**Book Talk Script:**

**Link to Voicethread:** https://voicethread.com/myvoice/#thread/8428807/46925096/47418646

**Introduction**: We’ve all heard about natural disasters like hurricanes, tornados, earthquakes, and tsunamis that cause mass destruction and can kill hundreds of people. Yet, because they occur naturally, these type of disasters are beyond our control. Then there’s something called man-made disasters.  The Business Dictionary defines a man-made disaster as “ A disastrous event caused directly and principally by one or more identifiable deliberate or negligent human actions.” This might include nuclear warfare, biochemical warfare, toxic emissions, global warming, fires, civil unrest, and terrorism. Can anyone think of a man-made disaster? Today, I’m going to share with you three books that talk about man-made disasters throughout history. We’ll start in chronological order with the sinking of the Titanic in 1912, then move to the Hindenburg Disaster of 1937 where a large passenger airship burst into flames, and we’ll finish with the collapse of the World Trade Center in 2001. Each of these books talks about the disaster from a different perspective sometimes through the eyes of a character who lived through the disaster and sometimes through the eyes of a character learning about the disaster second hand years later. As we talk about each of these books, try to imagine the disaster through the perspective of the main character of each book.

**Transition to the First book:** This first book, *The Titanic: an Interactive History Adventure* by Bob Temple is a choose your own adventure book. In this nonfiction book, you get to pretend you were aboard the Titanic on that fateful voyage in 1912, when the world’s largest ocean liner slammed into an iceberg and, over the next 2 hours and 40 minutes, made its slow descent to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

Temple, B. (2008). *The Titanic: An interactive history adventure*. Mankato, Minn: Capstone Press.

**Scene based approach:** So the Titanic was a passenger ship that carried 1,316 passengers. As you can see, some passengers were able to escape on a lifeboat while others froze to death in the cold Atlantic waters and weren’t so lucky.

From the beginning of the book, you get to decide which character type you’ll be. You might want to travel as a rich, first class passenger, or as a poor third class passenger journeying alongside immigrants seeking a new life in America, or if you are a member of the crew, you can either work aboard the deck or in the engine room. After selecting your character type, follow the directions at the bottom of the page, to chart your own path aboard the ship and determine whether or not you’ll make it off the ship alive.

Here’s an example of one of the many suspenseful paths you may choose to follow as you read.

As a first class passenger, you are relaxing in the first class lounge when you meet two wealthy, famous gentlemen, one of whom is John Jacob Astor. Astor is an old friend you haven’t seen since he left for Europe four months ago with his new bride. He invites you to join him a few nights later for dinner on Sunday, April 14th.

“As you sit down to dinner, astor entertains you and the others at the table with tale of his business deals in new york and in europe. It is a fun, festive night. You all eat your fill. After dinner, you and other other men move to the smoking room. You spend the next few hours playing cards before returning to your stateroom. As you get ready for bed, there is a pounding on your door. A steward calls, “I’m sorry to inform you that the captain has ordered all on deck with life jackets.” What’s this? Is it a drill or a serious problem? You aren’t sure what to do. Suddenly you think of the Astors. If there is trouble, they should be warned.”    p. 20-21

Do you go warn the Astors by turning to page 33 or do you follow the instructions and head out on the deck by turning to page 34? You decided to go warn them.

“You grab your life jacket and leave your stateroom. When you finally find the Astors, they are in the gym. They greet you as you walk in, but there’s little time to talk. A crewmember calls into the room, urging everyone to go up on deck. On deck, a crewmember tells you that all the lifeboats are being loaded. Astor doesn’t believe the passengers are in serious danger. I’m sure we’ll be fine aboard the big ship,” he says. It doesn’t matter, as the crew is loading women and children first. Mrs. Astor isn’t sure that boarding a lifeboat is a good idea. But her husband asks her to get on the boat as a precaution. As her lifeboat is lowered, he calls to her, “We’ll meet in New York.” p. 33

Then the book instructs you to turn to page 39 to find out whether or not you survive to be able to meet up with Mrs. Astor in New York or not.

Return to the beginning of the book to follow different paths.  All of these storylines in *The Titanic: an Interactive History Adventure* by Bob Temple are loosely based around real characters and events that happened aboard the ship.

**Transition:** About 25 years after the “unsinkable” Titanic departed from Southhampton, England, across the Atlantic bound for New York City, a similar Titanic-sized, hydrogen powered aircraft known as the Hindenburg took flight from Europe. In 1937, the Hindenburg departed from Germany and followed a similar path across the Atlantic Ocean, this time bound for Lakehurst, New Jersey, just a short distance from New York City. *I Survived the Hindenburg Disaster* by Lauren Tarshis, the newest installment in the New York Times bestselling I Survived series, recounts one young boy’s fictional journey aboard the Hindenburg.

Tarshis, L., & Dawson, S. (2016). *I survived the Hindenburg disaster, 1937*. New York, NY: Scholastic.

**Plot based approach:** At 11 years old, Hugo Ballard’s life has been filled with more unexpected adventures than some people experience in a lifetime.  It’s Monday, May 3rd 1937 and Hugo, his parents, and his four year old sister Gertie are at Rhein-Main Airfield in Frankfurt, Germany about to board the Hindenburg, the world’s largest hydrogen powered aircraft (almost as long as the Titanic). Prior to this, Hugo and his family had moved New York City and spent the last year living in Kenya, where his science professor parents studied the lions inhabiting this east african country. Unexpectedly, Hugo’s little sister Gertie came down with malaria and, in a panic, the family fled to Germany, where they heard a famous malaria doctor could help them. Still unable to cure Gertie, Hugo and his family are encouraged to see another team of doctors back in New York.

Zooming through the air at 85 miles per hour enroute to New York, Hugo befriends young Marty Singer, whose father, Mr. Singer, works for the Zeppelin Company that owns the Hindenburg. Then after an unexpected visit from Colonel Joseph Kohl, a vicious Nazi leader, Hugo’s family learns that Kohl is searching for a spy who smuggled a top secret document on board the Hindenburg that reveals classified information about the Nazi’s dangerous plots against the United States.  Could Mr. Singer somehow be tied up in these dangerous Nazi schemes? While Hugo tries to make sense of Colonel Kohl’s mission, Gertie comes down with a fever of 105 that can’t seem to break.

And then, after three days of sailing across the Atlantic, just minutes before the Hindenburg was scheduled to land on Thursday, May 6th, the greatest flying machine ever built burst into flames at 7:35 p.m., trapping Hugo inside. Here’s what happened.

“The force of the explosive blast sent him flying back. He landed on the ground with a sickening thud. Frantic people fell on top of him, and he was nearly crushed.

Someone’s heavy shoe kicked his face. An elbow jabbed him in the eye. A knee pressed against his throat, making it impossible to breathe.

He managed to free himself, but now the flames were everywhere. Poisonous black smoke rushed up his nose and down his throat. Tears gushed from hsi burning eyes. Red-hot drops of molten metal rained down, burning through his clothes and sizzling against his skin.

But Hugo barely noticed the pain He just wanted to find his parents and his little sister, Gertie.”

P. 2

Did Hugo find his family and make it out alive? And did Colonel Kohl and Mr. Singer receive the justice they deserve?  You’ll have to read Lauren Tarshis’ I Survived The Hindenburg Disaster to find out.

**Transition to third book:** Fast forward to the 21st century, and we come to a historical disaster that many of your parents lived through - the terrorist attacks of 9/11. In *Towers Falling* by Jewell Parker Rhodes, 5th grader Deja tries to make sense of that horrific day that happened before she was born - September 11, 2001- the day the World Trade Centers in New York City were struck by a terrorist plane crash killing 2,753 people from over 90 nations. Little did she know, that day would come scar her life and her family’s life forever. Let’s listen as she recounts how that infamous day came to affect her.

Rhodes, J. P. (2016). *Towers falling*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

**Character based approach:**

Hi, I’m Deja. Just Deja. The original. One and only. This year I’m starting 5th grade at a brand new school, Brooklyn Collective Elementary. It’s hard enough moving to a new school and making new friends right before I head off to middle school. But what makes it even harder is trying to hide from my classmates the truth about where I live - in a homeless shelter. Don’t get me wrong, I love my family. Even though my Pop can’t hold a job for very long any more and spends a lot of time sleeping and wheezing, I know he and my Ma love me fiercely. And some days, even though taking care of my little sister Leda and my brother Raymond can be exhausting, I wouldn’t trade them for the world. But being forced to share one small, dingy room with all five of my family members and constantly worrying that our neighbors at Avalon Family Residence might steal what little we have left isn’t exactly what I thought my life would be like at 10 years old.

But it turns out, I really have nothing to worry about. On my first day of school, I quickly made new friends. There’s Benjamin Rubin the third (Ben for short). He’s new too. He just left his family’s ranch in Arizona and moved with his mom to an apartment in New York. His parents are getting a divorce, but he’s still super nice and really smart. And then there’s  Sabeen, the nicest girl I ever met. She’s from Turkey and wears different colored scarves everyday.  Even though she lives in a mansion with her extended family, she still invites me over.

And I can’t tell you how much I love Miss Garcia, our 5th grade teacher. On the first day of school she gave us a homework assignment - she told us to write about where we lived. She understands me so well, just like Ma, that she pulled me aside and told me I didn’t have to write about the Avalon, the homeless shelter, if I didn’t want to. She said writing about where we live would somehow relate to learning about something she calls the 9/11 terrorist attacks. From what I’ve heard, that was a terrible day, on September 11, 2001, when planes that flew into the Twin Towers in New York, destroying the towers and killing lots of people.  I don’t get it. I’ve never heard about the Towers Falling before, and every time I tell my dad that’s what we’re studying in school, he gets really angry and then he stays in bed for days, wheezing. I don’t know why talking about 9/11 makes him so upset. But I trust my friends, Ben and Sabeen, to help me figure out more about how we’re all interconnected through where we live and why anyone who was born after 9/11 should care about what happened anyway.  I just hope I can figure it all out before my dad gets even angrier and sends me to different school far, far away from my new friends and even further away from uncovering my father’s secret.

**Transition to conclusion:** After reading *Towers Falling* by Jewell Parker Rhodes, you might feel inspired to talk to your own family about their recollections of 9/11.

**Conclusion:** *The Titanic: An Interactive History Adventure* by Bob Temple, *I Survived The Hindenburg Disaster of 1937* by Lauren Tarshis, and *Towers Falling* by Jewell Parker Rhodes each offer a unique perspective of how each character reflects differently upon the impacts of man-made disasters throughout history. Whether you actually lived through the disaster, like Hugo who survived the Hindenburg, or are just pretending to live through the disaster like in the choose your own adventure Titanic book, or whether you’re learning about a disaster for the first time through family and friends, like Deja with the Twin Towers, it’s intriguing to think about the personal impacts of such horrific, large-scale tragedies. It’s very possible that, in your lifetime, you might survive or know someone who will survive a man-made disaster like this. So check out one of these books and experience the struggles these characters faced in confronting man-made disasters in their own way.