

# COME FROM AWAY

A NEW MUSICAL

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## STUDENT BACKGROUND PACK CROSS CURRICULA LEARNING

COVERING ENGLISH, PSHE AND CITIZENSHIP, DRAMA, GEOGRAPHY, HISTORY.  
CREATED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ARTSLINK, TDF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT,  
LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE AND SEATTLE REPERTORY THEATRE

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## FROM DAVID AND IRENE

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**Hello,**

Welcome to the Rock!

When we traveled to Newfoundland in September 2011 on the tenth anniversary of 9/11, we had no idea that our journey would bring us to London.

We spent a month in Gander, Newfoundland and the surrounding communities meeting with the locals, returning flight crews and pilots, and returning “come from aways” (a Newfoundland term for a visitor from beyond the island) who gathered to celebrate the hope that emerged from tragedy.

We didn’t know what we were looking for, but thankfully the people of Newfoundland are incredible storytellers. As we heard numerous tales of ordinary people and extraordinary generosity, it became clear that during the week of 9/11, for the 7,000 stranded passengers and people of Newfoundland, the island was a safe harbor in a world thrown into chaos.

We laughed, we cried, we were invited over for dinner and offered cars. We made lifetime friends out of strangers and we came home wanting to share every story we heard – about 16,000 of them!

Through this journey, we’ve learned it’s important to tell stories about welcoming strangers and stories of kindness. It’s important to honor what was lost and commemorate what was found.

Thank you for joining us on this journey and adding your story.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Irene". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**David Hein and Irene Sankoff**

## COME FROM AWAY – BACKGROUND AND STORY

**On September 11, 2001 the world stopped. On September 12, 2001 their stories moved us all.**

In North America, anyone born before 1995 will remember exactly what they were doing when they heard the news of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City and, later that day, the Pentagon. September 11, 2001 was a day when people started their routines, just like any other day, but were suddenly confronted with one of the greatest tragedies in American history.

2,977 lives were lost in a matter of hours and the American and British cultural landscapes changed forever. Meanwhile, as a direct consequence of these events, on the East coast of Canada thousands of lives were also being altered for good. 38 planes, with 6,579 passengers were stranded in a remote town in Newfoundland. The locals opened their hearts and homes, hosting this international community of strangers – spurring unexpected camaraderie in extraordinary circumstances.



## SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 - TIMELINE OF EVENTS:

### AN UNEXPECTED MORNING

#### 7:59 AM EST

American Airlines Flight 11, with 92 people aboard, takes off from Boston's Logan International Airport for Los Angeles.

#### 8:14 AM EST

United Airlines Flight 175, with 65 people aboard, takes off from Boston, headed to Los Angeles.

#### 8:19 AM EST

Flight attendants aboard Flight 11 alert ground personnel that the plane has been hijacked; American Airlines notifies the FBI.

#### 8:20 AM EST

American Airlines Flight 77 takes off from Dulles International Airport (outside of Washington, D.C.) to Los Angeles with 64 people aboard.

#### 8:46 AM EST

Flight 11 crashes into floors 93-99 of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, killing everyone on board and hundreds inside the building.

#### 8:47 AM EST

The City of New York Police Department and The New York City Fire Department forces dispatch units to the World Trade Center, while Port Authority Police Department officers on site begin immediate evacuation of the North Tower.

#### 8:50 AM EST

White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card alerts President George W. Bush that a plane has hit the World Trade Center; the president is visiting an elementary school in Sarasota, Florida at the time.

### THE WORLD TURNS ITS ATTENTION

#### 9:02 AM EST

Port Authority officials, who manage the building, broadcast orders to evacuate the South Tower of the World Trade Center.

#### 9:03 AM EST

Hijackers crash United Airlines Flight 175 into floors 75-85 of the World Trade Center's South Tower, killing everyone on board and hundreds inside the building.

#### 9:26 AM EST

The Federal Aviation Administration closes down air traffic to the U.S. All flights from Europe diverted.

#### 9:37 AM EST

Hijackers aboard Flight 77 crash the plane into the western façade of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., killing 59 aboard the plane and 125 military and civilian personnel inside the building.

#### 9:59 AM EST

The South Tower of the World Trade Center collapses.

#### 10:28 AM EST

The World Trade Center's North Tower collapses, 102 minutes after being struck by Flight 11.

#### 5:20 PM EST

The 47-story Seven World Trade Center collapses after burning for hours.

#### 8:30 PM EST

President Bush declares that America, along with its friends and allies would "stand together" to win the war against terrorism.



# GETTING TO KNOW NEWFOUNDLAND



## MAKING A MUSICAL

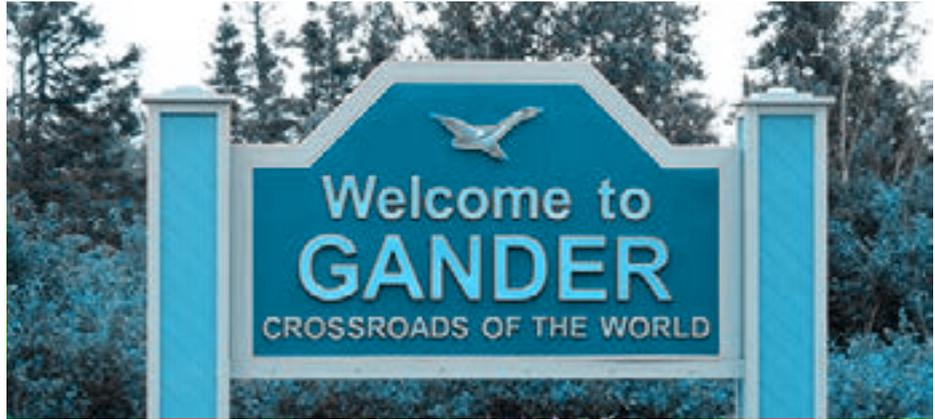
How does the story of Gander, Newfoundland on September 11, 2001 transform into a new musical? That is where David Hein and Irene Sankoff, Canadian husband-and-wife writing team, enter. In 2010, they wrote and performed in their first show together, *My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding*. It was the hit of the Toronto Fringe Festival and it was later picked up by Mirvish Productions for an extended run. Michael Rubinoff, who later founded the Canadian Musical Theatre Project and is the Associate Dean at Toronto's Sheridan College, attended a performance of *MMLJWW*. Impressed with the couple's work, he presented the idea for a new show: the story about how a small Newfoundland community welcomed 7,000 passengers on 38 planes that were diverted to their town on 9/11.

David and Irene are the perfect authors for this musical, having connections to both Canada and the United States. Not only are they Canadian writers, but David also holds dual citizenship and the couple lived in New York during 9/11. They recognised this story as one not about 9/11, but set against that backdrop. David and Irene traveled to Newfoundland in September 2011 for the 10th anniversary commemorating the pilots and "Plane People" that had returned to Gander. There, they gathered interviews with everyone they met and experienced the Newfoundlander's generosity.

From here, they sorted through the interviews, documentaries, and letters from around the world. This surplus of material needed to be streamlined. The playwrights asked themselves, "What is the story? What is the through line?" In 2012, the couple was invited to workshop the show for the inaugural year of the Canadian Music Theatre Project at Sheridan College. They presented 45 minutes of material, essentially the first half of the show. Fourteen student actors played over 100 characters, and sang the music from Newfoundland and around the world.

The musical journeyed to the National Alliance of Musical Theatre Festival in New York in 2013. David and Irene made connections with major regional theatres across the country, including La Jolla Playhouse. Christopher Ashley, director, joined the team and a co-production with Seattle Repertory Theatre was created. *COME FROM AWAY* then traveled to Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC and the Royal Alexandra Theatre in Toronto before landing on Broadway. The cast of the show has been cut down to twelve and the stories consolidated into one act. It has musically expanded to an eight-piece band. With this musical, the couple hopes the audience will be inspired by these stories and music from Newfoundland, just as they were.





## HISTORY

Gander was chosen for the construction of an airport in 1935 because of its location close to the northeastern tip of North America. In 1936, workers began clearing land, boasting one square mile of tarmac. Captain Douglas Fraser made the first landing at “Newfoundland Airport” now known as Gander International Airport on January 11, 1938. With the onset of WWII, as many as 12,000 British, Canadian and American servicemen lived in crowded barracks beside and between the runways. Gander became a strategic post for the Royal Air Force Ferry command. After the war, efforts were made to move residents a safer distance away from the runways. Construction began in the 1950s on the current town site. During the post-war/Cold War era, Gander emerged as the hub of commercial transatlantic aviation, gaining the name the “Crossroads of the World.”

## CULTURE

As a result of its international heritage, Gander’s residents include individuals and families from countries on five different continents. Gander is primarily an English-speaking community, though many residents also speak French. Warm and friendly, the people of Gander are famous for their hospitality. Newfoundland and Labrador was named one of the top 10 friendliest cultures in the world according to *Macleans* magazine. The community treats non-Newfoundlanders (known to Newfoundlanders as “come from aways”) as family. Visit Gander, and you might find yourself involved in a screech-in ceremony. During this initiation to Newfoundland, outsiders take a shot of screech (Newfoundland rum), perform a short recitation, and kiss a codfish.

### BRAINSTORM IT!

**Think of a story that you think would make a great musical. This story can be about a personal experience, a historical moment or a fictional character.**

- **Why do you think this story would make a great musical?**
- **How will music enhance the telling of this story?**
- **What characters would be central to the story?**

## GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Gander lies in the northeastern tip of the island of Newfoundland in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador





## HOW DO PEOPLE MAKE MONEY IN GANDER?

Residents of Gander make money by working in these main industries:

- **Transportation**  
e.g. Bus Driver or Air Traffic Controller
- **Communications**  
e.g. Local TV Reporter
- **Public Administration and Defense**  
e.g. Mayor or an administrator for the Gander government

HOW MANY PEOPLE  
LIVE IN GANDER?

**12,732** (SEPT  
2018)

## FUN FACTS

- At the time of its completion in 1938, the then 'Newfoundland Airport' was the largest airfield on the planet, with four huge paved runways. These tarmacs equalled one square mile. Today the world's largest airport is the King Fahd International Airport in Saudi Arabia with a land area of 301 square miles.
- In St. John's, Newfoundland, you can find moose wandering about. Because of this, residents advise tourists not to drive on the highway at night.
- A crater on the surface of Mars has been named for the town of Gander, in recognition of the airport town's history of pioneering aviation and aerospace technologies.
- The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has its own dictionary. The province's language and dialect are so diverse, different communities spread throughout the island often have their own, unique accent.
- Newfoundland has no crickets, porcupines, skunks, snakes or deer, native to North America. It does, however, have over 100,000 moose. They were introduced over 100 years ago.
- The island has its own time zone, 30 minutes ahead of Atlantic Standard Time.
- The first known European presence in North America was not Christopher Columbus, but rather the Vikings. They arrived at L'ase aux Meadows, located at the very northern tip of the island, which is believed to be the location of a Viking colony. It was discovered in 1960 and it is believed that the settlement was founded around the year 1,000.
- Newfoundland used to be an independent country. In 1907, Newfoundland was given dominion status by the UK along with New Zealand, Australia and Canada and remained so until 1949 when it joined the Canadian confederation.
- Gander's town roads are shaped like the head of a goose.
- Gander International Airport boasted Newfoundland's first 24-hour alcohol license and the province's first escalator.
- Nearly all of Gander's streets are named for famous aviators, including Amelia Earhart, Alcock and Brown, Charles Lindbergh, Eddie Rickenbacker, Marc Garneau and Chuck Yeager.
- Newfoundland and Labrador was named one of the top 10 friendliest cultures in the world according to *Macleans* magazine.

# SOME STEPS TO BECOMING A NEWFOUNDLANDER



## LEARN THE LANGUAGE

Hear tales of Newfoundlanders past while you eat bologna, caplan and repeat Newfoundland phrases.

*After it's over* YOU'LL REMEMBER THAT



# 02

## TAKE A SHOT

Back in World War 2, an officer was stationed here and was offered some Screech. All the locals were tossing it back with nar' a quiver, so he does too, and lets out an ear-piecing howl. "What was that ungodly screech!"

# 03

## KISS THE FISH

Now with every transformation, comes a tiny bit of risk. And it's the same to be a Newfoundlander, every person's wish. So don't be dumb, just take the plunge, and go on - kiss the fish!

# YOU'RE A NEWFOUNDLANDER



## KELLY DEVINE

### MUSICAL STAGING

When I was first exposed to *Come From Away*, I was hit by the music and then by the unique story telling structure. It has been a wonderful challenge to work on a musical that doesn't directly point to dance; it made me focus solely on the characters, their situations, and how they were being affected emotionally, to discover and find the movement. Chris Ashley said to me early on, "What if we just use 12 chairs?" That immediately forced us to be inventive - like building things out of Legos. I think one of the special elements about this production is that it takes all 12 actors working together, and working for each other every second of the show to achieve and support each moment. That is what is unique to an ensemble. There are so many unseen secret moves that happen to prepare another actor before his or her moment. It feels a little bit like we learned that from the people of Newfoundland - that sense of community spirit and selflessness. To be a part of a new musical that highlights people's goodness void of cynicism felt like a good thing to put out in the world...and I got to do it with some really incredible people.



## OPERATION YELLOW RIBBON



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF GANDER



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE TOWN OF GANDER

# OPERATION YELLOW RIBBON

Operation Yellow Ribbon was launched by Canada to handle the diversion of civilian airline flights on September 11, 2001 in response to the terrorist attack that morning. In total, 255 aircraft were diverted to 17 different airports across Canada. The communities surrounding Gander International Airport were up to the challenge of housing, feeding and entertaining the travelers. To quote a New York Times article written a few months after the fact:

"Jake Turner, the town manager, went into action as soon as the planes started landing. Des Dillon of the Canadian Red Cross was asked to round up beds, along with Maj. Ron Stuckless of the Salvation Army, who also became the coordinator of a mass collection of food that emptied refrigerators for miles around. Employees from the local co-op supermarket arrived with a refrigerated truck full of meat and other provisions. At St. Martin's Anglican Church, Hilda Goodyear spent 48 mostly sleepless hours organizing bedding and priming the parish hall's kitchen for a Lufthansa flight.

People from as far away as Twillingate, an island off the Kittiwake Coast of Newfoundland, prepared enough sandwiches and soup for at least 200 people and drove an hour and a half to Gander to deliver it to dazed and frightened passengers being herded off planes without luggage and under intense scrutiny.

Responding to radio and television announcements, the residents and businesses of Gander and other towns supplied toothbrushes, deodorant, soap, blankets and even spare underwear, along with offers of hot showers and guest rooms. Newtel Communications, the telephone company, set up phone banks for passengers to call home. Local television cable companies wired schools and church halls, where passengers watched events unfolding in New York and realized how lucky they were."<sup>\*</sup>

Five days later, the majority of the "plane people" (as the unexpected visitors came to be called) were on their way home. Gone – but certainly not forgotten.

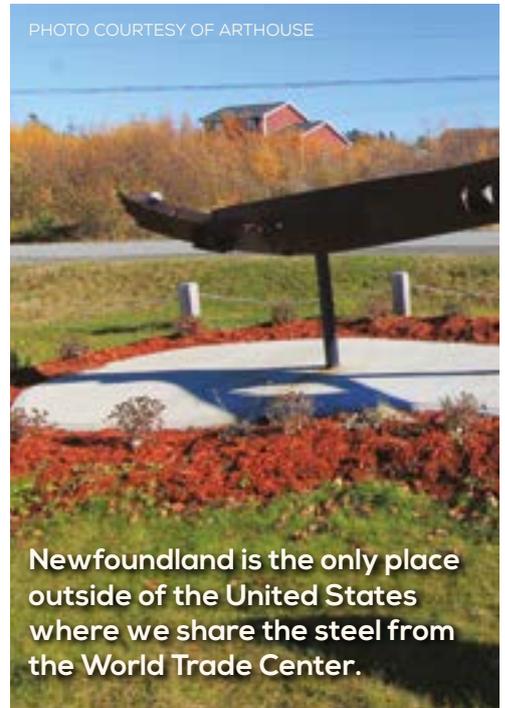
<sup>\*</sup> "Unexpected Guests Warm Hearts in the Frozen North"  
– New York Times, 18/11/01 by Barbara Crossette.

PORTIONS REPRINTED COURTESY OF SEATTLE REPERTORY THEATRE

# 2011 10 YEAR REUNION

*Come From Away* was born on the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, when Sankoff and Hein attended a reunion event in Gander after receiving a grant to interview local citizens and some of the returning passengers.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTHOUSE



Newfoundland is the only place outside of the United States where we share the steel from the World Trade Center.



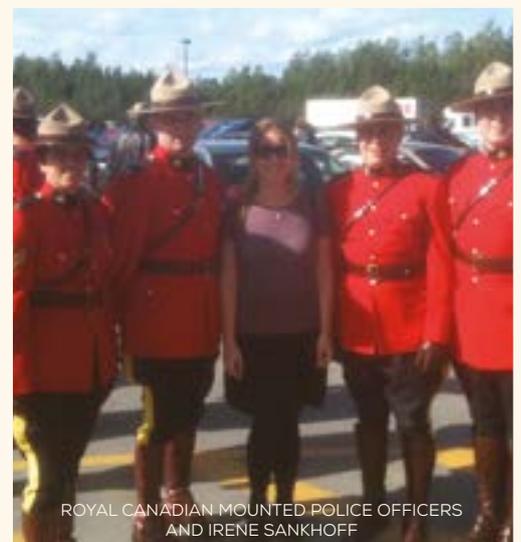
DAVID HEIN AND IRENE SANKOFF



DAVID HEIN AND IRENE SANKOFF



NICK MARSON, DIANE MARSON, IRENE SANKOFF AND DAVID HEIN



ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE OFFICERS AND IRENE SANKOFF

# LASTING LEGACY

The generosity displayed by the town became a news item in itself, resulting in a barrage of media coverage; a book, Jim DeFede's *The Day the World Came to Town: 9/11 in Gander, Newfoundland*; and numerous television segments, including an extensive human interest piece by NBC reporter Tom Brokaw as part of the 2010 Vancouver Olympics coverage.

Over the years, the passengers, who left with tears and hugs, have responded with their own astonishing acts of generosity – setting up scholarship funds and donating back to the hosts who asked for nothing in return.

On the 10th anniversary of 9/11, a number of the “plane people” returned to Gander to commemorate the occasion. A New York Times article reported from the event:

“Maureen Murray and Sue Riccardelli of Morris Plains, N.J., were returning from Paris on Sept. 11, 2001, when their flight was diverted. ‘We were the fourth plane to land,’ Ms. Murray said Sunday. They were visiting with Mac Moss, a former administrator at the Gander campus of the College of the North Atlantic, a trade school. He had taken care of them for three days back then. ‘This is our fifth trip back,’ Ms. Murray said. ‘We feel like it’s our second home.’

It’s not clear how many “plane people” returned to Gander for the 10th anniversary of those days. The town is an intimate place, a scattering of houses, a few hotels, five stoplights, one high school and a strip of chain stores. This weekend, the hotels were booked up, and a ceremony held in a small auditorium in the town’s community center Sunday afternoon was nearly full.

‘I had to pick a place to be on 9/11,’ said David C. Jacobson, the American ambassador to Canada, who had flown into town for the occasion. ‘I picked the best place to thank the Canadian people for what they did.’

For some, being in Gander for the anniversary of the attacks was one more way of coming to terms with the attacks.

‘We feel like we’ve healed a little bit more,’ Ms. Riccardelli said, ‘because we’ve had Gander.’\*\*

\* “Plane People’ From 9/11 Return to Newfoundland to Give Thanks”  
– New York Times, 9/11/11, by Jim Lewis

PORTIONS REPRINTED COURTESY OF  
SEATTLE REPERTORY THEATRE



*...if any time there's a tragedy, you feel free to drop by Gander. We will be here, willing to help your people in a time of need.*

*– Gander Mayor,  
Claude Elliott*

## SECTION 3

# 9/12 AND BEYOND

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## THE IMPACT OF 9/11 IN THE USA

9/11 significantly altered life in the US in many ways. Security measures in airports have significantly increased since the attacks. Before 9/11, you could comfortably bring your bottled water with you past security, you could have things like small scissors, nail clippers or tweezers in your carry-on and you did not have to limit the amount of liquids (shampoo, conditioner, creams, etc) you carried with you. Now, you are only allowed to go through security with 100ml of liquid in 100ml containers. Any liquids you are carrying must be packed in a see-through sealed bag and run through the X-ray belt.

Another, perhaps more significant consequence of 9/11 is an increase in racial profiling against Muslim people. Racial profiling is a term used when law enforcement officials target individuals for suspicion of crime based on the individual's race, appearance, ethnicity, religion or national origin. Given that the attackers on September 11th were Muslim, many people around the globe started to perceive all Muslims as terrorists.

Crimes against people from Arabic countries increased by 500% between 2001-2009 and discrimination against Muslim people in the workplace increased 150%. You may have heard the story of Ahmed Mohamed who was arrested in 2015 in Texas for bringing a clock to school that, to teachers, looked like a bomb.

## TWO SIDES OF THE SAME STORY

There are multiple points of view and lots of speculation on the reason for the attack on September 11, 2001. Below, we are including the two most prominent perspectives at this point in history: statements from President Bush & Osama Bin Laden. Osama bin Laden (March 10, 1957 – May 2, 2011) was the founder of Al-Qaeda, the organization that claimed responsibility for the September 11 attacks on the United States. Al-Qaeda was formed as a response to the abolition of the caliphate in Turkey in 1924. A caliphate is a form of Islamic government where the ruler is considered both a political and religious successor to the Islamic prophet, Muhammad. Seeing secular government as 'unholy,' Al-Qaeda's mission was to bring the caliphate back to the Muslim world stating that "Islam is not performing rituals but a complete system: religion and government, worship and Jihad (holy war), ethics and dealing with people, and the Koran and sword" (Quote from: The Al-Qaeda Manual, p.8 UK translation).

We invite you to read both speeches. Read between the lines. Think about what they choose to highlight and what they leave out. Form your own opinion.

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## PRESIDENT BUSH'S STATEMENT SEPTEMBER 11, 2001



Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes, or in their offices; secretaries, businessmen and women, military and federal workers; moms and dads, friends and neighbors. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. America was targeted for attack because we're the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world. And no one will keep that light from shining. Today, our nation saw evil, the very worst of human nature. And we responded with the best of America — with the daring of our rescue workers, with the caring for strangers and neighbors who came to give blood and help in any way they could.

Immediately following the first attack, I implemented our government's emergency response plans. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts. Our first priority is to get help to those who have been injured, and to take every precaution to protect our citizens at home and around the world from further attacks. The functions of our government continue without interruption. Federal agencies in Washington which had to be evacuated today are reopening for essential personnel tonight, and will be open for business tomorrow. Our financial institutions remain strong, and the American economy will be open for business, as well. The search is underway for those who are behind these evil acts. I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them. I appreciate so very much the members of Congress who have joined me in strongly condemning these attacks. And on behalf of the American people, I thank the many world leaders who have called to offer their condolences and assistance. America and our friends and allies join with all those who want peace and security in the world, and we stand together to win the war against terrorism. Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose worlds have been shattered, for all whose sense of safety and security has been threatened. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me." This is a day when all Americans from every walk of life unite in our resolve for justice and peace. America has stood down enemies before, and we will do so this time. None of us will ever forget this day. Yet, we go forward to defend freedom and all that is good and just in our world. Thank you. Good night, and God bless America.

## **LINKS TO USEFUL SPEECHES:**

### **POLITICIANS:**

[Donald Trump - Inauguration speech](#)

[David Cameron - resignation speech post-Brexit](#)

[Winston Churchill- We shall fight on the beaches](#)

[Barack Obama- Victory Speech](#)

[Margaret Thatcher- The Lady Is Not For Turning](#)

### **OTHER:**

[Malala Yousafzai - United Nations Speech](#)

[Emmeline Pankhurst's- Freedom or death](#)

[Inua Ellams \(playwright\) - Ted Talk on Redefining Black Masculinity](#)

[JK Rowling - Harvard speech 'The Fringe Benefits of Failure and the Importance of Imagination'](#)

[Baz Lurhmann - Everybody's Free \(to wear sunscreen\)](#)

[Oprah Winfrey- Golden Globes #MeToo speech 2018](#)

[Maya Angelou - 'On the Pulse of Morning'- Clinton's Inauguration](#)







## GOING FURTHER

- Create a classroom art display using the gratitude narratives.
- Visit [comefromawaylondon.co.uk](http://comefromawaylondon.co.uk) to further explore the stories behind COME FROM AWAY.



The  
**Arts**  
**Link.**

**tdf**

LA  
JOLLA  
PLAY  
HOUSE

**srt**

THIS GUIDE WAS CO-CREATED AND PRODUCED BY REBECCA YEOH  
AT THE ARTSLINK AND SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHER, IZZY SIDWELL.

IT WAS CO-PRODUCED WITH TDF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT,  
LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE AND SEATTLE REPERTORY THEATRE