

## About the book

“A powerful novel by award-winning author Jewell Parker Rhodes set fifteen years after the 9/11 attacks. When her fifth-grade teacher hints that a series of lessons about home and community will culminate with one big answer about two tall towers once visible outside their classroom window, Dèja can’t help but feel confused. She sets off on a journey of discovery, with new friends Ben and Sabeen by her side. But just as she gets closer to answering big questions about who she is, what America means, and how communities can grow (and heal), she uncovers new questions, too. Like, why does Pop get so angry when she brings up anything about the towers? Award-winning author Jewell Parker Rhodes tells a powerful story about young people who weren’t alive to

witness this defining moment in history, but begin to realize how much it colors their every day. *Towers Falling* explores the thought-provoking question of how kids born after 2001 can find meaning in events they have no personal memory of, but which still have a monumental impact on their families, educators, and communities. In the tradition of her revered body of middle grade work including *Ninth Ward*, *Sugar*, and *Bayou Magic*, once again Jewell Parker Rhodes deftly weaves historical and socio-political layers into a story that is at its heart about friendship, family, and finding your way in a complicated world.” – Author’s website, <http://jewellparkerrhodes.com/children/books/towers-falling/>

## Teaching the book

Why do we need to teach this book? Children born after 9/11, like Dèja, are growing up, going to school, and making their way into the world whether we choose to educate them about the events of 9/11 or not.

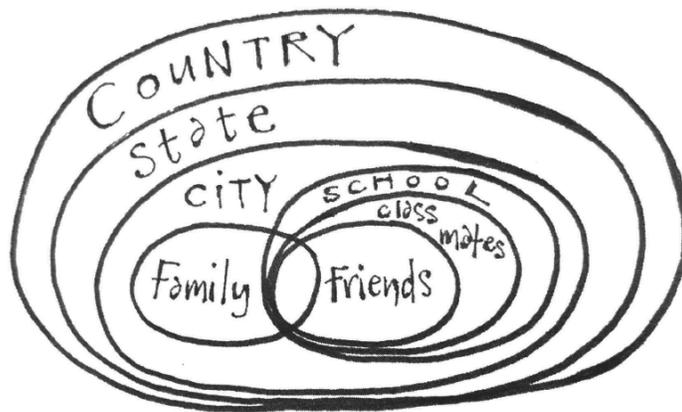
**“A good question, Dèja,”  
says Miss Garcia, her voice  
trembling. “Why should  
anybody care?”**

If we want students to learn the facts about what happened and be able to reflect and make their own meaning without bias, we first need to confront the fears and biases held within ourselves and within our classrooms. In the educator’s guide for this book there is an example activity to help yourself and your students identify initial responses to certain statements that can be later examined after reading the book. Because of the wide variety of characters and situations in this book, it is likely that most readers will have their thinking or beliefs challenged by some aspect, and discussing these challenges in a positive way can help our students grow.

**“New school year,” pipes Miss Garcia...“All lessons are to be integrated...‘Be relevant,’ Principal Thompson likes to say. ‘History is alive.’”**

*Towers Falling* provides an example of a school curriculum about 9/11 that is at once respectfully somber and reflectively uplifting. Teachers of various subjects collaborate and support each other through a tough series of lessons. Although the events of 9/11 are remembered respectfully, history is not seen as just tragedy in the past; rather it is alive and informs the current values and systems in which we are embedded. As teachers, we educate our

students about their communities, the state they live in, and the country we call home so that we can develop our shared identities and learn to be citizens. In light of what seems to be a never-ending series of difficult events in our country in the past few years, students need to learn how to be resilient and care for one another. As Dèja says, **“I love my American home. We are a family – not perfect, not all the same, some rich, some poor, all kinds of religions and skin colors, some born in America and some immigrating here...Americans believe in freedom. Two hundred and forty years as a nation, and this belief hasn’t changed.”**



To download the FREE official educator’s guide, created by current and former teachers, please go to: <http://jewellparkerrhodes.com/children/teaching-guide-towers-falling/>