

# 9/12

*from chaos to community*

## **9/12 STUDY GUIDE for High Schools**

*Thought-provoking questions for high school students in the areas of service learning, community building and current affairs were designed to help students and teachers prepare for and discuss 9/12: **From Chaos to Community**.*

### **Chapter One: “Ground Zero Dirt”**

Why did the film begin with a quotation from Walt Whitman, and what about that quotation is significant?

Why did John feel that the attack on the Twin Towers was personal? What was his initial motivation for getting involved at Ground Zero?

What was the difference between uniformed and non-uniformed personnel at the site? What did you think/feel when they didn't let the volunteers on site anymore?

### **Chapter Two: “The Conversation Started”**

What were the different ways of helping at Ground Zero?

What do you think Denise was referring to when she said that the volunteers would get whatever the workers needed, even if they “weren't supposed to”?

What did Steve mean by a “carnival” atmosphere?

### **Chapter Three: “Anniversary”**

What do you think Liz was feeling when she said that it was safer inside Ground Zero than outside?

### **Chapter Four: “Nothing But Love”**

What did John mean when he said there was nothing but love at the site?

“It became me, it consumed you.” What did Amalia mean by that statement?

How do you respond to her agony over feeling she could have done more, and her regret that she “might have missed something”? How do you respond to her guilt?

### **Chapter Five: “Reunion”**

Why did the film include the scene with the sailors?



### **Chapter Six: “Fathers and Sons”**

Who were the “Band of Dads”, and why was it important for them to meet each other?

### **Chapter Seven: “Listening”**

Denise commented that sometimes the workers needed to talk to a regular volunteer, instead of a “religious” or “official” person. What did she mean?

What was the function of listening?

Why was the major rule “Don’t cry”?

Why did Toolie say you can never tell anyone what happened?

### **Chapter Eight: “Things Just Took Off”**

Barbara Geidel describes how her husband needed to be hugged and taken care of. Why did the workers need human contact to keep their humanity?

### **Chapter Nine: “Couples”**

Why did Steve and Debbie say they saved each other?

### **Chapter Ten: “Wish We’d Never Met”**

Can you imagine why it was hard to separate and why some people felt lost when it ended?

What did John McGuire mean by a “cocoon of wonderfulness”?

What was your reaction to Paul Geidel saying to his new friends “I kind of wish we’d never met”?

What did John C. mean by the phrase, “We were the fortunate ones, we were blessed”?  
How and Why?



## **Reflections**

What impressed you most about the volunteers? What they did? What they learned?

What do you think was the most important work at Ground Zero? Were some activities more important than others?

What does it mean to be a patriot? Was patriotism interpreted differently by the volunteers, and if so, how?

How did 9/11 make people think differently about their lives?

Is there a difference between 9/11 as a local -- neighborhood, citywide -- and a national tragedy?

Do you think this tragedy is different from war? If so, how?

What do you think is the proper way to acknowledge 9/11? Do you think a public memorial is important?

Sigmund Freud established that human beings have the capacity to hold two opposite feelings simultaneously. How do you see this dynamic played out in the film?

How would you describe and understand the contradictions in the film?

How is ambiguity present in this film? What does this film suggest about the nature of human experience?

Do you think it is appropriate to search for meaning in the face of tragedy or suffering? Is this the human response? Can meaning come out of suffering?

What does this film suggest about the nature of both giving and receiving? Is there a distinction between who gave and who received?

Who was served at Ground Zero? How? What is the purpose of community service?

What did you like about the film? Who did you like in the film? Can you remember any parts of the film that made you uncomfortable?

What does the film say about community?

What do you think this film was really about?