

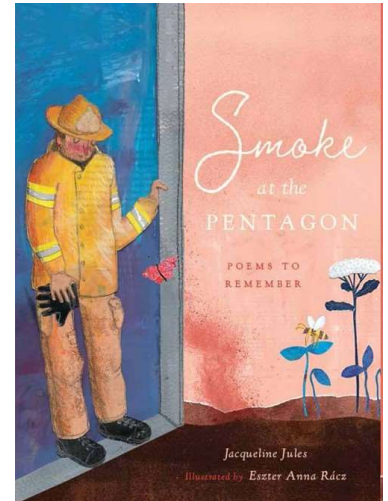
A Teacher's Guide for

SMOKE AT THE PENTAGON: Poems to Remember

By [Jacqueline Jules](#)

ABOUT THE BOOK

ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. One hundred and eighty-four innocent people were killed. The event occurred at 9:37 a.m. and was part of a coordinated terrorist attack against the United States involving four hijacked flights. Shortly before the Pentagon was hit, two planes crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Around 10 a.m., another hijacked plane went down in a field in Pennsylvania. Approximately 3,000 people lost their lives on September 11, 2001.



In this collection of 20 narrative poems, Jacqueline Jules portrays the reactions of young people who experienced September 11th in Arlington, Virginia, where the Pentagon is located.

- Emily, age 13, is in class, watching her teacher visibly shaken, trying to absorb the disturbing news.
- Kelvin, age 5, is on the swings at recess when he is frightened by a loud sound.
- Henry, age 7, is stuck at his almost-empty school waiting for his mother.
- Delia, age 17, resting from a wisdom tooth extraction, turns on the television news.
- Luke, age 16, leaves school and processes the news with a group of teenage friends.
- Josselyn, age 14, shops at a quiet but very crowded grocery store with her parents.
- Cyrus, age 10, waits for his father, a fireman responding to the Pentagon attack.
- Tayvon, age 11, is frightened by the smoke in the sky the next morning.
- Karima, age 13, stays home with her Muslim family for a few days.
- Jennifer, age 13, worries about her classmate Karima, who isn't at school.
- Reuben, age 10, attends a neighborhood gathering to remember a man who died.
- Leo, age 15, is grateful his mother was at the doctor, not at her Pentagon job, the morning of the attack.
- Calista, age 16, is babysitting three-year-old Dylan who says he saw a hole in the Pentagon.
- Michael, age 8, is worried when his brother signs up to fight in Afghanistan.
- Jaime, age 15, travels right after 9/11 and notices the vastly increased airport security.
- Charlie, age 12, listens to his parents discuss moving away from the nation's capital.
- Tyra, age 14, watches rubble cleared from the Pentagon while riding the bus to school.
- Alex, age 17, is stuck in traffic in front of the Pentagon one year after the attacks.
- Nelson, age 18, ponders the meaning of the numbers 911.
- Allison, age 21, visits the Pentagon Memorial 7 years after the attack.

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

Activate Prior Knowledge: Before reading the poems, encourage students to discuss what they already know about 9/11.

Brainstorming Strategies:

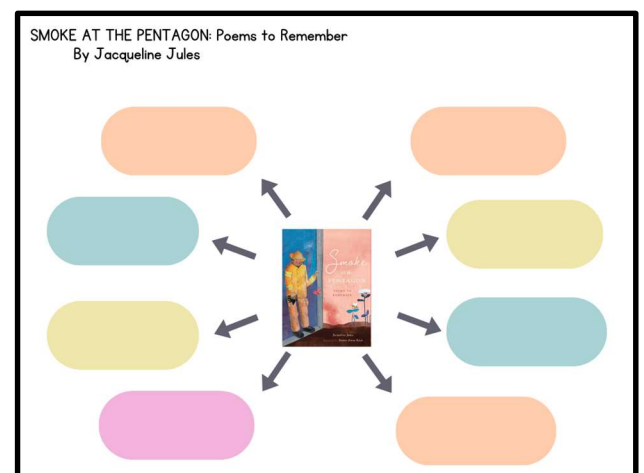
★ K-W-L Chart: Have students fill out the first 2 sections of a K-W-L chart. Then read the author's note in the book. Ask students to return to their chart and fill out the last section.

K-W-L CHART Organize information about a topic before and after learning more about it.		
What is your topic?		
K What you know	W What you want to learn	L What you have learned

★ Sticky-Note Swap: Hand out 2-3 small post-it notes to each student. Ask them to write down one thing they know about 9/11 on each note, anonymously. Collect the notes and stick them on the board. Then ask students to come up and choose a sticky note or two with a fact they didn't know. This will encourage discussion as a class or in small groups.

★ Virtual Visit: Have students take a virtual visit to the [National September 11 Memorial and Museum](#) site. (See the [Lesson Plan](#) on Targeting American Symbols).

★ Concept Map: Use the title and cover of the book to make predictions. What do you think the book will be about? How does the cover make you feel? Write words or phrases on the concept map.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

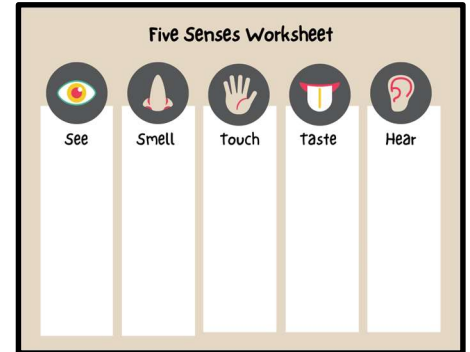
- 1) Which character do you identify with the most? Why? Cite lines from the poem for the character you choose.
- 2) Emily says, "If the Pentagon isn't safe, no place is." What do you know about the Pentagon? What does it symbolize for the United States?
- 3) Jaime talks about increased airport security after 9/11. Do you take airport security for granted? Were you aware that things were different at airports before 9/11?
- 4) Several characters in the book talk about losing a sense of safety after 9/11. Does listening to the news ever make you feel unsafe?
- 5) Do you feel that all the characters are equally affected by the attack on the Pentagon? In your opinion, who will need the most time to heal? Why?
- 6) The adults in several poems want to protect the children from the details of the attack. Imagine you had to tell a five-year-old about 9/11. How much detail would you use? What words would you use to describe it?
- 7) What messages of HOPE are in the poems? Cite lines and/or stanzas from the poems to support your answer.
- 8) The bonds of family and friends are a recurring theme in the poems. Who do you turn to in your family when there is a crisis?
- 9) The characters feel different emotions during and after the attack. What are they? Make a chart with the name of the character and cite lines from the poem to support your answer.

<i>Emotion</i>	<i>Character</i>	<i>Example</i>
Confusion		
Anger		
Indifference		
Denial		
Fear		
Sadness		
Relief		
Frustration		
Surprise		
Happiness		

POST-READING ACTIVITIES

- 1) Write an e-mail: Choose a poem with a character you admire. Write an email to that character. Why do you admire him/her? Why did you feel a connection to his/her story?
- 2) Interview: Choose a character you identify with. Pair up with other students to “interview” the character for a news clip. Who will give the interview? Who will represent the character from the poem? Make a list of the questions the interviewer will ask. Write the responses for your character, staying faithful to the tone and wording in the poem.
- 3) Role-Play: Choose a poem you would like to read aloud and act out. Join with other classmates to perform the poems in a Reader’s Theater. If your class has more than twenty students, use parts of the introduction so everyone can have a speaking role.

- 4) Our Five Senses: Find words or lines in the poems that reflect our senses. What do the characters see, smell, touch, taste and hear? How do these words affect you as you read the poems?



- 5) Virtual Visit: Take a virtual visit to the [Pentagon Memorial Site](#). How does the memorial honor the victims? What part of the site appeals to you most? Why?

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