



YANKEE POST

Fall 2026 Edition



Presidents Message:

Greetings, Yankee Post readers,

I hope each of you found time this summer to relax and recharge. It was a summer filled with reminders of the international unity and joy that only the World Cup can bring, along with the commemoration of the 250th anniversary of America's founding. As the days begin to grow shorter, and a new academic year begins, I hope this issue offers space to reflect and explore new possibilities for learning.

While the commemoration of one historic anniversary has passed, another looms large at the start of the school year. This September marks the 25th anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001. September 11 left an indelible mark on my life and education. The attacks occurred as I sat in a seventh-grade classroom during my first week of middle school on Long Island, in the shadow of New York City. Nearly a decade later, Osama bin Laden was killed just days before I walked across the stage to accept my undergraduate diploma. Having moved through high school and college as 9/11, the War on Terror, and other geopolitical events unfolded, that period still feels visceral to me.

Yet the students entering our classrooms today are as far removed from September 11 as I was from the fall of Saigon or the post-Watergate election of Jimmy Carter. As a student, those moments felt like distant memories with little bearing on my world. Only later did I recognize how profoundly they had shaped the country I inherited.

The high school students we teach today have no living memory of September 11. Many are unaware of how deeply it has shaped their world by directing U.S. foreign policy and military engagements abroad, influencing immigration policy, and reshaping debates over national security, civil liberties, and religious discrimination. As this anniversary approaches, it is important that we not only remember the events of that day, but also teach them in ways students can contextualize and understand.

When I teach about this monumental event, I begin with student questions created through the Question Formulation Technique. From there, we examine the essential facts of the coordinated attacks and their immediate consequences, but we also explore stories of courage and community. One of my most valued resources is a brief documentary about the Great Boat Lift, the impromptu evacuation of Lower Manhattan that is often described as the largest maritime evacuation in history. I find myself returning to this story because it demonstrates how strangers can come together to uplift and protect one another in some of humanity's darkest moments. For me, rooting this history in our shared humanity is an important part of helping students understand the events of that day.

I have also found that oral histories deepen student understanding. Because this anniversary occurs so early in the academic year, these primary sources provide an excellent opportunity for students to engage in the authentic work of historians. Listening closely to primary sources allows students to consider perspectives and experiences vastly different from their own. Students do have experience seeing the horrific images of this day, but centering the day on the individual lives of ordinary people has proven to be a powerful academic experience. As an extension of this work, I invite students to conduct oral history interviews or, at the very least, begin an intergenerational conversation at home.

Those conversations demonstrate that there is no single national experience of September 11. Some students have shared stories of family members watching the towers fall or seeking safety alongside strangers. Others have described the anti-Muslim racism and Islamophobia their families and communities experienced in the aftermath, including harassment, discrimination, and violence directed at anyone even perceived to be Muslim. Some families watched from countries far away, wondering how events thousands of miles from them might affect their communities, dreams of immigrating to America, or just worried about loved ones in New York.

Others remember how the subsequent War on Terror affected their families through military service, displacement, and unfathomable loss. The thousands of lives taken on September 11 demand our remembrance, but the story did not end that day. The ripples from the attacks and the response to them continue to shape the lives and minds of our students, sometimes in obvious ways and sometimes much more subtly.

As important as it is to look back in remembrance, we must also prepare students to look ahead to the 2026 midterm elections. Confidence in our democratic institutions has been strained by election denialism, partisan gerrymandering, the erosion of protections under the Voting Rights Act, and easily debunked conspiracy theories about election security.

Social studies educators face the difficult question of how to teach this election cycle and political current events more broadly. Every teacher and district operates within a unique set of circumstances, and entering political discussions can feel like inviting controversy. Yet that is precisely why robust civics education matters. We have an obligation to uphold constitutional principles, and help students navigate challenging conversations in professional and developmentally appropriate ways. I believe the only way out of a toxic political culture is through it. The best path forward begins with classrooms rooted in mutual respect, civil

discourse, foundational documents, and verifiable facts. Our role is not to tell students what to think, but to provide them with the knowledge and skills necessary to examine evidence, recognize falsehoods, consider competing arguments, and reach informed conclusions.

As I consider these two issues, I see a thread connecting the teaching of September 11 with the coming election cycle: the increasingly urgent need for media literacy. In both cases, students are asked to make sense of complex, emotionally charged events that are often filtered through incomplete, biased, or misleading information. The way 9/11 was reported and remembered across different media sources shaped public understanding in powerful ways, just as today's election politics are shaped by rapidly circulating news, commentary, and misinformation.

Artificial intelligence is further changing how students conduct research, while social media algorithms increasingly determine the information they encounter and amplify. In this environment, students must learn to thoughtfully evaluate sources, identify bias, and verify claims with clarity. I am deeply grateful to my social studies and humanities colleagues, as well as the library media specialists who dedicate their talents to supporting students and teachers in this increasingly important work. Social studies educators cannot eliminate misinformation or institutional distrust on our own. We can, however, create classrooms in which students feel safe taking academic risks and thinking critically about the information they encounter.

Whether we are helping students understand the enduring consequences of September 11 or preparing them to interpret an election unfolding in real time, our responsibility extends beyond teaching facts. We help students understand how the past shaped the world they inherited and prepare them to become informed citizens, ready to participate in what comes next for our republic.

I wish you the best as the new academic year begins, and I hope CCSS can continue to play an important role in the meaningful work you do each day.

In Gratitude,

Maxwell Comando
President, Connecticut Council for the Social Studies





FROM THE EDITORS' DESKS



Stephen Armstrong

LéAnn Murphy Cassidy

The Choice Before the United States of America: A Nation at the Crossroads

by *LéAnn Murphy Cassidy*

The midterm election is about more than politics, it is about the nation we want to become. As Americans prepare to head to the polls this fall, the country finds itself at another defining crossroads. Midterm elections have traditionally served as a referendum on the party in power, but this year's vote carries broader implications. Voters are confronting not a single issue, but a convergence of economic uncertainty, geopolitical instability, technological disruption, and growing distrust in public institutions. The question before the nation is no longer simply *which party should govern?* It is whether our political system can still unite Americans around common challenges.

The economy remains the issue most likely to influence voters. Although unemployment has remained relatively low by historical standards, many families continue to feel squeezed by the high cost of housing, groceries, insurance, healthcare, and childcare. Inflation may have slowed from its recent peaks, but prices remain significantly higher than they were just a few years ago. For many Americans, paychecks have not fully kept pace with the cost of living. Younger families wonder if they will ever afford a home, while retirees worry about preserving their savings.

Immigration continues to divide the country. Record numbers of migrants arriving at the southern border have fueled concerns about security, public resources, and the effectiveness of federal policy. At the same time, many businesses continue to face labor shortages, and humanitarian concerns remain central to the debate. Americans broadly agree that the current immigration system is broken, but consensus on how to fix it has proven elusive.

Crime and public safety also remain important issues. While national crime statistics fluctuate and many violent crime rates have declined from pandemic-era highs, public perception often tells a different story. Communities continue to grapple with opioid addiction, organized retail theft, gun violence, and concerns about policing. Voters are searching for leaders who can balance effective law enforcement with accountability and justice.

Healthcare presents another growing challenge. Rising insurance premiums, prescription drug costs, shortages of healthcare professionals, and access to mental health services continue to strain families across the nation. As America's population ages, questions surrounding Medicare, Medicaid, long-term care, and the future of Social Security have become increasingly urgent.

Education has become one of the country's most politically charged issues. Debates over curriculum, parental rights, standardized testing, school funding, and the role of technology have transformed local school board meetings into national political battlegrounds. Artificial intelligence now introduces a new set of opportunities and challenges, forcing educators to rethink instruction while preparing students for careers that may not yet exist.

America's role in the world also weighs heavily on voters' minds. Ongoing conflicts in Europe and the Middle East, growing competition with China, cybersecurity threats, and questions about military readiness all demand thoughtful leadership. At the same time, Americans increasingly ask how the nation can maintain global leadership while addressing pressing needs at home.

Yet perhaps no issue is more troubling than the erosion of trust itself.

Confidence in Congress, the media, higher education, major corporations, and even the electoral process has declined over the past two decades. Political disagreement has increasingly given way to political hostility. Social media algorithms reward outrage over understanding, while misinformation spreads faster than careful analysis. Americans often consume different versions of reality, making compromise increasingly difficult.

The result is a political climate in which opponents are too often viewed not as fellow citizens with different ideas, but as enemies. Democracy cannot thrive under those conditions. Elections are designed to settle disagreements peacefully, not deepen divisions.

Neither major political party possesses all the answers. Republicans argue that stronger borders, lower taxes, deregulation, and reduced government spending will strengthen the economy and restore national security. Democrats contend that investments in infrastructure, education, healthcare, clean energy, and expanded social programs are essential for long-term prosperity and equity. Each perspective speaks to legitimate concerns. Each also faces difficult tradeoffs.

The challenge for voters is to look beyond campaign slogans and ask harder questions. Which candidates demonstrate competence rather than simply confidence? Which offers practical solutions instead of political theater? Which shows a willingness to work across party lines when the nation's interests demand cooperation?

History reminds us that America's greatest achievements have rarely emerged from ideological purity. They have come from compromise, innovation, and an enduring belief that imperfect people can build a more perfect union.

The stakes this fall extend beyond control of Congress or state legislatures. They encompass the nation's fiscal future, the strength of democratic institutions, America's role on the world stage, and the civic culture we leave for the next generation.

Voting remains one of the few moments when every citizen possesses an equal voice. It deserves more than partisan loyalty or emotional reaction. It deserves informed judgment.

Regardless of political affiliation, Americans should enter the voting booth remembering that elections are not merely contests between parties. They are opportunities to shape the future of the republic. Our challenges are real, but so is our capacity to meet them if we choose leaders committed not only to winning elections, but to governing a diverse nation with wisdom, humility, and respect for the Constitution.

In the end, the health of American democracy will depend less on which party prevails than on whether citizens remain engaged, informed, and willing to see one another not as adversaries, but as partners in the ongoing experiment that is the United States of America.

A Nation at 250: Celebrating the Declaration of Independence

By *Stephen Armstrong*

Many activities are taking place in Connecticut and throughout the nation related to America 250. Some of these activities are deeply celebratory; others call for the commemoration of our country's past. Similar activities took place in other anniversaries of 1776: 1826, 1876, 1926, and 1976. Analyzing events related to the anniversaries during these years tell us much about the United States during these time periods and the attitude in each era related to the original Declaration.

1826: Events during this year were celebrated and organized locally. Many activities also included the commemoration of America's economic growth and expansion. Historians see these events as helping to heal the deep divisions coming from the 1824 presidential election between Andrew Jackson and Martin van Buren. Many efforts were taken to honor the remaining veterans of the American Revolution. It should be remembered that ex-presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826.

1876: Events surrounding the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence displayed incredible optimism: many activities also included floats and displays related to the massive industrial growth of the United States and its increasing world power. The Centennial Exposition took place in Philadelphia; ¼ of all Americans visited the exposition. 1876 events helped to promote healing; tensions from the Civil War remained. It should be noted that into the twentieth century many southerners did not celebrate July 4. Many groups could not celebrate accomplishments in 1876, including women. Custer's Last Stand took place on June 25th and 26th, 1876; this was followed by the eradication of Native American tribes. On July 4, a race riot took place in Hamburg, South Carolina; one hundred blacks were killed in the massacre.

1926: The 1926 celebrations created far less excitement than those that occurred in 1876. An exposition was again built in Philadelphia but was not well attended. Americans in 1926 were in the middle of a national crisis of identity and were not sure of what to celebrate. Events celebrated modernism in technology and culture. At the same time, the country was in the midst of prohibition and was experiencing cultural clashes over immigration, religion (the Scopes Trial), and music (the impact of jazz). In 1926 modernism was being celebrated; at the same time the Ku Klux Klan had unprecedented power in the country.

1976: The 1976 anniversary was the most celebratory of all. Many people who remember the 1776 anniversary remember the patriotism that came from the events of that year. American immigrants were deeply involved in these celebrations. Activities in 1976 provided an opportunity for healing from the scars of the Vietnam War, Watergate, and racial tensions. Celebratory events took place in virtually every community in the United States. One criticism of the 1976 events was the commercial nature of some of them. It did seem a bit much to have Ronald McDonald standing beside a birthday cake for America. Events of 2026 were important for the United States. Studying previous celebrations can assist us in studying the values and beliefs of previous time periods.

Sources:

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Remembrance

There are certain days in history that become frozen in time. We remember exactly where we were, what we were doing, and how our lives changed in a single moment.

For me, that day was September 11, 2001.

Twenty-five years have passed, yet I can still picture my sixth-grade social studies classroom at Lincoln Middle School. Like teachers across America, I was expected to do what educators have always done during moments of uncertainty: provide stability when the world outside seemed anything but stable. Inside, however, I was anything but calm.

As the horrifying events unfolded, my thoughts raced far beyond the walls of my classroom. One of my brothers had been scheduled to fly out of Boston. Another brother worked in lower Manhattan, close to the World Trade Center Complex, where unimaginable devastation was occurring. At the same time, I was the mother of five children. Like millions of Americans, I was desperate for answers, wondering whether the people I loved were safe while knowing that countless other families were asking the very same questions.

Yet in front of me sat a room full of eleven- and twelve-year-olds. They looked to me for reassurance, for answers, and for some indication that everything would somehow be all right. I didn't have those answers. None of us did. But I understood that my students needed something more important than certainty; they needed an adult who could offer calm in the midst of chaos.

So, like thousands of teachers across the country, I took a deep breath and did my best to become that calm presence, even as fear gripped my own heart. That, perhaps, was one of the untold stories of September 11.

While firefighters raced into burning buildings, police officers secured cities, and first responders answered impossible calls, America's teachers quietly carried another responsibility. We cared for children while many of

us were silently worrying about our own families. We answered difficult questions without having answers ourselves. We helped children make sense of a world that suddenly no longer made sense.

The next day brought something unexpected. It brought hope. Not because the pain had lessened, it had not; but because our classrooms became places where healing could begin. My students needed space to ask questions, to share fears, to express confusion, and sometimes simply to sit in silence. I realized that I needed that same space as well.

Those conversations reminded me that schools are more than places of academic learning. They are communities where children discover resilience, empathy, and compassion. They are places where history is not only taught but lived.

Now, twenty-five years later, many of today's students, and even many early career teachers, know the date September 11, 2001 only through textbooks, photographs, and documentaries. They have never experienced the uncertainty of that day, the silence that followed, or the extraordinary unity that emerged across our nation.

It is our responsibility to ensure that they understand more than the facts. They need to know about the nearly 3,000 innocent lives that were stolen. They need to know about the firefighters who climbed stairs others were desperately trying to descend, the police officers who ran toward danger, the paramedics who refused to abandon hope, the passengers aboard United Flight 93 who chose courage over fear, and the countless recovery workers who labored for months at Ground Zero.

But they also need to know about the quieter acts of courage. They need to know about teachers who comforted frightened children while wondering about their own loved ones. They need to know about neighbors who became family, strangers who became helpers, and communities that discovered remarkable strength through shared compassion.

September 11 revealed the darkest depths of hatred, but it also illuminated the extraordinary goodness of ordinary people.

That lesson feels especially important today. Our nation often finds itself divided by politics, ideology, and competing visions of the future. We sometimes forget that what unites us is far greater than what separates us. On September 12, 2001, Americans did not ask one another how they voted, what faith they practiced, or where they came from. They simply reached out to help.

Perhaps that is one of the greatest lessons of September 11: not only that evil exists, but that goodness is stronger when people choose one another over division.

As a teacher, I have always believed that education is about more than imparting knowledge. It is about preparing young people to become thoughtful citizens and compassionate human beings. Every year, another group of students enters our classrooms with no personal memory of that September morning. Each year, it becomes increasingly important that we tell the stories, not to perpetuate fear, but to preserve understanding. History survives because people remember.

This September, as bells ring, names are read, and flags fly at half-staff, I will remember the fear I carried for my brothers, the concern I felt as a mother, and the responsibility I bore as a teacher trying to reassure children while searching for reassurance myself.

But, I will also remember what came next, hope. Hope found in shared grief. Hope found in compassion. Hope found in classrooms where children learned that even in the darkest moments, kindness endures.

Twenty-five years later, the skyline has been rebuilt, generations have grown, and time has continued its steady march forward. Yet our obligation remains unchanged: to remember; to teach; to honor; and to ensure that the courage, sacrifice, resilience, and humanity revealed on September 11, 2001, are never forgotten. Because remembrance is not simply about looking back. It is about shaping the future.



Lesson Lens: Silent 9/11 Poetry Write Around in Social Studies

Lesson by .LeAnn Murphy Cassidy

Some moments in history are so profound that facts and timelines alone cannot fully capture their human impact. September 11, 2001, is one of those moments. While students can learn about the events through historical accounts, primary sources, and documentaries, photographs have a unique ability to preserve the emotions, courage, loss, and resilience experienced on that day. They invite students to pause, observe, and connect with history on a deeply personal level.

The **Silent 9/11 Poetry Write Around** is an inquiry-based lesson that combines historical thinking, close observation, collaborative writing, and reflective poetry. Through the deliberate practice of silence, students slow down their thinking and focus their attention on authentic historical images. Rather than rushing to

interpret or explain, they carefully observe, record details, imagine perspectives, and build meaning together through a series of structured writing prompts.

As students rotate through the photographs, each contributes a unique voice while also building upon the observations and insights of classmates. The result is a collective exploration of history that honors multiple perspectives and demonstrates how shared experiences can inspire individual expression. By the conclusion of the activity, students transform this collaborative writing into an original free-verse poem that reflects their own understanding of remembrance, resilience, hope, and the enduring significance of September 11.

Although designed for commemorating 9/11, this instructional strategy can be adapted to virtually any historical era or social studies topic using compelling historical photographs or other visual primary sources. It encourages students to develop historical empathy, strengthen descriptive and figurative language, practice respectful collaboration, and recognize that history is not simply a collection of events to memorize, but the lived experiences of real people whose stories continue to shape our world.

For more than two decades, I have used this lesson with middle school students during our annual September 11 commemoration. Each year I am reminded that, when given time to observe carefully and reflect quietly, students produce writing of remarkable depth, compassion, and insight. Their poems become lasting tributes, not only to those who experienced September 11, but also to the enduring power of memory, community, and hope.

Overview (grades 6-12)

Over a period of 2 class periods. On day 1 students silently rotate through a series of historical September 11 photographs. Each photograph remains at its station with a sheet of lined paper beside it. Students travel with only their pencils, adding a new response to each photograph as directed by the teacher. By the end of the activity, every student has contributed to every photograph, creating a collaborative collection of observations and poetic language, and begun their own free-verse poems. On day 2, students share their work and then reflect, discuss, and debrief.

Objectives

Students will:

- Observe historical photographs closely.
- Use descriptive and figurative language.
- Build collaborative poetry through shared writing.
- Practice respectful silence and reflection.
- Develop empathy through historical inquiry.

Materials

- Enough carefully selected, non-graphic 9/11 photographs for each student to have their own to start-print all pictures in black and white ([Image file already curated](#))
- One lined sheet of paper beside each photograph
- One lined sheet of paper for each student to complete their personal poem
- Pencils (students carry only their pencils)

- Quiet classical music playing in the background (I prefer Pachelbel's Canon in D, the extended version, as it sets a tone of solemnity and respect during this experience.)
- Clipboards if needed in your classroom space.

Classroom Setup

Arrange the desks so that there is a single circular path through the room if possible. Each spot will have a photograph upside down next to a piece of lined paper. (Enough so that each student has their own.)

- The photograph and lined paper remain at the original spot throughout the activity.

Students travel with only their pencils, as they will be writing at each image.

Expectations

This activity is completed in **absolute silence**. (Give these directions outside the classroom before students enter.)

There is:

- no talking
- no whispering
- no commenting
- no questions once the activity begins
- Leave your belongings along the classroom wall, bring only yourself and a pencil to stand at a paper. Do not touch anything until given directions.

Students communicate only through their writing.

When a student finishes writing after each round, they should **stand up straight beside their station**. This silent signal lets the teacher know they are ready to rotate. The teacher waits until everyone is standing before signaling the next rotation.

Students then move **clockwise one or two stations** (as directed by the teacher based on time available) and continue writing based on teacher directions.

Directions for the Write-Around (Adjust your rounds based on your classroom needs.)

Round 1 – Give the Photograph you are beginning with a Title

Without speaking, carefully study the image.

On the first line of the paper, write a title for the photograph.

The title should capture the feeling, message, or story of the image.

When finished, stand silently until directed to move to the next image. Reminder - the lined paper and the images stay stationary. Students will be writing on different papers each time. (Also, students should not write on the images, only the lined papers.)

Round 2 – Five Things You Notice

Write five observations.

Only describe what you see.

Round 3 – If One Object Could Speak...

Choose one object in the photograph.

Write what it might say about the scene in the image.

Round 4 – Soundscape

List five sounds you imagine hearing.

Think creatively and realistically.

Round 5 - Powerful Words

List three words to describe the scene

Round 6 - Action

List three vivid verbs

Round 7 - Emotion

Describe two emotions this image makes you feel

Round 8 - Sensory Details

List 5 things you see

Round 9 - Sensory Details

Write a statement about how this image makes you feel

Round 10 - Sensory Details

Describe what you might hear if the image had sound

Round 11 - Sensory Details

List 3 smells you would expect if you were in this image

Round 12 - Sensory Details

If this image had color, list 5 colors you would see.

Round 13 - A Person's Thoughts

Choose someone or something in the photograph.

Write an "I wonder..." statement about that person or object

Round 14 - Figurative Language

Write one simile

Round 15 - Figurative Language

Write one metaphor

Round 16 - Figurative Language

Write one personification

Round 17 - Hope

Identify one detail that represents courage, kindness, perseverance, or hope.

Write two or three sentences explaining why.

Round 18 - One Memorable Line

Write one powerful poetic line inspired by all of your senses as you look at the image

Try to create a line someone would remember.

Round 19 - If One Object Could Speak...

Choose one object in the photograph.

Write what it might say about the scene in the image.

Round 20 - Powerful Words

Write three words to describe the scene

Final Writing Activity - From Collaboration to Individual Voice

When the final rotation is complete, students quietly return to the photograph where they began.

Each student should recognize the title they originally created at the top of their original lined paper.

Without speaking, students take a few moments to read every response that has been written beneath their title. They should notice the different observations, emotions, sensory details, figurative language, and perspectives contributed by their classmates.

When everyone has finished reading, the teacher instructs students to **turn the photograph face down**. The image is no longer visible. Students will now rely on their memories and the collective writing generated during the write around.

The teacher distributes a **clean sheet of lined paper** to each student.

Students take the write around, the new paper, and their pencil and find a quiet place in the classroom to write independently.

Using **the title they originally created**, students write it at the top of their new paper.

The collaborative write-around paper serves as a source of inspiration. Students may return to it as needed to reread ideas, words, or phrases, but they should not copy it directly. Instead, they should weave together the images, emotions, and language generated by the class into an original free-verse poem that reflects their own voice using the sensory details and descriptive language that concludes with a line that reflects remembrance, resilience, hope, or the enduring impact of September 11. Students have until the next class to complete their personal poems.

Day 2: Reflection, Sharing, and Debrief

When students have completed their poems, invite volunteers to share their work aloud. As each poem is read, reveal the corresponding photograph once again so listeners can compare the poet's interpretation with the original image. (Note: I will usually read the poems written by the other students out loud, with no names given.) Conclude by discussing how each poem is unique. This reinforces the understanding that history can inspire many different voices, perspectives, and emotional responses while preserving a shared commitment to remembrance. As part of the debrief, it is always helpful to discuss the events of 9/11. In recent years, I have used materials from the 9/11 Museum for this segment.

Teacher Notes

Because every student contributes to every paper, the final products become collective historical reflections. The silence, movement, and shared writing reinforce careful observation and respectful remembrance while demonstrating that history is understood through many voices. I have done this each year since 9/11 and find that it is easiest to set desks up in a way so that there is an easy clockwise flow throughout the room. Students do not sit until the final writing time. All students are able to do this work. The poetry created is always powerful and moving.

Museum Moments: What's New in History Halls?

The Shore Line Trolley Museum, East Haven, Connecticut

The museum's story began with an ending.

In the mid-1940s, the Connecticut Company announced that trolley service between New Haven and Branford would soon be replaced by buses. According to the conductor on my visit, Wayne Sanford, as communities across America watched electric railways disappear, five gentlemen with a shared passion for preserving transportation history refused to let Connecticut's trolleys simply vanish. They organized what became the Branford Electric Railway Association, determined to save both the trolley cars and a portion of the historic railway before they were lost forever. Their vision transformed what began as a small preservation club into one of the nation's premier transportation museums.

When passenger trolley service officially ended on March 8, 1947, the newly formed association immediately assumed operation of a 1.5-mile section of the line. Thanks to their foresight, the railway became the oldest continuously operating suburban trolley line in the United States, a distinction it proudly maintains today. The railway and museum are now listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Branford Electric Railway Historic District.



The tracks themselves tell an important story. Opened in 1900, the Branford Electric Railway connected New Haven, East Haven, and Branford, making travel faster, cleaner, and more affordable than ever before. Trolleys carried workers to factories, students to school, shoppers to downtown businesses, and vacationers to Connecticut's shoreline. They helped shape suburban life decades before the automobile became king. As roads improved and private cars became increasingly common, however, ridership declined. Hurricanes

damaged infrastructure, operating costs climbed, and bus service gradually replaced the trolleys. By 1947, an era had come to an end, but thanks to those original preservationists, it was not forgotten.

Today, the Shore Line Trolley Museum is far more than a collection of antique vehicles. Its collection includes nearly 100 historic transit vehicles representing more than a century of public transportation, along with thousands of photographs, books, documents, maps, uniforms, tickets, and artifacts that tell the broader story of electric rail transit in America. Many of the museum's trolleys have been painstakingly restored by dedicated volunteers, allowing visitors not only to see history but to experience it firsthand with a ride through the scenic marshes between East Haven and Branford.



From the determination of five gentlemen who refused to see history disappear to the thousands of volunteers and visitors who continue that mission today, the Shore Line Trolley Museum stands as a testament to what can be accomplished when a community values

A museum display titled "COLLECTING THE POLE & WIRE" is mounted on a wooden wall. The display includes a large, black, mechanical wire strapping tool with a long handle and a coiled spring. Below the tool, a blue toolbox with a yellow "RECTOR" sign is open, revealing various tools and components. Next to the toolbox is a yellow toy train. The wall is decorated with several historical photographs and documents, including a large red sign with the letters "MIF". A framed plaque on the right side of the display contains text about the history of wire strapping. The entire display is set on a wooden shelf.

Photo Courtesy of L. Cassidy

Preserving a Living Connection to September 11

When people think of the events of September 11, 2001, they often picture the Twin Towers, first responders, and the thousands of lives forever changed. Few realize that some of the most remarkable surviving artifacts from that tragic day are preserved right here in Connecticut at the Shore Line Trolley Museum in East Haven.



Photo Courtesy of L. Cassidy

Known as America's oldest continuously operating suburban trolley museum, the museum is dedicated to preserving the history of electric rail transportation. Yet among its collection of more than ninety historic rail vehicles stands one exhibit unlike any other, a silent witness to one of the defining moments in American history.

A survivor from Ground Zero, PATH Car 745 carried commuters between New Jersey and the World Trade Center. On the morning of September 11, 2001, the train had completed its morning run and was resting in the underground World Trade Center station when terrorists attacked the Twin Towers.

As the towers collapsed above, nearly every railcar in the station was crushed or destroyed. Against incredible odds, Car 745 emerged largely intact, becoming one of only two PATH cars known to have survived the collapse. Its survival has made it one of the most significant transportation artifacts connected to the attacks.



Photo courtesy of The Shoreline Trolley Museum

Following years of careful planning and preservation, the Shore Line Trolley Museum became the permanent home of Car 745. Today, visitors can step inside the railcar, view photographs and original artifacts, and gain a powerful appreciation for the human stories connected to that day.

The museum's ties to September 11 extend beyond the railcar itself.

On my visit to the museum, I had the pleasure of meeting Wayne Sanford. Mr. Sanford, the former museum manager and board president, was serving as East Haven's Fire Chief on September 11, 2001. Like countless first responders across Connecticut, he answered New York City's call for assistance by sending personnel and equipment to support rescue and recovery efforts at Ground Zero. Years later, he helped lead the effort to preserve PATH Car 745 so future generations could learn from this historic artifact.



Photo courtesy of The Shoreline Trolley Museum



Photo courtesy of L. Cassidy

Another key figure is retired PATH engineer Alan Zelazo, who volunteered countless hours to rescue and preserve the car. On the evening of September 11, he operated one of the first trains back into Manhattan, helping restore transportation service during one of the nation's darkest days. Today, he shares his firsthand experiences with museum visitors, providing an extraordinary personal perspective on history.



Photo Courtesy of the Shoreline Trolley Museum

While the Shore Line Trolley Museum celebrates the evolution of streetcars and electric railways, PATH Car 745 serves a different purpose. It is not simply an exhibit. It is a memorial.

Standing inside the car allows visitors to imagine an ordinary workday interrupted by unimaginable tragedy. I, myself, was moved to tears standing in this memorial. The preserved interior, historical photographs, and interpretive displays remind us of the nearly 3,000 innocent lives lost, the courage of first responders, and the resilience shown by Americans in the days and years that followed.



Photo courtesy of L. Cassidy- Former East Haven Fire Chief, Wayne Sanford discussing PATH Car 745 on my visit.

Each September, the museum hosts a Patriot Day remembrance program, welcoming veterans, first responders, survivors, and members of the public to honor those who sacrificed so much and to ensure their stories are never forgotten.

As we commemorate the 25th anniversary of September 11, preserving places like the Shore Line Trolley Museum becomes increasingly important. For younger generations born after 2001, the events of that day exist only in textbooks and documentaries. Artifacts such as PATH Car 745 transform history from something that is read about into something that is experienced.

The museum reminds us that history is not confined to monuments in distant cities. Sometimes it resides just down the road in a preserved railcar, in the memories of volunteers, and in the dedication of those committed to ensuring that future generations never forget.

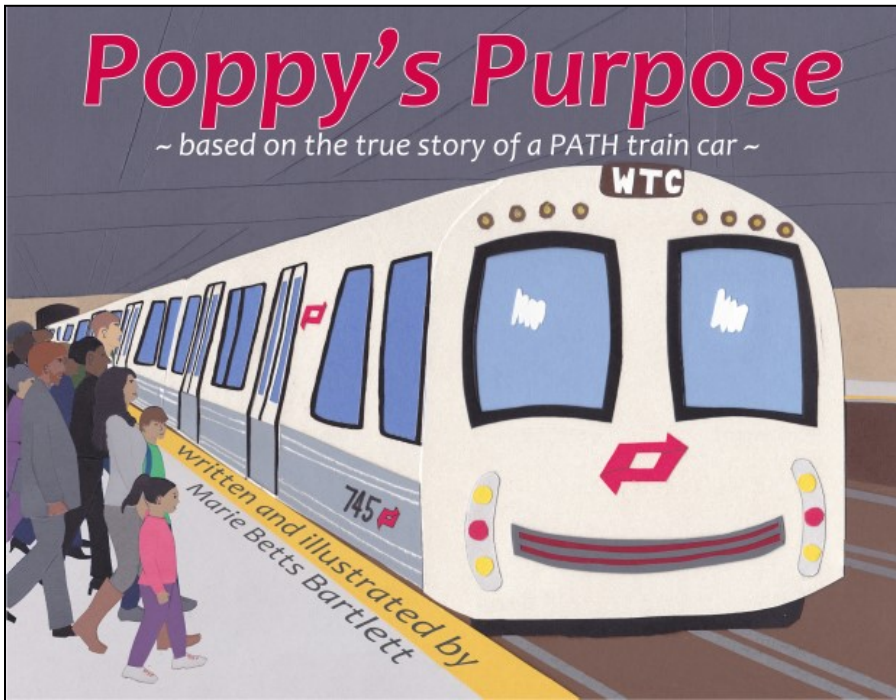
In preserving PATH Car 745, the Shore Line Trolley Museum has done more than save a piece of transportation history. It has preserved a powerful symbol of resilience, remembrance, and hope, one that continues to tell the story of September 11, 2001 for all who walk through its doors.



Photo Courtesy of L. Cassidy

Great Reads in Social Studies: Stories of 9/11 for Young People

Books have the power to help young people understand history through facts, stories, and personal experiences. As we mark the 25th anniversary of September 11, 2001, these reviews highlight books that introduce readers to the events of that day, the courage of those who responded, and the resilience that followed. Whether written as nonfiction, historical fiction, or picture books, each title offers age-appropriate opportunities for children and teens to learn about 9/11, reflect on its lasting impact, and consider the importance of compassion, service, and remembrance.



Book Review: *Poppy's Purpose*

by Marie Betts Bartlett

As our nation approaches the 25th anniversary of September 11, *Poppy's Purpose* by Marie Betts Bartlett offers a remarkable way to introduce one of America's most difficult days to young readers with honesty, hope, and compassion.

Inspired by the true story of a PATH train car that survived the collapse of the World Trade Center, the book follows Poppy, a train whose greatest joy is carrying passengers between New Jersey and New York. When the

events of September 11 suddenly change her world, Poppy is left wondering if she still has a purpose. Rather than dwelling on tragedy, Bartlett gently guides readers toward a timeless lesson: even when our lives change in unexpected ways, we can discover new meaning through service, remembrance, and kindness.

Bartlett masterfully balances historical reality with age-appropriate storytelling. The events of September 11 are acknowledged without overwhelming young children, allowing parents and teachers to begin important conversations in a safe and thoughtful manner. Instead of focusing on fear, the story celebrates resilience, healing, and the many acts of courage and compassion that emerged in the aftermath of tragedy.

The illustrations are warm, expressive, and filled with movement and emotion. Their vibrant collage style invites readers to linger on each page, reinforcing the story's themes of hope and renewal. Poppy herself becomes an instantly lovable character whose journey mirrors the questions many children, and adults, ask during times of uncertainty: *What is my purpose? How can I help?*

What makes *Poppy's Purpose* especially valuable is its versatility. It serves equally well as a read-aloud for elementary students, a classroom resource for teaching resilience and empathy, or an introductory text for discussing September 11 in ways that emphasize community rather than fear. The story naturally opens discussions about memorials, first responders, acts of kindness, and how communities remember difficult chapters in history.

Marie Betts Bartlett has created much more than a children's book about September 11. She has written a story about finding purpose after loss, a lesson that resonates far beyond a single historical event. By showing that even a humble train car can become a place of remembrance and healing, Bartlett reminds readers that every individual has the capacity to bring comfort, hope, and meaning to others.

This Very Tree

by Sean Rubin

Few children's books capture the themes of resilience, remembrance, and hope as beautifully as *This Very Tree* by Sean Rubin. Told from the perspective of the Callery pear tree that survived the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, this moving picture book introduces young readers to one of the most powerful living symbols of healing to emerge from that tragic day.

The story begins with a small tree growing quietly in the plaza between the Twin Towers, providing shade and beauty to the thousands of people who pass by each day. When the attacks of September 11 devastate the site, the tree is buried beneath the rubble and nearly forgotten. Against all odds, it is discovered alive, carefully removed, and nurtured back to health before returning years later to the rebuilt memorial plaza. Today, the "Survivor Tree" stands as a symbol of endurance, hope, and renewal for millions of visitors.

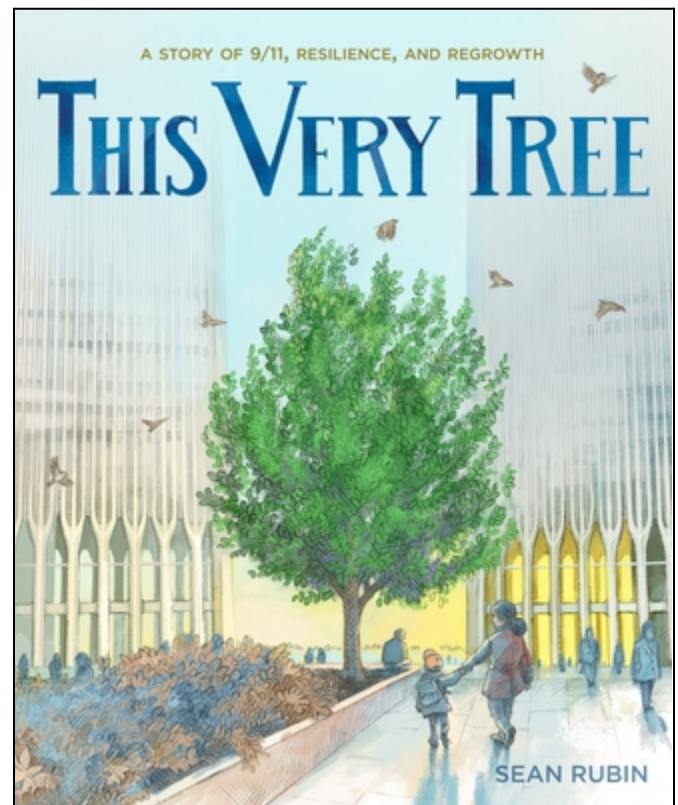
Sean Rubin tells this remarkable true story with remarkable sensitivity. Rather than focusing on the violence of the attacks, he centers the narrative on recovery and the enduring strength of life. His gentle prose makes complex historical events accessible for young children while encouraging meaningful conversations about courage, perseverance, and community.

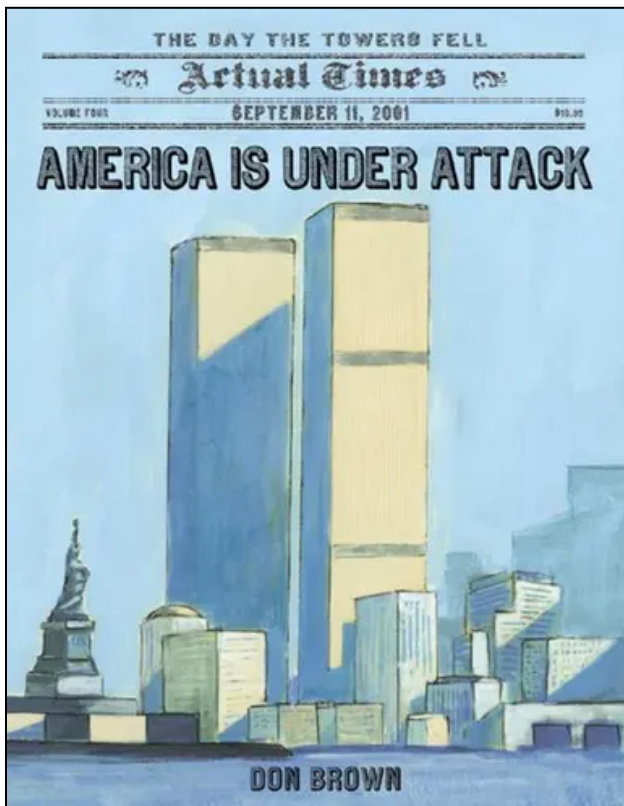
Rubin's illustrations are equally compelling. Rich with warm colors, expressive details, and changing seasons, the artwork mirrors the emotional journey of the tree—from peaceful beginnings, through devastation, to eventual rebirth. Young readers will notice how the illustrations subtly reinforce the passage of time and the healing that follows even the deepest wounds.

One of the greatest strengths of *This Very Tree* is its ability to introduce September 11 in a developmentally appropriate way. Teachers and parents often struggle to explain this chapter of American history to elementary-age children. Rubin offers an entry point that emphasizes hope over fear and remembrance over tragedy. The story naturally leads to discussions about memorials, symbols, caring for one another, and how communities recover after difficult events.

The book also serves as a reminder that history lives not only in monuments and museums but in the living things that witness it. The Survivor Tree has become an enduring emblem of resilience, and through Rubin's storytelling, its message becomes accessible to an entirely new generation.

As communities across the nation commemorate the 25th anniversary of September 11, *This Very Tree* is an outstanding selection for classrooms, libraries, families, and community remembrance events. It encourages young readers to understand that while tragedy can leave lasting scars, hope, kindness, and perseverance can take root and flourish once again.





America Is Under Attack: September 11, 2001 - The Day the Towers Fell **by Don Brown**

Don Brown's *America Is Under Attack: September 11, 2001 – The Day the Towers Fell* is one of the most compelling nonfiction picture books available for introducing older elementary and middle school students to the events of September 11, 2001. Combining concise, factual text with powerful illustrations, Brown presents a clear and respectful account of a day that forever changed the United States.

Rather than simplifying history, Brown carefully reconstructs the timeline of the attacks—from the hijacked airplanes and the collapse of the Twin Towers to the attack on the Pentagon and the crash of United Airlines Flight 93. His straightforward writing helps young readers understand the sequence of events without overwhelming them with unnecessary detail. The book acknowledges the tragedy while emphasizing the courage of first responders, ordinary citizens, and the many individuals who acted selflessly in the

face of unimaginable danger.

Brown's watercolor and ink illustrations are among the book's greatest strengths. They capture both the scale of the attacks and the deeply human experiences of those who lived through them. The artwork conveys emotion without becoming graphic, allowing readers to grasp the gravity of the events while remaining appropriate for upper elementary and middle school audiences. Maps, diagrams, and visual timelines further enhance students' understanding of what occurred.

What distinguishes *America Is Under Attack* from many other books on September 11 is its balance between historical accuracy and age-appropriate presentation. Brown neither sensationalizes the attacks nor avoids their significance. Instead, he provides readers with a factual foundation that encourages thoughtful discussion about terrorism, democracy, national resilience, and the importance of remembering history. Teachers will find it especially valuable as an introduction to a broader unit on September 11, civic responsibility, or contemporary American history.

The book also encourages students to consider the long-term impact of September 11. It opens conversations about the sacrifices of first responders, the unity demonstrated by Americans in the aftermath of the attacks, and the ways communities continue to honor those who were lost. These themes make it an excellent resource for classroom discussions, memorial observances, and inquiry-based learning.

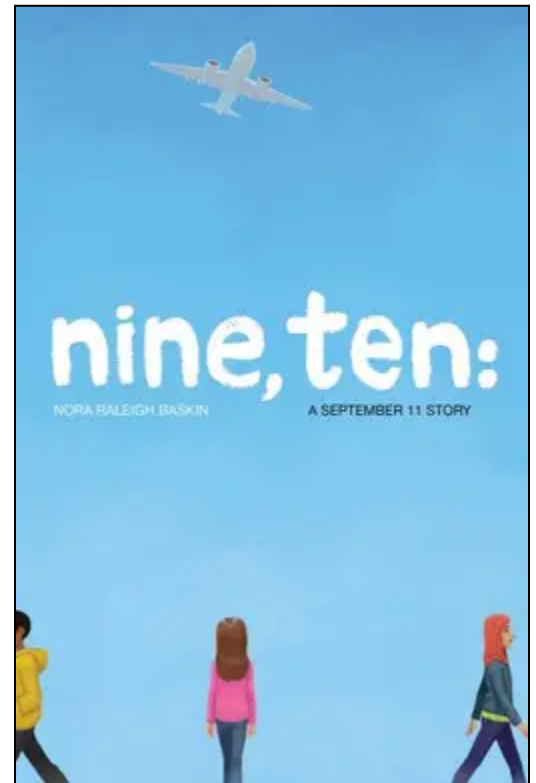
As the nation marks the 25th anniversary of September 11, *America Is Under Attack* remains one of the strongest introductory histories for young readers. Don Brown succeeds in telling a difficult story with honesty, clarity, and compassion, helping students understand not only what happened but why it continues to matter. It is an essential addition to school and public library collections and a valuable resource for families seeking to preserve the memory of this pivotal moment in American history.

Nine, Ten: A September 11 Story

by Nora Raleigh Baskin

Nora Raleigh Baskin's *Nine, Ten: A September 11 Story* is a beautifully written middle-grade novel that explores one of the most defining moments in modern American history through the eyes of four ordinary children. Rather than centering on the attacks themselves, Baskin focuses on the lives of young people in the days leading up to September 11, 2001, reminding readers how quickly life can change and how shared experiences can unite a nation.

The novel follows four children living in different parts of the United States. Sergio is adjusting to a new school after moving to Brooklyn. Naheed, a Muslim American girl in Ohio, struggles to balance her identity with the expectations of those around her. Will, in Pennsylvania, is trying to live up to his father's expectations while coping with personal challenges. Aimee, in Los Angeles, is preparing to sing at her first public performance. At first, their stories seem unrelated, but as September 11 unfolds, their lives become connected by a tragedy that touches every American.

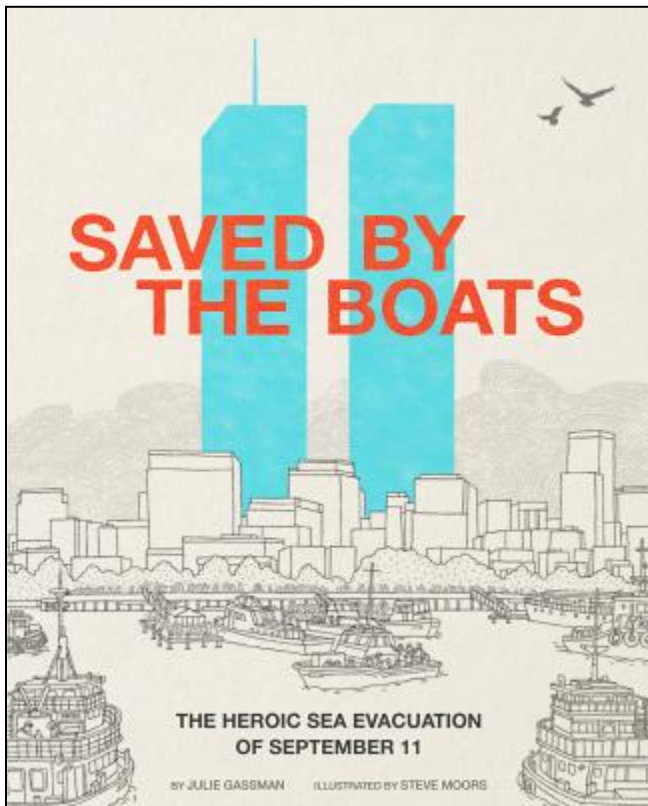


Baskin's greatest achievement is her ability to capture the innocence of childhood while acknowledging the profound impact of national events. The characters feel authentic, each facing ordinary worries about friendships, family, school, and growing up. These relatable experiences make the events of September 11 all the more powerful, allowing readers to understand how an ordinary Tuesday morning became a day that would shape an entire generation.

The novel is especially effective because it emphasizes empathy and humanity over fear. Baskin thoughtfully explores themes of kindness, resilience, courage, and acceptance, while also addressing the prejudice and misunderstanding that some Americans, particularly Muslim families, experienced in the aftermath of the attacks. These conversations remain relevant today, making the book not only a historical novel but also an important lesson in compassion and respect.

Written in accessible prose with short chapters and multiple perspectives, *Nine, Ten* is ideal for middle-grade readers. It provides enough historical context for students unfamiliar with September 11 while encouraging them to think critically about how national events affect individuals, families, and communities. Teachers will find it an excellent companion to studies of contemporary history, civic responsibility, and character education, while parents will appreciate its thoughtful approach to a difficult subject.

As the United States commemorates the 25th anniversary of September 11, *Nine, Ten: A September 11 Story* stands out as one of the finest novels available for young readers. Nora Raleigh Baskin reminds us that history is not only made by headlines and world leaders but also by ordinary people whose lives are forever changed by extraordinary events. It is a moving, hopeful, and deeply human story that encourages readers to remember the past while embracing empathy, resilience, and the strength found in community.



Saved by the Boats: The Heroic Sea Evacuation of September 11 **by Julie Gassman**

History often remembers the dramatic images of September 11, 2001: the burning towers, the collapsing buildings, and the courageous first responders who rushed into danger. Less well known, but equally inspiring, is the story of the largest maritime evacuation in history. *Saved by the Boats: The Heroic Sea Evacuation of September 11* by Julie Gassman shines a well-deserved spotlight on this extraordinary rescue, introducing young readers to the thousands of ordinary people who became heroes on New York Harbor.

Told in clear, engaging language, the book recounts how, after the attacks left lower Manhattan isolated, hundreds of ferries, tugboats, fishing vessels, dinner cruise boats, Coast Guard cutters, and private watercraft answered an

urgent call for help. Working together without hesitation, civilian captains and professional mariners safely evacuated an estimated half-million people from Manhattan in just a matter of hours. Gassman presents this remarkable feat through a narrative that is both historically accurate and accessible to elementary readers.

The illustrations complement the text beautifully, capturing the urgency of the evacuation while emphasizing cooperation, courage, and compassion rather than fear. The artwork conveys the scale of the rescue and helps young readers visualize an event that is often overshadowed by other stories from September 11. Together, the text and illustrations create a powerful reminder that heroism takes many forms.

One of the book's greatest strengths is its focus on hope in the midst of tragedy. While acknowledging the devastating events of the day, Gassman directs readers' attention to the remarkable acts of kindness and selflessness that emerged. The captains and crews who left their normal routines to rescue strangers demonstrate how ordinary citizens can make an extraordinary difference when their communities need them most.

For educators, *Saved by the Boats* offers an excellent opportunity to broaden students' understanding of September 11. It expands the historical narrative beyond the attacks themselves by highlighting cooperation, civic responsibility, and the many ways individuals responded with courage. The story also invites discussions about geography, transportation, emergency response, and the importance of communities working together during times of crisis.

As the nation marks the 25th anniversary of September 11, *Saved by the Boats* serves as an inspiring reminder that even in moments of profound loss, compassion can prevail. Julie Gassman has brought an often-overlooked chapter of history to life with warmth and clarity, ensuring that a new generation will remember not only the tragedy of September 11 but also the extraordinary humanity that followed.

Mapping the Midterms: Race, Housing, and Political Power in Connecticut, 1946–2026

by *Allison Norrie*

In November 1946, Connecticut held its first midterm election after World War II. The war had transformed the state's economy and begun to change its population, but the basic experience of voting remained familiar. Connecticut voters went to assigned polling places, usually in schools, town halls, firehouses, or other public buildings. Their addresses determined their voting districts, and their voting districts determined which candidates appeared on their ballots. The system may seem straight forward, although the history behind it: not so much. As Connecticut teachers start a new school year it's worthwhile to take a survey of this history of midterms elections.

Connecticut had organized political participation around geography since the nineteenth century. The Constitution of 1818 established the legal category of the elector and placed political participation within the state's towns. Over time, the state developed voting districts and designated polling places. By the middle of the twentieth century, a Connecticut resident's address determined much more than where that person received mail. It helped determine where that person voted and which political representatives appeared on the ballot.

By 1946, however, Connecticut's population was beginning to move in ways that would eventually transform that political geography. Black migrants from the South arrived in Connecticut's industrial cities. Hartford, Bridgeport, New Haven, and Waterbury developed larger Black communities, while white families increasingly moved toward the suburbs. The process changed the racial and economic composition of the state's cities and towns and eventually affected the political districts that contained them.

Housing policy played an important role in that transformation. Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law* provides a useful national framework for understanding how government policy contributed to residential segregation. Connecticut offers its own examples. The Trinity College project *On The Line* documents how federal mortgage policies, restrictive covenants, real-estate practices, public housing, and suburban zoning helped shape the racial geography of metropolitan Hartford. The famous HOLC maps from the 1930s are part of that history, but they do not tell the entire story. Federal officials evaluated neighborhoods partly according to racial and ethnic composition, while FHA policies and private lenders reinforced those patterns. Connecticut's suburbs also developed zoning policies that influenced who could afford to live in particular communities. West Hartford, for example, adopted Connecticut's first municipal zoning ordinance in 1924. Minimum lot sizes and restrictions on multifamily housing later helped shape the social and economic composition of suburban neighborhoods.

Of course, these policies did not determine who won the 1946 or 1950 midterms. They did, however, help determine where voters lived. That distinction becomes important as the history moves into the 1960s. By the 1962 midterm, the country had entered the civil-rights era, and Connecticut faced increasingly difficult questions about political representation. The Supreme Court's decision in *Baker v. Carr* that year opened federal courts to challenges involving legislative apportionment. Two years later, *Reynolds v. Sims* established the principle of "one person, one vote." The decisions changed the meaning of a political district. Connecticut could no longer rely simply on historical boundaries when organizing representation. Population had to matter. The state therefore entered the 1960s facing two changes at once. Its population was becoming more racially and economically diverse, and the courts were demanding a more equal system of representation.

Civil-rights legislation added another dimension. Connecticut had prohibited certain forms of deprivation of civil and legal rights based on race, color, and alienage since 1884. In 1965, the state amended its Constitution to prohibit discrimination in civil and political rights based on religion, race, color, ancestry, or national origin. That same year, Congress passed the Voting Rights Act. Three years later, Congress passed the Fair Housing Act. The two laws addressed different problems, but they intersected in the places where people lived. The Voting Rights Act addressed discrimination in political participation. The Fair Housing Act addressed discrimination in housing. Housing, in turn, helped determine the racial and economic composition of the communities that political districts represented. The 1966 midterm therefore took place during a period when Connecticut was changing the legal structure surrounding both housing and voting.

The 1970 midterm brought another major change. The 1970 census required Connecticut to redraw its political districts. The state had to account for population shifts and comply with the constitutional principle of equal representation. Resulting maps reflected a Connecticut that looked increasingly different from the state that had gone to the polls in 1946. But redistricting could only work with the population that existed on the ground. That population reflected decades of migration, suburbanization, housing policy, zoning, and racial segregation. The distinction is important. Drawing a district does not create the community inside it. Residential history creates the population, and redistricting organizes that population into political units.

By the 1970s and 1980s, researchers could increasingly study the relationship between those residential patterns and political participation. Bridgeport provides an important example. Researchers Kurt Schlichting, Peter Tuckel, and Richard Maisel used GIS and voter data to examine racial segregation and voter turnout in the city. Their work identified relationships between neighborhood racial composition, surrounding racial geography, and political participation. Their research raises a particularly important question about midterm elections. When fewer people participate than in presidential elections, does the place influence participation? The answer involves more than the location of the polling place. It involves the political and social networks within neighborhoods, transportation, familiarity with candidates, local political organizations, and the history of the community itself.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Connecticut and other states to reconsider the assumption that voting had to occur inside a particular building on a particular day. Absentee voting expanded dramatically, and the experience accelerated a debate that had been developing for years about how Connecticut should make voting more accessible. The change reached the ballot in 2022. The 2022 midterm included congressional races and elections for every seat in the Connecticut House of Representatives and 36 seats in the state Senate. But voters also considered a constitutional amendment authorizing the legislature to establish early voting. They approved it. The decision marked a significant turning point in Connecticut's election history. For more than a century, the state had organized Election Day around the relationship between a voter's address, voting district, and polling place. The 2022 vote created a constitutional foundation for a different system. Connecticut implemented early voting in 2024.

The change did not eliminate the traditional polling place. Instead, it created another way for voters to participate. A voter still had an assigned Election Day location, but could now cast a ballot during an early-voting period at designated locations. The result was a hybrid system, one that combines Connecticut's traditional neighborhood-based Election Day structure with newer methods of voting. The 2026 midterm provides the first opportunity to see how that system develops in practice. The state now has early voting, absentee voting, and traditional Election Day voting. At the same time, Connecticut continues to organize Election Day around voting districts. A recent dispute in Westport illustrates this tension. In 2026, state officials rejected an effort to consolidate the town's five Election Day polling places and maintained separate polling

locations for the town's voting districts. And though issues like this appear administrative (and they are), they also connect directly to the history of Connecticut's elections.

For generations, the state has treated the polling place as part of the geographic structure of representation. A voter belongs to a district, and the district has a polling place. Early voting changes the timing and location of participation, but the traditional district remains important. Connecticut's State Voting Rights Act, enacted in 2023, reflects that continuing importance. The law addresses districting, redistricting, polling-place locations, and the assignment of voting districts to polling places. It also allows courts to consider historical discrimination involving housing, education, transportation, and land use when evaluating voting-rights claims. That provision brings the history of Connecticut's midterm elections back to the question of geography. The Connecticut voter who went to the polls in 1946 lived in a state shaped by decades of housing and political decisions. The voter who participates in the 2026 midterm inherits that same history, although the state now has a different population, different districts, different voting technology, and more opportunities to cast a ballot. The fundamental issue has remained consistent.

Connecticut organizes political participation through place. Where people live affects the districts in which they vote. Residential patterns reflect the history of housing policy, migration, economics, zoning, and race. Districting then turns those populations into political constituencies. Polling places give those districts a physical location. That makes the history of Connecticut's midterms about more than candidates and election results. It is also a history of how the state has organized people geographically and how those geographic decisions have influenced political participation. For teachers, that connection offers a particularly useful way to approach the midterms. Instead of treating each election as an isolated contest, students can follow the changing geography of Connecticut from the 1946 election through the civil-rights era, the reapportionment battles of the 1960s and 1970s, the changing racial geography of the late twentieth century, and the expansion of early voting after 2022. The result is a broader history of democracy in Connecticut.

Children's Books About U.S. Elections, Voting, and Democracy

Picture Books for Grades K - 2

Voting & Civic Participation

- **Duck for President** by Doreen Cronin, illustrated by Betsy Lewin
A humorous introduction to elections, campaigning, voting, and government through the story of a duck who decides he could run things better.
- **Grace for President** by Kelly S. DiPucchio, illustrated by LeUyen Pham
Grace decides to run for class president after learning that the United States has never had a woman president. Excellent for discussing elections, representation, campaigning, and leadership.
- **Vote** by Eileen Christelow
A lively, accessible introduction to voting and elections, including campaigning, voting, counting ballots, and the Electoral College.
- **The Next President** by Kate Messner, illustrated by Adam Rex
A fascinating look at U.S. presidents through history, including the children who might someday become president.

- **If I Ran for President** by Catherine Stier, illustrated by Lynne Avril
Introduces children to the presidential campaign process and what it takes to run for office.
- **If I Were President** by Catherine Stier, illustrated by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan
Explores the responsibilities and possibilities of being president.
- **I Voted** by Mark Shulman, illustrated by Serge Bloch
A simple introduction to the importance of voting and civic participation.
- **We Are the Change: The Power of Voting** by various editions/resources
Useful for connecting voting with community participation and making one's voice heard.

Democracy & Being a Citizen

- **We the Kids: The Preamble to the Constitution of the United States** by David Catrow
A child-friendly interpretation of the Constitution's Preamble.
- **We the People** by Peter Spier
A richly illustrated introduction to the ideals expressed in the Constitution.
- **A Is for Activist** by Innosanto Nagara
Introduces children to civic engagement, activism, community, and participation.
- **The Day the Crayons Quit** by Drew Daywalt, illustrated by Oliver Jeffers
Not an election book, but useful as a springboard for discussions about voice, representation, compromise, and resolving disagreements.

Picture Books for Grades 2 - 4

Elections & Campaigns

- **Sofia Valdez, Future Prez** by Andrea Beaty, illustrated by David Roberts
Sofia learns about community action, leadership, and working through government to make change.
- **Grace Goes to Washington** by Kelly S. DiPucchio, illustrated by LeUyen Pham
Grace discovers how government works and becomes involved in a civic issue.
- **One Vote, Two Votes, I Vote, You Vote** by Bonnie Worth
A beginning-level introduction to voting and elections.
- **Election Day** by Patricia J. Murphy
An accessible introduction to what happens on Election Day.
- **Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965** by Jonah Winter, illustrated by Shane W. Evans
A powerful picture book connecting voting with the history of the Voting Rights Movement.
- **Around America to Win the Vote: Two Suffragists, a Kitten, and 10,000 Miles** by Mara Rockliff, illustrated by Hadley Hooper
Tells the story of Nell Richardson and Alice Burke's cross-country campaign for women's voting rights.

Young People and Democracy

- **The Youngest Marcher: The Story of Audrey Faye Hendricks, a Young Civil Rights Activist** by Cynthia Levinson
A powerful story for connecting young people's civic participation with voting rights and democracy.
- **Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez & Her Family's Fight for Desegregation** by Duncan Tonatiuh

Not specifically about elections, but excellent for exploring citizenship, civil rights, equality, and civic action.

- **The Proudest Blue** by Ibtihaj Muhammad and S.K. Ali
Useful for discussions of identity, inclusion, belonging, and the democratic principle of equal citizenship.

Elementary/Middle Grade: Grades 3 - 6

Voting Rights

- **The Voting Booth Battle** by Andrew C. McCarthy
A contemporary middle-grade novel that introduces young readers to voting, civic responsibility, and political participation.
- **Ida B. Wells: Let the Truth Be Told** by Walter Dean Myers
A biography that can help students understand journalism, activism, civil rights, and the fight for political equality.
- **A Voice for the Everglades: Marjory Stoneman Douglas** by Vicki Conrad
A biography illustrating how individuals can participate in civic life and advocate for change.
- **Voice of Freedom: Fannie Lou Hamer, Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement** by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustrated by Ekua Holmes
A particularly strong choice for teaching the history of voting rights and voter suppression.
- **Marching for the Vote: Suffrage, Citizenship, and the Legacy of the 19th Amendment** by various nonfiction resources
Useful for connecting women's suffrage to contemporary voting rights.

Presidents & Political Leadership

- **What Was the First Election?** by Joan Holub
Part of the *What Was?* series and accessible for elementary readers.
- **What Was the 19th Amendment?** by Sarah Laskow
A useful introduction to the constitutional amendment that expanded women's voting rights.
- **Who Was George Washington?** by Roberta Edwards
A readable biography for younger students.
- **Who Was Abraham Lincoln?** by Janet B. Pascal
Particularly useful when studying elections, leadership, and the Civil War era.
- **Who Was John F. Kennedy?** by Yona Zeldis McDonough
Provides an accessible presidential biography.

Middle Grade: Grades 5 - 8

Fiction

- **The Kid Who Ran for President** by Dan Gutman
A humorous novel about a child who runs for president. Great for examining campaign strategy, political messaging, media, and what makes a candidate appealing.

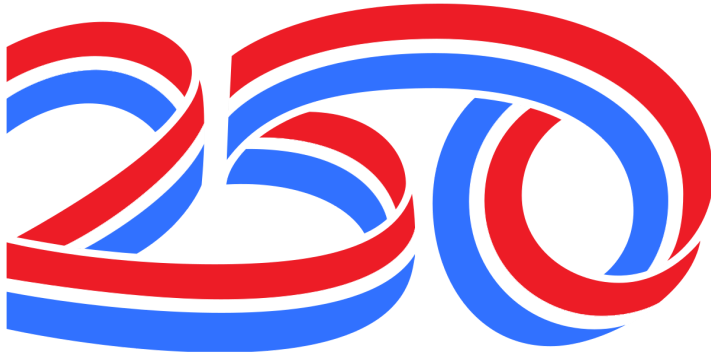
- **The Kid Who Became President** by Dan Gutman
A sequel that continues the fictional presidential campaign and provides opportunities to discuss the responsibilities and challenges of political leadership.
- **Restart** by Gordon Korman
Not an election novel, but contains useful themes of identity, accountability, reputation, and changing one's behavior that can support discussions of leadership.

Nonfiction

- **The U.S. Constitution and You** by Syl Sobel
Accessible for students learning about constitutional government and the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
- **The Bill of Rights in Translation** by Elizabeth W. Verkamp
Helpful for connecting constitutional rights to contemporary civic life.
- **The 19th Amendment** various middle-grade nonfiction editions
Particularly valuable when teaching the history of women's suffrage.
- **The 15th Amendment** various middle-grade nonfiction editions
Useful for examining the constitutional history of voting rights for Black Americans.
- **The Voting Rights Act of 1965** various middle-grade nonfiction editions
An important companion to books about the Civil Rights Movement.



AMERICA



As you all know July 4, 2026 was the 250th anniversary of the birth of the United States. If you go to the Connecticut America250 website (<https://ct250.org/>) you can still find many resources that will assist you in the teaching of this important topic. We have determined that four major themes can guide schools and towns:

- Tell Inclusive Stories
- The Power of Place
- Doing History
- For the Common Good

What can districts, schools, teachers and teachers do regarding the study of July 4, 2026 once they are back in school for the 2026-2027 school year:

- Study the events and the impact of these events in classrooms. What was the role of Connecticut and your own community in this revolutionary era? In all probability, your community was involved, in some way, in the American Revolution. We are developing a way that research that classes and students do can be published so that Connecticut residents can see the work that students have done.
- Reach out and have students work with local historical societies and local America250 commissions.
- For teachers: we have available a number of podcasts and webinars that are related to America250. We have also produced curriculum materials.
- For teachers and students: note that the new Ken Burns series on the Revolutionary War is now available. Get engaged in this series!

We are greatly looking forward to having students and teachers involved in these important topics. If you want more information, contact Stephen.Armstrong@ct.gov



For those of you who are looking for resources and information you can use in your classrooms, check out the [**CCSS Website**](#)!

Get Civically Involved:

Join the Connecticut Council for the Social Studies Today! Help us to promote the study of social studies across the state. This [**link**](#) will take you to the membership page where you have the option of joining online, or printing out a hardcopy form to complete and mail in.