

Name:

Poets respond to September 11

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, writers tried to make sense of what they had seen and heard. You may want to read these poems several times.

The fires at the World Trade Center burned for three months after the September 11 attacks. As the towers crashed, clouds of dust and ash covered lower Manhattan. Poet Rachel Vigier describes this scene. She also pictures the area just before the attacks. In the poem on the next page, "Names," Vigier begins with "Suddenly it's important to know names..." It describes what many people felt that day.

Burnt Ground

On this street, a powdery dust
settles on my shoulders
as I think of the moment—just before

when it's still an ordinary morning
on a bright September day
when the skyline

stretches up forever
the glory of space
standing still as workers

milling moving around

milling inside or on the street
each start an ordinary day
in an ordinary way. Now

this is the moment—just after
when I think whose dust is this
blowing across burnt ground?

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Poets respond, continued

As you read, ask, “Who were these people?” “Why are their names important now?”

You may want to trade off reading lines in “Names” with a partner.

Names

Suddenly it’s important to know names—
the name of the waitress in the donut shop
the name of the clerk in the bookstore
the name of the teller at the bank
the name of the visitor in the elevator
the name of the guard at the door
the name of the janitor on the top floor
and in the park across the street
the names of all the old men
shuffling backgammon pieces
the names of all the office workers
jostling in lines by the food carts
even the name of the park and the name
of the statue in the park now covered in ash

backgammon *a board
game*

jostling *crowding,
pushing*

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