

FIRST DAY COVERS

ARE ENVELOPES
CONTAINING
A COMMEMORATIVE
STAMP, APPROPRIATE
POSTMARK AND
ARTWORK DEPICTING
THE TOPIC.

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Barbara Jordan

New stamp issue on
September 16, 2011
Houston, TX 77201



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FIRST DAY COVERS AND THE 9/11 ANNIVERSARY

As our nation approaches the tenth anniversary of 9/11, how will you teach it? If you use the word “attack,” will students compare Pearl Harbor to 9/11? If you plan to teach by using the nation’s “response,” will students read and compare the December 8, 1941 speech by President Roosevelt to the September 11, 2001 speech by President Bush? Do both attacks deserve to be a “day of infamy”? Will you teach the anniversary using the concept of “hallowed ground” as described by President Lincoln in the Gettysburg Address?

This first day cover contains an original piece of artwork, interpreting the stamp issued by the U.S. Post Office in 1998, three years before the 9/11 attack.

Using this first day cover students can analyze how symbols, such as the rising sun, the amber waves of grain, Uncle Sam with his sword pointing down, Lady Liberty with her shield of red white and blue, the eagle with its wings stretching into the “V” for victory & the flag representing the nations’ unity, are used to depict U.S. ideals of freedom and democracy.



(CLICK TO ENLARGE)

The “Uncle Sam Top Hat” stamp was postmarked from Troy, N.Y. the hometown of Samuel Wilson. During the War of 1812, Wilson sold beef to the U.S. army and he stamped U.S. on the wooden crates. Soldiers began referring to the food as from Uncle Sam, a new nickname for the federal government. During Reconstruction, cartoonist Thomas Nast began popularizing the image of Uncle Sam with a beard and wearing a stars and stripes suit, but it was during World War I that illustrator James Montgomery Flagg created the image we know today.

Read or listen to President Bush’s speech to the American people on September 11, 2001, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/gwbush911address-to-the-nation.htm>. Then have students draw a new first day cover depicting Uncle Sam’s response to the attack. Would his sword be up as he charged off to war? Would Uncle Sam be wearing a fireman’s uniform entering the World Trade Towers to rescue survivors? Maybe Uncle Sam would be standing with the American Red Cross as it collected donations, and served food to the rescuers, or he might be kneeling in prayer. Students could work in pairs with one creating the stamp and postmark and the other the artwork.

For a 9/11 teaching unit, go to *Tribute Art and 9/11, Healing Through Artistic Response* for K-12 students. It was created by the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in partnership with the September 11th Education Trust and the Social Studies School Service.
<http://www.911memorial.org/tribute-art-911>

*Visit the First Day Cover Lessons booth at the TCSS convention in Austin, Oct. 21/22
and at the NCSS convention in Washington, D.C., Dec. 2/3.*

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