

18-#2 A man walks into one of the identical tall buildings in New York City on September 11, 2001. He sets his bag down, and resumes working, as he had a meeting to go to at noon that day. At 10:30, nothing is left of the two towers that once proudly stood in New York City. Resulting from the apparent terrorist attack is chaos all across America. Then, approximately 10 years later, Navy SEALs bravely enter the building that housed the terrorist who planned the most brutal attack on American soil. When the man was captured, Americans experienced a sense of pride about their country; there was, and still is, such a strong sense of unity in every American after that life changing event. After months of being away from home on that operation, Navy SEALs returned home, and neither them nor their families could hold back tears of joy. These Navy SEALs willingly put their lives in danger to defeat one of America's greatest enemies at the time. That is why we must never forget the brave men and women that risk their lives for us like they did in 9/11. We should keep in mind, 9/11 is one of the several times in which the veterans have stood out among us to serve our nation. We have had veterans serving the USA in the invasion of Afghanistan, Iraq, Panama, and more. We have veterans who served in the Vietnam War, in Grenada, and the Persian Gulf War. Veterans have families and other people they leave behind to protect all of our families as well as their own. Most people, when asked to describe veterans, they will mention the uniform they wear, or the equipment they are required to carry- but veterans are also dads who play baseball with their sons, or moms who drop their daughters off at dance lessons. These otherwise ordinary people have one of, if not the most dangerous and important job in the country. Their job is selfless. They risk their own lives, dedicate every single minute of every day, and spend time away from the people they love so

that we can retain our freedoms. They inspire young kids to be brave- just the way they are. These days, many schools such as my own have a JROTC program where they train students to be in the Army. Many of these kids, kids as old as I will be, later enlist in the army. Many of these kids are inspired by a family member in service, looked up to them when they were young, and want to be just like them and protect the freedoms of people of the United States. They protect our right to say the pledge to the flag every morning. Veterans are the reason we still have our freedoms that the Founding Fathers wrote for us, they preserve our nation; after all, America was built by those who fought for our country in the first place. They make it able for us to have rights to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. Their service to our nation and its citizens is the biggest sacrifice, and they hold our nation's pride and security every day they work. The veterans are people we must never take for granted- they are our heroes, and we are honored to have people like that defending America. Imagine a world without veterans, even for one day- it is a world no one would ever want to live in. That is why we "Honor Sacrifice, Inspire Service". Veterans Day symbolizes a specific day to honor the military veterans who served in the United States Armed Forces, but I believe every day when we pledge to the flag, we honor those who served, and those who are currently serving. I would also like to point out that no matter what, the sacrifice that veterans make when enlisting holds no political ties- it is not about what one believes in when it comes to politics- it is simply that they are brave enough, and valiant enough to serve this nation and protect the freedoms of its people. There is no question about whether or not we can take veterans for granted- without them we would not hold any of the rights we have

right now. We ought to respect veterans for all they do, because what they do is very altruistic.

To conclude, I want to share a story. I was at the Army War College over this summer, and I met a veteran there. He knew everything about military history, shared additional information with us as we walked through the exhibit, and he himself was dressed in his uniform. Someone pointed this out, and we started discussing the importance of all the badges he wore. He was asked the question, "why is the flag on your uniform facing inward, not outward?". He answered, "it represents that as the soldier moves forward, the flag is moving in the breeze". The flag represents so much to veterans- it is their motivation to move forward in work every day. They respect this country enough to risk their lives, serving America. In return, we must honor them, and respect them, and always remember them every time we wake up in the morning to a peaceful sunrise. It is imperative that we recognize our tranquility comes at the expense of their horrific experiences at war. We must never take veterans for granted, for because of all they do, our grandparents, parents, kids, and grandkids will be able to have protected freedoms in this great nation. So on this Veterans Day, I want to take time to sincerely thank every veteran that has served this country, no matter what branch they served on. I also want to congratulate every kid that has enlisted in the Army, thank them for their bravery, and tell them how much it means to me that people my age are brave enough to take this decision for their country.