

# INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 18 MODEL

## TASK 18 SOW, SEW, SO WHAT?

**STEP 1:** *Students are provided with a thesis statement (Sow) and a set of documents. They then Sew the appropriate evidence from the documents and write a So What conclusion*

### Thesis Statement:

Sociological context plays a major role in whether a tragedy is sensationalized or ignored.

**FROM: DEATH ON THE DARK RIVER (COLLECTION #05009)**

### DOCUMENT 1: "RMS TITANIC? HOW 'BOUT SS SULTANA?"

by Nancy Y. Bonar

ACCESSED JUNE 18, 2013

<http://www.mwsadispatches.com/node/953>

There'd also been scant reporting about Sultana's April 1865 cataclysm, plus the public was Civil War-weary. They'd read way too many newspaper and magazine stories about war and death. Adding to this disinterest in Sultana, 18 days prior to the steamboat tragedy, readers had been bombarded with news of General Lee's surrender, President Lincoln's assassination, and the capture and killing of John Wilkes Booth. Americans wanted a return to normalcy.

On the flip side, here and abroad the RMS Titanic's calamity filled newspaper front pages and radio shows from the day after she'd sunk, and for days and months to come. Today, for instance, Titanic and its dead are remembered with museums, tourist attractions and monuments (two in Washington, DC) and another major one in New York City. The ocean liner is the focus of music, movies, TV shows and documentaries, websites, art exhibits, for examples, and more will come.

### DOCUMENT 2: "DEATH ON THE DARK RIVER"

by Cedric A. Larson

ACCESSED JUNE 18, 2013

<http://www.americanheritage.com/content/death-dark-river?page=show>

Queerly enough, this overwhelming catastrophe got only a moderate amount of newspaper attention at the time. The nation's mind was fixed on the closing scenes of the Civil War. Lee had surrendered, General Joseph E. Johnston was surrendering on the day before the disaster, the country had a new President and was beginning to worry about the problem of rebuilding the sadly shattered Union, the Army naturally was not anxious to publicize the accident—and, anyway, the country's most

(Continued next page)



Labeling?

People were sick of the war...wanted normal life to come back

Because of all the famous people ????

-ROBERT



The ship was in disrepair....

## INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 18 MODEL (continued)

### STEP 1 (CONTINUED)

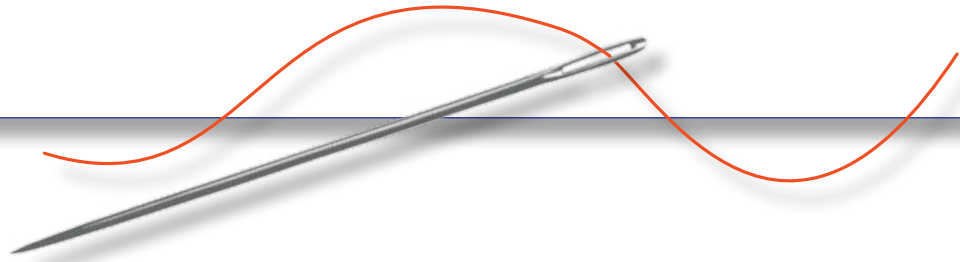
influential papers were published in the East, and the Sultana's victims were all from the Middle West, far away and across the mountains. There was an official inquiry, productive of a mass of documents to which nobody in particular paid very much attention . . . and there the affair ended, one of the worst marine disasters in history but one which has a hard time finding its way into the history books.

Just a bunch of regular people, not famous

Investigation not really public

-ROBERT

*In conclusion,  
When a "disaster" strikes after a time of war, people have "had enough" tragedy, and it can go basically unnoticed, such as in the case of the Sultana disaster.  
In contrast, the Titanic was high profile, due to the fact that it occurred during a time of peace. Also, the people that died on the Sultana were soldiers returning from the Civil War; not rich, famous, "important" people like those on the Titanic*



## INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 18 MODEL (continued)

**STEP 2:** *Students examine their textbook account using the topic sentence of the chapter or section as the So and then determine what evidence the author has Sewn to the topic sentence. In determining So What students consider what additional evidence they need or what elements have been left uncertain.*

(Textbooks with lower reading levels have often simplified content and can make this exercise an opportunity for students to fill in the gaps.)

Labeling?

**FROM: DEATH ON THE DARK RIVER (COLLECTION #05009)**  
**SURVIVING THE WORST: THE WRECK OF THE SULTANA AT THE END OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR**  
 by Alan Huffman

TOPIC SENTENCE:

○	<p><i>The Sultana remains the worst maritime disaster in American history—more people died than with the 1912 sinking of the Titanic.</i></p>	
	<p><u>Evidence Supplied:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Recently released Union soldiers trying to get home</i></li> <li>• <i>Had to walk many miles, dirty, hungry, sick etc</i></li> <li>• <i>Did not care that the ship was overcrowded</i></li> <li>• <i>Ship's operators made \$10/passenger</i></li> <li>• <i>Meant to carry less than 400; over 2000 passengers</i></li> <li>• <i>Faulty boilers exploded</i></li> </ul>	
○	<p><u>Uncertain:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Why was there not more regulation on # of passengers?</i></li> <li>• <i>Why not more of an investigation?</i></li> <li>• <i>Why do students today not study this disaster?</i></li> </ul>	

## INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 18 MODEL (continued)

**STEP 3:** *Students are provided with texts of varying degrees of support for a given thesis (So<sub>w</sub>) and determine which source provides (Se<sub>w</sub>s) the strongest evidence, and why the sources might vary considering the author's point of view and purpose (So What).*

*Documents 1 and 2 provide greater detail and support, providing a more complete picture of the disaster, and its causes. Document 3 seems like it is written for a younger audience, maybe a middle-school textbook. It leaves out some of the details, more of a neutral tone. Document 1 is an informative article, Doc. 2 has with an outraged tone; author is comparing all the notoriety that the Titanic disaster receives, even today, to a virtually unknown disaster of equally epic proportions. It is interesting to note that while Doc 1 and 2 explain why the disaster received little coverage at the time, neither explain why students today for the most part have never heard of this incident.*

