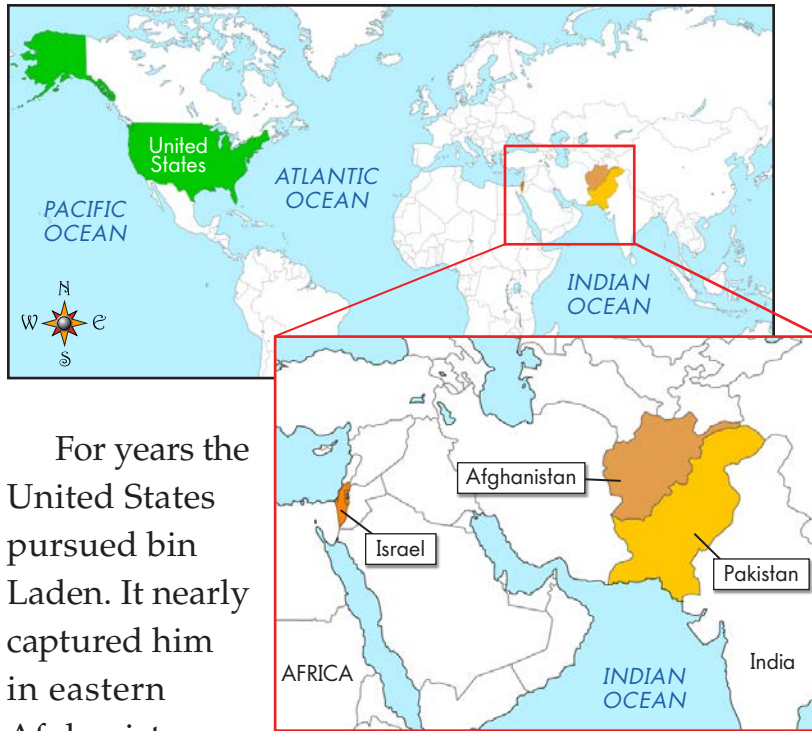
An employee of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) gently wands a three-year-old girl before her family travels from Denver back to their home in Boston in 2003.

In an attempt to prevent future attacks, the government tightened security along U.S. borders, at shipping ports, and at U.S. airports. Other countries around the world took similar action. In many ways, life after 9/11 was not the same.

For more than three years, Al-Qaeda and its leader, Osama bin Laden, denied any involvement in the attacks. Finally, in 2004, bin Laden publicly claimed responsibility. He stated that the motive for the attacks was to punish the United States for stationing troops in Middle Eastern countries during the 1991 Gulf War and for its support of the country of Israel.

A Brief History of Israel

Between 1933 and 1945, approximately six million Jews were put to death in areas under the control of Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany. This organized effort to kill all the Jews in Europe is known as the Holocaust. After World War II, many surviving Jews wanted to live in a country all their own, where they would always feel safe and welcome. They chose Israel, their ancient homeland in the Middle East. But to create the modern state of Israel in 1948, they had to claim land that Arabs in surrounding countries did not want to give up because the Arabs, too, considered that land their home. Relations between Israel and those surrounding countries have been rocky ever since.



For years the United States pursued bin Laden. It nearly captured him in eastern Afghanistan before he fled across the border into Pakistan. On May 1, 2011, President Obama announced that a U.S. Navy team with special training had launched a raid on a **compound** in Pakistan where bin Laden was thought to be hiding. They swiftly entered the compound, found bin Laden, and shot him. His body was transported to a Navy ship and buried at sea.

Today the United States and several allies continue to carry out a war against terrorism. U.S. troops remain in parts of the Middle East and on alert in other areas of the world.

A New Trade Center

Soon after the destruction of the Twin Towers, people launched plans to build a new structure on the site. In 2006, after much debate, construction of a new tower, One World Trade Center, began. The tower is one of the tallest buildings in the world. It was completed in 2014. Other towers are still being built on the site.



One World Trade Center stands 1,776 feet (541 m) including its antenna—the same number as the year that America claimed its independence from Great Britain.

In addition to the new buildings, a memorial and a museum were built at Ground Zero. The memorial honors those who lost their lives in the attacks. It features two large reflecting pools set within a grove of trees. The names of all the victims are inscribed in bronze panels bordering the pools. The memorial also features North America's largest artificial waterfalls. The pools and twin waterfalls were built within the footprints of where the Twin Towers once stood.

The museum tells the story of 9/11 and the events leading up to the tragic day. It has portraits of the victims of the attack and artifacts from the original site. The museum's purpose is to educate the millions of people who visit the site each year. The hope is that what they learn will help build a better future for all people and prevent a tragedy like 9/11 from ever happening again.



Glossary

chaos (<i>n.</i>)	confusion; lack of order (p. 14)
compound (<i>n.</i>)	a walled-off area containing a group of buildings (p. 21)
debris (<i>n.</i>)	scattered pieces of something that are left after the rest has been destroyed or is gone (p. 11)
demolition (<i>n.</i>)	the act of destroying something completely, often by means of explosives (p. 11)
evacuating (<i>v.</i>)	moving people out of danger (p. 10)
fundamentalist (<i>adj.</i>)	marked by a strict following of a set of beliefs, often relating to religion (p. 19)
hijacked (<i>v.</i>)	seized control of a vehicle by outside force (p. 7)
mastermind (<i>n.</i>)	a person who invents, plans, and directs a complex or difficult project (p. 18)
memorial (<i>n.</i>)	something that represents the memory of a person, place, thing, or event (p. 16)
resolve (<i>n.</i>)	determination (p. 9)
sacrifice (<i>n.</i>)	an action or object unselfishly given to help other people or a cause (p. 13)
terrorists (<i>n.</i>)	people who use terror as a political weapon (p. 18)