

# INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 24 MODEL

## TASK 24

### QFT (QUESTION FORMULATION TECHNIQUE)

**STEP 1:** *Select multiple texts and sources that address a specific topic.*

THIS EXAMPLE USES DOCUMENTS FROM THE  
"DEATH ON THE DARK RIVER"—COLLECTION #05009

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ASSESSED JULY 18, 2013

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

labeling?

**STEP 2:** *Review rules:*

Ask as many questions as you can

Do not discuss,  
judge, or answer any  
of the questions

Record the questions  
exactly as stated

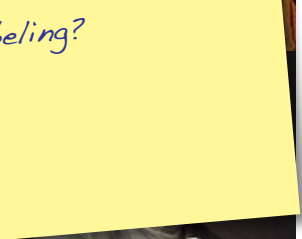
Change any  
statements into  
questions

**STEP 3:** *Generate questions (5-7 min)*

Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 and distribute chart paper/markers (or other mechanism for recording questions)

- Direct students to ask as many questions as they can and record each question as stated. They are not to discuss or judge the question. Your focus is on enforcing rules
- Do not offer examples or model the task!! If students struggle to create questions offer question starter words such as "who" "what" etc.
- Number of questions each group creates does not matter; limit the time for generating questions to 5-7 minutes.

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





## INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 24 MODEL (continued)

### STEP 4: Categorize questions (10 min)

Define **Close-ended** (explanatory) and **Open-ended** (argumentative) for students. Close-ended questions have an answer that is generally agreed upon while open-ended questions have a variety of answers and there is debate about the answers and the interpretation of evidence.

Students remain in groups and classify their questions as close-ended or open-ended by writing a 'C' or 'O' next to each question.

#### STUDENT GENERATED QUESTIONS

- What does sensationalized mean? C
- What does sociological context mean? C
- What kind of tragedy are we talking about? O
- Is this now times or long ago? O
- What about the Internet? O
- How does media play a part in this? O

As a class, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each type of question:

- "You can't answer the question at all unless you know the meaning of the words...but you need closed-ended questions to get the facts...."
- "Open-ended questions provide support and detail"
- "More than one answer can lead to more fact-finding"
- "Sometimes you need just the facts, though"

a. Students then edit two questions, changing them from one type to another—a closed to an open and vice versa—and consider the different types of answers and information elicited from the questions

Is this 'now times' or long ago

When did this particular tragedy take place?

What kind of tragedy are we Talking about?

Are we talking about a natural disaster?

**STEP 5: Improve Questions**—based on step 4, students focus on the idea that the construction and phrasing of a question shapes the kind of information they can expect to receive. They then re-write/edit their questions to more adequately address the Question Focus Statement.

If I want to get the basic facts about a particular incident, I need a lot of open-ended questions, or a some very targeted closed end questions

Thinking about this, I don't know if we are talking about a particular incident, or situations in general...I definitely need to rephrase this question

#### New Questions:

Are natural or man-made disasters given more attention by the media?

In the past, were tragedies treated differently by the media and the public?

## INSTRUCTIONAL TASK 24 MODEL (continued)

**STEP 6: Prioritize Questions**—*Students are directed to prioritize the questions based on the teacher’s instructional goals. Suggestions for prioritizing include:*

- i. most important/interesting/relevant questions
- ii. Three questions that need to be answered first
- iii. Nesting the questions: Which ones are **compelling questions** and which are **supporting questions** that can help answer the compelling question?
- d. Once students have selected questions, they discuss their reasoning and report to class. The teacher records all questions for further use.

**ARE NATURAL OR MAN-MADE DISASTERS GIVEN MORE ATTENTION BY THE MEDIA?**

What does sociological context refer to?

Does it mean the economy?

Does it mean the political situation?

Does it mean social values?

What type of tragedies are being referred to?

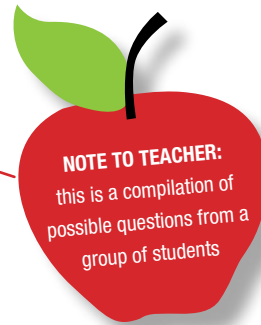
**ARE NATURAL OR MAN-MADE DISASTERS GIVEN MORE ATTENTION BY THE MEDIA?**

**CAN WE COMPARE THE PAST AND THE PRESENT IN TERMS OF PUBLIC AWARENESS?**

**IN THE PAST, WERE TRAGEDIES TREATED DIFFERENTLY BY THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC?**

How did people get their information and how is it different from today?

Were people more sympathetic before the barrage of media that we have today?



**STEP 7: Further steps in this process are based on the teacher’s instructional goals:**

- Students might begin research for a project:

Sensationalism of Tragedy in the Media: What gets Attention?  
What gets Ignored?  
Comparing our Response to Tragedy in the Past/Present  
Yellow Journalism and the Internet

- Use provided documents to find answers to questions: (all of these are provided in the collection)

White, Truman C. “Our Country And Its People, A Descriptive Work on Erie County.” Accessed June 18, 2013.

<http://archive.org/stream/cu31924025959226#page/n5/mode/2up>

Huffman, Alan. “Surviving the Worst: The Wreck of the Sultana at the End of the American Civil War.” Accessed June 18, 2013.

<http://mshistorynow.mdah.state.ms.us/articles/319/surviving-the-worst-the-wreck-of-the-sultana>

Bonar, Nancy Y. “RMS Titanic? How ‘bout SS Sultana?” Accessed June 18, 2013. <http://www.mwsadispatches.com/node/953>

- Use a student generated question as a basis for an essay/presentation:

*In 1865 the worst maritime disaster in American history, the wreck of the Sultana, occurred. Yet today, this event is largely unknown in our history, while in comparison, the Titanic disaster is one that is well know to almost everyone. Why is this so? Because the events sociological context in which a disaster takes place greatly influence the amount of media attention a tragedy receives...*

- Maintain a list of questions to be answered throughout a unit of study, or reflect on the process of generating questions. (record questions/brainstorming from above in a reflective journal)