

CREATIVE NON-FICTION: FIRST PLACE

Destin Shaw, author

The Academies at Jonesboro High School Meredith Baine, teacher

A Gut Punch in History

The day was crisp and sunny like every other morning. The sound of birds chirping, metronomes clicking, and band instruments playing filled the early morning air. Sweat beads dripped off of Grant and the other trumpet players as the sun rays shone down upon them. The band director, Steve Warner, then quickly noticed the time and wanted the band to have time to change before 2nd block.

“Alright, one last show run and you will be dismissed. Make it a great one!” Steve Warner exclaimed from the top of the band tower. The show run’s quality was quite great with only minimal mistakes like they hoped. All the band kids chattered as rehearsal was finally over. Grant and his friends quickly ran to change, get their backpacks, and headed to their second period. Grant’s second period was probably the most annoying class he could've had, Algebra two. His legs were tired from marching for an hour and a half, yet he still had to make his way up two flights of stairs to get to class on time. Grant practically ran so he could arrive there before the bell. Finally, just as the bell rang, Grant set his backpack down and plopped down into his chair. He was ready for another very uneventful day.

As the teacher tried his hardest to start roll over the loud noise of classroom chatter, the square boxed television was steadily playing at a medium volume. Grant thought to himself that maybe he forgot to turn it off, still the teacher wasn’t too focused on the tv playing at the current moment. Grant then began to pull out his homework assignment and a few pencils for class. This was only before the entire class filled with silence. The sudden change from loud laughter,

talking, and borderline hollering to dead silence was maybe the scariest part of the whole situation. Everyone's heads were fixated to the box television, except the teacher's. Grant looked over to see the visible confusion on his teacher's face wondering why the class was silent, until the teacher had looked over and saw what was playing on the screen. The news broadcast had only played for about 10 minutes, but that entire 10 minute time felt like an eternity.

Grant's eyes began to widen with fear as he saw a glimpse of the pentagon being on fire, people jumping out of the windows of the skyscrapers, and a huge amount of smoke filled the air. Some kids in class started to freak out, but Grant continued to stare in disbelief. Not quite being an adult yet, Grant saw his life be put into a new perspective. As the chaos started to rise within the classrooms, everyone's mixed feelings were interrupted by the principal on the intercom.

"This is your principal speaking, I am aware of the severity of the situation but please turn off all televisions at this current time, so we do not further upset the students. Thank you Jonesboro High." The principal stated in a stern yet still worried voice.

Grant was shaken up as his algebra teacher turned off the television. No further questions were asked, and the teacher tried his best to make class run as usual. Grant could see the worried faces on some kids and then the other kids who didn't see this event as being tragic. He then began to try to push this tragic event in the back of his mind, however he was just so angry that they wouldn't let them watch the news. Grant felt shadowed away from reality, and he just wanted to figure out what actually occurred on the day 9/11/2001.

Later that day, Grant arrived home and immediately turned on the news. That 10 minute time the news was on in class was not nearly enough time for Grant to really figure out what happened. Grant sat there, watching the news on a repeating cycle. The smoke rose from the

buildings, and the people screaming were silent yet still so loud. The pain and mental damage that these poor people, families, and emergency responders experienced that day was unimaginable for Grant. Up until now, this tragic event was the scariest point in Grant's life. As the time passed and the day got later and later, Grant found himself stuck watching the news, similar to a record on repeat. Suddenly, he heard the phone ringing and was shocked to pick up and hear from his brother.

“Grant, bud, I need you to inform mom that I got T-boned. I was getting gas in mom’s car and everyone was freaking out and driving recklessly because of the limited gas. I just need you to let mom know that I’m okay, but her car on the other hand is not.” Grant’s brother seemed stressed and worry carried over into his voice.

Grant then shared the information with his mom, and worry instantly showed on his mother’s face. It felt like the world was slowly crumbling with so many awful events happening. The gas prices, the World Trade Center incident, and now his brother getting T-boned? This was way too much for Grant. It all felt like one big gut punch to the stomach.

Looking back at the occurrences during that horrible day 9/11, Grant believes that 9/11 was more impactful than how COVID-19 felt. With COVID-19, you could see what it looked like on a map, where it was going, and how it affected so many people. With the incident of 9/11, it was much more sudden than the results of COVID-19. Grant knew that this memory would stick with him for the rest of his life.