SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS

On a calm Tuesday morning on September 11, 2001, the United States of America suffered an unprecedented terrorist attack, the worst in the nation’s history and the largest foreign attack on American soil since the attacks on Pearl Harbor. Nearly 3,000 men, women, and children died that morning, thousands were injured, and many have suffered long-term health effects. The events of September 11 shocked the nation and the world. A terrorist organization, al-Qaeda, then led by Osama Bin Laden, took responsibility for planning and carrying out the attacks.

That morning, nineteen al-Qaeda terrorists boarded four separate planes with the intention of using them as guided missiles against civilian targets. Despite screening procedures, all nineteen terrorists passed through security checkpoints at the airports and were allowed to board. Armed with knives, mace, and box-cutters, the terrorists waited until the planes took off before attacking the flight crew and hijacking the planes. After taking control of the planes, the terrorists set off on suicide missions to crash the planes into buildings.

At 8:46 a.m., American Airlines Flight 11, originally headed from Boston to Los Angeles, crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City. All on board were killed instantly, as well as many inside the North Tower. First-responders, including firefighters, policeman, Red Cross and emergency crews, and civilians, began to help people evacuate from the North Tower. At this point, it was not clear to onlookers and the news media whether the crash was an accident or a terrorist attack. There was no longer any doubt, however, when a second plane, United Airlines Flight 175, crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m. Flight 175 also took off from Boston and was hijacked in the same way as Flight 11. At this point in the morning, both towers were on fire, with huge plumes of smoke billowing from the crash sites. Emergency crews were overwhelmed and the entire city was in a state of panic.

Meanwhile, a third flight, American Airlines Flight 77, was hijacked shortly after its departure from Washington Dulles International Airport in Virginia. At 9:37, the plane crashed into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the United States Department of Defense. Everyone on board and 125 people in the Pentagon died as a result of the attack. The fourth and final plane, United Airlines Flight 93, was hijacked at around 9:28 a.m., after taking off from Newark, New Jersey. The plane was turned away from its destination by the terrorists and started flying towards Washington D.C. By this time, the attacks on the World Trade Center were well known, and several passengers learned of the attacks by calling loved ones on their cell phones. By a vote, passengers decided to attempt to take back control of the plane. The passengers rushed the terrorists and nearly took control of the cockpit. The terrorists piloting the plane decided to crash the
plane when they realized that the passengers were about to regain control of the plane. United Airlines Flight 93 crashed in a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, killing everyone on board. By attacking the terrorists, the passengers of Flight 93 prevented the plane from being used as a weapon against the Capitol Building or the White House.

In New York, as emergency crews continued to help people evacuate, the two towers collapsed because they were structurally weakened from the explosion and fire. The North Tower collapsed at 9:59 a.m., and the South Tower collapsed at 10:28 a.m. Many people were still inside the buildings at the time of their collapse, including civilians, emergency crews, firefighters, policemen, and others.

Although nearly 3,000 people died in the attacks of September 11, the heroic efforts of emergency crews and citizens saved the lives of many people in New York City and at the Pentagon. Without their sacrifice, the death toll would have been far higher. President George W. Bush addressed the nation and the world that evening, condemning the attacks on “our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom” and praising “the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could.”

As a response to the attacks on September 11, the United States launched a military action against the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban is a terrorist group that controlled much of Afghanistan at the time of the attacks. The Taliban helped to fund and train al-Qaeda terrorists planning the September 11 attacks. The United States’ military action was intended to destroy Taliban military operations and terrorist training camps, and to capture or kill those responsible for the September 11 attacks. While the United States Military was able to eliminate Taliban control over most of the major cities in Afghanistan, the Taliban still has control over some rural towns (as of 2011). U.S. and international allied forces are still fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, in what has become a 10-year war.

Many high-ranking al-Qaeda terrorists, including Osama bin Laden, fled to the neighboring country of Pakistan during the war. On May 1, 2011, nearly 10 years after he helped orchestrate September 11, Osama bin Laden was killed in his compound in Pakistan by US special forces. After bin Laden’s death, President Barack Obama said that the “death of bin Laden marks the most significant achievement to date in our nation’s effort to defeat al Qaeda.” For many affected by the attacks of September 11, Osama bin Laden’s death brought a sense of closure to one of the most horrific events in history.
ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS

1. Terrorists crashed two planes into the North and South Towers of what building?
   a. The Empire State Building
   b. The White House
   c. The World Trade Center
   d. The John Hancock Center

2. What terrorist organization(s) planned and carried out the attacks of September 11, 2001?
   a. The Taliban
   b. al-Qaeda
   c. Osbat al-Ansar
   d. The Irish Republican Army
   e. Both a and b

3. The emergency crews that helped evacuate people from the towers included which of the following?
   a. Firefighters
   b. Police
   c. Red Cross and emergency crews
   d. Helpful citizens
   e. All of the above

4. On which flight did the passengers attack the terrorists and prevent the plane from crashing into another building?
   a. United Airlines Flight 93
   b. American Airlines Flight 11
   c. United Airlines Flight 175
   d. American Airlines Flight 77

5. Why did the United States retaliate by attacking the Taliban in Afghanistan?
   a. The Taliban helped to fund al-Qaeda
   b. The Taliban was involved in the international drug trade
   c. The Taliban had several training camps that were used to train terrorists that carried out the September 11 attacks.
   d. Both a and c
   e. Both b and c

6. What happened on May 1, 2011?
   a. The U.S. military ended combat operations in Afghanistan
   b. Osama bin Laden was killed in a raid by U.S. forces in Pakistan
   c. The U.S. began another military campaign to defeat the Taliban
   d. Another terrorist attack by al-Qaeda occurred on U.S. soil
Name____________________________________________________________

Answer the Questions about the September 11 attacks with complete sentences.

1. How have the events of September 11, 2001 affected your life? How do you think these attacks have changed the world? How would your life be different if these attacks never occurred?

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2. What do you do on September 11th to commemorate those that lost their lives in the terrorist attacks? If you haven’t done anything in the past to commemorate September 11, what could you do this year?

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Answers to *SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS*

**MULTIPLE CHOICE**

1. c  
2. e  
3. e  
4. a  
5. d  
6. b

**SHORT RESPONSE**

1. Answers will vary.  
2. Answers will vary.