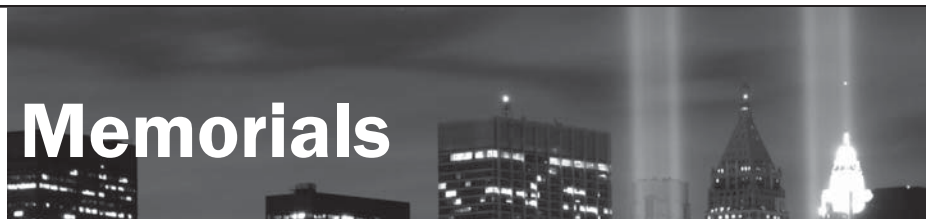


Examining Memorials

Hillary Gardner



PRE-READING: Discuss *spontaneous* memorials that you have seen. Compare them to *official* memorials.

Ghost Bikes

Near the Brooklyn playground where my son likes to play, there is a bicycle chained to a street sign. It is decorated with fake flowers and the name of a bike accident victim.



Every time I take my son to the park, I am confronted with this “ghost bike,” just one example of how memorials fill our daily lives.

Public Remembering

The dictionary explains: “A memorial is an object which serves as a focus for memory of something, usually a person (who has died) or an event.” Memorials can be large or small, sanctioned by government agencies or, like the ghost bike, a controversial effort started by concerned citizens. Maybe you have noticed examples of memorials in your community.

It has been ten years and the National September 11 Memorial and Museum will finally be dedicated this year. But immediately following the attacks in 2001, a spontaneous memorial grew

I’ll never forget the missing persons flyers plastered in Union Square.

in Union Square. I’ll never forget the missing persons flyers plastered in the Square. (See the photo on the next page.) Every day for nine days, images of people whose families longed to learn something more about them greeted me as I exited the subway. These flyers

were the families’ last attempt to make contact with the loved ones they had lost.

For many years, the skies of New York City have been changed each anniversary of September 11th by the Tribute in Light, two towers of light streamed into the sky, mimicking in light the way the Twin Towers were so tall they could be seen for miles away.

Neither of these memorials were without controversy, and they are good reminders of the questions: Who should we remember and why? Who decides how we use public space? What can we do if we want to memorialize someone?

POST-READING: Find a memorial and write about it, answering the following questions: Who or what does it commemorate? What does it look like? Where is it located? When did it start? Who started it? What do you like/dislike about it?

Hillary Gardner is an ESOL professional development coordinator at City University of New York. To further explore memorials, see <www.911memorial.org>, <www.tributeinlight.org>, <www.livingmemorialsproject.net>, <www.streetmemorials.org>, and <www.aidsquilt.org>.



The Pentagon Memorial honors the 184 victims who died at this location on 9/11. Illuminated benches were arranged according to the victim's ages, starting with Dana Falkenberg, 3, to John Yamnicky Sr., 71.