

The great American poet Walt Whitman wrote the following verse in memory of the Johnstown Flood.

A voice from Death, solemn and strange, in all his sweep and power,

*With sudden, indescribable blow—towns drown'd—humanity by
thousands slain,*

The vaunted work of thrift, goods, dwellings, forge, street, iron bridge,

Dash'd pell-mell by the blow—yet usher'd life continuing on,...

Consider the poem and answer the following questions IN COMPLETE SENTENCES, ON LOOSE LEAF (not this sheet!):

1. What “indescribable blow” is Whitman talking about?
2. Does “the vaunted work of thrift” refer to the people who died or the things destroyed by the flood?
3. Would you call this a sad or a hopeful poem?
4. Write your own poem or artistic description of the Johnstown Flood.

Imagine that modern media, such as television and radio, existed back in 1889. Write an on-the-spot news report of the Johnstown Flood, using the information on the attached pages. Consider incorporating the following news practices in your story:

Interviews with eyewitnesses, “Expert” commentary, Charts, diagrams, and other graphics, Reenactments.

Photo Analysis Worksheet

Please answer on loose leaf in complete sentences!

Step 1:

Examine the attached photograph for 10 seconds. How would you describe the photograph?

Step 2:

Divide the photograph into quadrants and study each section individually. What details--such as people, objects, activities--do you notice?

Step 3:

What other information--such as time period, location, season, reason photo was taken--can you gather from the photo?

Step 4:

How would you revise your first description of the photo using the information noted in Steps 2 and 3?

Step 5:

What questions do you have about the photograph? How might you find answers to these questions?