Sometimes, History is Sadness
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This text discusses the events of September 11, 2001, when a series of four terrorist attacks were carried out across the country. As you read, take notes on the different ways that people face tragedy and heal from it.

[1] History is full of beautiful and wonderful things. You can probably think of many, like your first birthday and the day you got your latest favorite thing. People in your family probably remember great days like the day men walked on the moon or the day the Berlin Wall came down. Everyone you know has favorite days, days that they remember happily.

September 11, 2001 was different. On September 11, a great many people died.

You probably already know the details. The big picture is that the World Trade Center, one of the most famous symbols of New York and of the United States, was destroyed. One airplane hit each of the two towers of the World Trade Center. Not long after those crashes, both towers collapsed. The Pentagon, the center of the U.S. Defense Department, was also hit by an airplane, and many people died there, too.

Farther away, another airplane that had been hijacked crashed in Pennsylvania. Everyone aboard was killed.

[5] In total, 2,996 people died and more than 6,000 others were injured.

This is very sad. It’s horrible. It’s terrifying. It makes us all wonder what’s next.

Many people (children and adults) looked up in fear whenever they heard a noise. Was it another airplane? Was it coming for them?

This terrible tragedy affected everyone in different ways. Some people knew someone who was there. Many had family members who were visiting New York or Washington who couldn’t get home. The sadness extended far beyond the city of New York or Washington, D.C.

1. The Berlin Wall was a barrier that divided East Germany from West Germany between 1961 and 1989. Its fall represented the triumph of freedom and cooperation.
2. The World Trade Center was a large group of seven buildings in New York City. It featured a pair of twin towers, which were destroyed in the attacks of September 11, 2001.
3. Collapse (verb): to fall down
4. When someone hijacks a vehicle, they take control of it illegally.
Sometimes, history is sad. History is full of terrible things, like long wars and terrible natural disasters. History is full of people dying and people being injured. It’s a part of life, just as much a part of life as happiness and great things.

Older people you know can probably remember the explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger or the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear plant or the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Those were terrible, horrible things, and people were terribly afraid for many days after each of those things happened. Now, many years later, we can look back on them and learn from them. Security in the space shuttle program, in nuclear power plants, and around the U.S. president is greater today.

When all is said and done, September 11 was certainly one of the most terrible tragedies in history. But as people listened to the news and talked to their friends and family about this terrible day, it became easier to remember that time can help ease the pain that people feel. People recover, and heal, and the grief of the survivors lessens.

Sometimes, only time lessens pain and grief.

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5. The Challenger was a space shuttle carrying 7 people that exploded in the air 73 seconds after take-off in 1986. All of the people on the shuttle – including 6 astronauts and a teacher – died.
6. In 1986, there was a big explosion at a nuclear power plant called Chernobyl in the Ukraine, a country in eastern Europe. The Chernobyl disaster was the worst accident in the history of nuclear power, killing dozens of people and infecting thousands with deadly diseases.
7. An assassination is when someone kills a leader for political reasons.
8. John F. Kennedy was the 35th president of the United States. He became president in 1961 and was very popular, until he was assassinated at a parade in 1963.
10. Grief (noun): intense sadness
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Summarize the author’s perspective on tragedies. Include evidence from the text in your response.

2. PART A: What is the central idea of this passage?
   A. It is important to make sure one’s friends and family members are safe following a tragedy.
   B. Tragic events will always be a part of history, but we can learn from them, and pain diminishes over time.
   C. Increased security will prevent all potential disasters.
   D. The World Trade Center was a cultural icon and a symbol of New York City.

3. PART B: Which phrase from the text best support the answers to Part A?
   A. “One airplane hit each of the two towers of the World Trade Center.” (Paragraph 3)
   B. “Many people (children and adults) looked up in fear whenever they heard a noise. Was it another airplane? Was it coming for them?” (Paragraph 7)
   C. “The sadness extended far beyond the city of New York or Washington, D.C.” (Paragraph 8)
   D. “As people listened to the news and talked to their friends and family about this terrible day, it became easier to remember that time can help ease the pain that people feel.” (Paragraph 11)

4. Why does the author include a discussion of happy events in paragraph 1?
   A. to show that good events will always outweigh the effects of disasters
   B. to emphasize that both happy and sad events are a part of life
   C. to encourage the reader to discuss them with his or her elders
   D. to show that tragedies overshadow societal accomplishments
5. How does the author support the idea that society can learn and grow from tragedies?

A. by promising that time helps make pain go completely away
B. by explaining how many people became scared and nervous after the events of 9/11
C. by stating strongly how sad and difficult this tragedy was for so many people
D. by sharing facts about ways the government made society safer after other tragedies
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. The author suggests that certain disastrous historical events led to increased security in various places. In the context of this poem, what can we learn from tragedy? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

2. Do you think there is something specific about the attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001 that might cause people more pain and fear than other tragedies?

3. Why does the author stress that we must accept both happy and gloomy occasions as a part of life? Do you agree with him?

4. What does the author's perspective say about the way in which people deal with death? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

5. Have you or someone you know been affected by a tragic event? Have you found that the pain that experience might have caused lessened over time?