



# Lessons on Acceptance and Forgiveness: *A Tale of Two Americas*

## Overview

In this immigration lesson plan, students will read a brief version of Rais Bhuiyan's inspiring story of forgiveness towards his attacker after being a survivor of a hate crime in the days after 9/11 because he was an immigrant. Students will then watch and respond to a *Ted Talk* by author Anand Giridharadas on Bhuiyan's story as well as listen Bhuiyan speak about his story and his efforts to build the [World Without Hate](#) foundation. Student will be asked to consider what does acceptance and forgiveness mean to them as well as how their school can contribute to making a world without hate.

This lesson is adaptable to English Language Learners and readers at multiple levels. It was developed by teacher Julie Mann, an ESL and Human Rights Teacher at Newcomers High School, Long Island City, New York and distributed with her permission.

## Objectives

- Students will be able to read and reflect on Rais Bhuiyan's story in order to define acceptance and forgiveness both orally and in writing.

## Essential Question

- What do the terms acceptance and forgiveness mean?

## Common Core Standards

High School

- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.1](#)  
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1](#)  
Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

## Grades

- 9-12 (adapt as appropriate)

## Texts & Materials

- Anand Giridharadas's *Ted Talk* "[A Tale of Two Americas. And the Mini-Mart Where They Collided](#)"
- Rais Bhuiyan's You Tube video "[World Without Hate](#)"
- Student handout

## Do now: Read this story about Rais Bhuiyan's Story and answer the questions below:



Just weeks after the tragic events of 9/11, Rais Bhuiyan was shot in the face by a white supremacist, who at that time called himself “the Arab slayer.” That fateful day would not only lead to Bhuiyan’s journey to rebuild his own life, but it would also help unexpectedly to build a better world.

The man who shot Rais Bhuiyan was Mark Stroman, who confessed to shooting Bhuiyan, as well as killing two other South Asian workers; for which he was sentenced to death.

Bhuiyan survived, but with the use of only one eye and he still carries 35 shotgun pellets embedded deep within in his face. Many wouldn’t blame him if he were to respond to Stroman’s misguided actions with hate and anger.

However, Bhuiyan chose to take the high road instead, mounting an aggressive campaign to convince Texas authorities to reduce his assailant’s sentence from death to life in prison.

Bhuiyan worked tirelessly to save Stroman’s life with pleas for clemency that in 2011 reached the U.S. Supreme Court and even met multiple times with his attacker to get to know him as a human being. Though Stroman was executed, Bhuiyan continues his [World Without Hate](#) campaign to promote healing, compassion and forgiveness.

1. How does this story make you feel and why?
2. What question would you ask Rais Bhuiyan if you had the chance?
3. What surprises you most about this story and why?

According to Bhuiyan, his continued efforts to educate youth are probably the most powerful. Recently he said "I look at the young faces of the students I speak to, and I think that they have not yet learned to hate. If we can reach them with our message of acceptance and forgiveness before they learn a different code, we might really make a difference."

**What does this quote mean to you?**

**Do you agree/disagree and why?**

**As you watch the two films (the TED Talk and Rais Bhuiyan's video), please answer the questions below:**

1. What about Rais Bhuiyan's story is most memorable to you and why?
2. What is Rais Bhuiyan's motivation for his World Without Hate organization?
3. Would you be able to forgive your attacker in the way Rais Bhuiyan has done? Why?
4. What steps can we take to end hate crimes?
5. What do the words "acceptance" and "forgiveness" mean to you?

**Extension:**

- Do something! Take the pledge: <http://worldwithouthate.org/forgiveness-pledge/>
- Come up with ways our school can contribute to making this a world without hate. What would you like to help with and why?