

**2005-2006
CBC Writing Competition**

Senior Level Entry
Category: Non -Fiction
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Terror to Truth:

Nine Eleven.

Before late in the year 2001, these numbers deemed insignificant. Their place in the endless line of mathematical symbols held no more consequence than the blue lines skating across the white expanse of mountainous stacks of school paper. Separated by the infamous integer ten, they had been cast into shadow since the dawn of time. One, two, three were the original celebrities, learned by every pre-school toddler, side-by-side with sharing and the importance of not eating glue.

But now, the first trio in the number line has been put on probation, their fame and glory removed and dubbed instead on the now shadow-less partners to either side of the first double-digit.

Planes one through four departed from their planned locations. However, the passenger count couldn't have been more wrong. Three burning buildings and one ruined field later, the numerals nine and eleven took the stage.

Fear struck the entire country, countered by the proud flying of red, white, and blue. Mothers wept, children cried, while the men stood by with silent tears streaking their faces. Relatives of the fallen uttered not a sound, endlessly searching their souls for any sign of hope. Even those who had no figure or name to relate to released their bitter cries, however voiceless.

But when the dust cleared, and every scrap and misplaced article of trash was discarded, the hurt remained. The skies over America's original capital felt empty and bare with the absence of the majestic symbols of freedom. And even though the five-points of secrecy were restored, an invisible scar exists; an emotional scar, without physical being, that clothes the governmental heart.

Anger. Revenge. War.

These thoughts course through every devotee of the stars and stripes. Those terrorists must pay.

~

Terrorist.

To any victim of that fateful day, it is a spiteful curse word, unsuitable for immature lips.

Nine Eleven.

The numbers are placed on a shrine and worshiped into perpetuity.

~

Action took place. Those who were deemed responsible were punished. Leaders acted on their own accord, though accepting the whispered hints of those they represent. One country plays as an avenger, the other reduced to rubble. Lives are lost; minds are broken; both sides paying the price. A dark cloud descends upon reality.

However, despite the bleak outlook, tiny rays of light peak through the blackness. Is democracy for a destroyed land the answer? Only time will tell.

The school yards are filled with playing children, but only the naïve ones can smile with sincerity. Nevertheless, already the anger is subsiding, and the erudite playmates pause their misery to throw, catch, slide.

~

Terrorist.

Soap on the tongue is reduced, and then forgotten. The spit of society dries.

Nine Eleven.

Fear is reduced to familiarity. No longer do the people shake their hands at the lonely sky.

~

The new word is withdrawal. Once furious and full of hatred, the red faces melt. Now the anger is starting to turn. The leaders begin to take the blame. Can't they see? Bring our troops home.

The country was dead before the red white and blue, but now it sees the deepest pits of hell. Even those who volunteered to avenge the ones they loved move to refuge, trading their weapons for pleas of return.

Backs turn. The knife drawer opens.

~

Terrorist.

Shudders turn to shrugs. A thing made common is a thing made harmless.

Nine Eleven.

The facts are written into history books. The pens still and calm, without emotion.

~

Hopes of a new election draw near. The country leans towards the left. The graves still lay with crosses of liberty, but the flowers wither and die. Long shadows creep across the churchyard.

The phrases are not only used, but clichéd, their meaning clinging to life with weak fingers.

A fugitive escapes from jail. Two accounts of third degree murder. Keep your children inside. Don't leave the house at night. A terrorist is on the loose.

Fire alarms ring, the smoke detectors working to the best of their abilities. A news reporter shows up at the scene. Their cries are barely audible above the roaring flames. It's like Nine Eleven out here. The building is slowly reduced to debris.

~

Terrorist.

No longer veiled with discretion, it opens up to a common sacrilege.

Nine Eleven.

Any simple disarray is labeled with the now subtle term.

~

The bare backs are completely exposed. The knives are in hand, ready to strike at any moment. Every clock ticks with anticipated climax.

Both phrases cannot see their connotation, as the weakness finally breaks, and the clutch is released.

A young man, still a boy, chatters like a blue jay to his surrounding crowd. The teacher gave them weekend homework. Can you believe it? What a terrorist.

The team cannot score; their spirits breaking. Turmoil and confusion of a simple game is transformed to a speech of emancipation. The game is Nine Eleven. Now get out there and fight.

~

Terrorist.

Nine Eleven.

These phrases are simply that; no longer a holy or sacred event. At the end of the day, horror and fear have been forgotten.

The back and knife join like long-lost brothers.