

Witness

Written by mImoment

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Why do people write down their memories of tragic events? Every author wishes to preserve those memories somehow, in some form, so that they won't slip away. Beyond that, the reasons for recounting these stories are as numerous as the individual authors. In this MediaLit Moment, your students will read a short graphic narrative about the 9-11 attacks by an artist who witnessed them firsthand. In reading it, your students will also have a chance to appreciate how a comic artist consciously frames a narrative around his personal experience.

Ask students why a graphic novelist who was in New York on September 11th would choose not to illustrate the World Trade Center under attack

AHA!: The artist who drew this story saw the 9-11 attacks on the World Trade Center close up, but he chose not to include it in the story!

Key Question #4: What values, lifestyles or points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?

Core Concept #4: Media have embedded values and points of view

Key Question #2: What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?

Core Concept #2: Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules

Grade Level: 8-10

Materials: Copies of “Walking the Williamsburg Bridge to Work,” a five page graphic narrative by Mo Willems from 9-11 – The World’s Finest Comic Book Writers & Artists Tell Stories to Remember, volume 2 (DC Comics, 2002). Find the graphics in our [May newsletter](#); pages 15-19.

Activity: Pass out copies of the story to individual students or to groups, and allow a few minutes for reading time. Briefly discuss student reactions to the piece. Next, draw students’ attention to the third page of the story, in which the main character and everyone around him see the attacks taking place. Ask, why doesn’t the artist show the World Trade Center on this page? As students discuss this question, direct their attention to Key Question and Core Concept #4, especially to the question of what’s represented in or omitted from a media message. You may also want to ask, what effect do they think the artist intended to have on the reader by leaving the WTC out of the picture?

Extended Activities:

1. Ask students about the purpose of this story. Why did the artist tell it?
2. View excerpts from World Trade Center and ask students to compare how the story of 9-11 is told in Willem’s graphic narrative and Oliver Stone’s live action film. The Five Core Concepts and Five Key Questions of media literacy were developed as part of the Center for Media Literacy’s MediaLit Kit™ and Questions/TIPS (Q/TIPS)™ framework. Used with permission, © 2002-2011, Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.com>

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