



**Literacy Design
Collaborative**

The Johnstown Flood of 1889

by Linda Muller

The Johnstown Flood of 1889 was one of Pennsylvania's greatest disasters. This module features using *The Johnstown Flood*, a historical non-fiction text written by author David McCullough, as a book backdrop. Students will evaluate evidence from McCullough's book and other primary and secondary sources to understand what caused this terrible disaster.

Students will state their position on what caused the Johnstown Flood of 1889 and will complete an LDC writing argumentation task in which they use text-based evidence to support their position.


GRADES

6 - 8

DISCIPLINE

 **Social Studies**

COURSE

 **PA History,
U.S. History**

Section 1: What Task?

Teaching Task

Task Template 1 - Argumentation

What caused the Johnstown Flood of 1889? After researching secondary and primary source texts on the Johnstown Flood of 1889, write an article for the Pennsylvania Heritage magazine in which you argue the primary cause(s) of the flood. Support your position with evidence from your research.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects

RH.6-8.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH.6-8.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

RH.6-8.10

By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6—8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

WHST.6-8.1

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

WHST.6-8.1

Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.

WHST.6-8.1.b

Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources.

WHST.6-8.1.c

Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

WHST.6-8.1.d

Establish and maintain a formal style.

WHST.6-8.1.e

Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented.

WHST.6-8.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHST.6-8.5

With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.


WHST.6-8.9

Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

WHST.6-8.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

Texts

 **The Johnstown Flood: The Incredible Story Behind One of the Most Devastating Disasters America Has Ever Known** by author David McCullough

Secondary source: historical non-fiction (informational text) used as a book backdrop throughout this module. Copies of this text are available for purchase. Teachers must read McCullough's book prior to instructional planning to decide where to provide opportunities for students to study other texts and/or conduct research in order to understand different circumstances linked to the event. McCullough's text provides details about the flood based on research and eyewitness testimonials and the author presents information in a manner that compels the reader to learn more about the event and discuss causation through the writing task.



List of primary sources on the Johnstown Flood

LDC Student Work Rubric - Argumentation

	Not Yet	Approaches Expectations	Meets Expectations	Advanced
	1	2	3	4
Focus	Attempts to address prompt, but lacks focus or is off-task.	Addresses prompt appropriately and establishes a position, but focus is uneven. D: Addresses additional demands superficially.	Addresses prompt appropriately and maintains a clear, steady focus. Provides a generally convincing position. D: Addresses additional demands sufficiently	Addresses all aspects of prompt appropriately with a consistently strong focus and convincing position. D: Addresses additional demands with thoroughness and makes a connection to claim.
Controlling Idea	Attempts to establish a claim, but lacks a clear purpose.	Establishes a claim.	Establishes a credible claim.	Establishes and maintains a substantive and credible claim or proposal.
Reading/Research	Attempts to reference reading materials to develop response, but lacks connections or relevance to the purpose of the prompt.	Presents information from reading materials relevant to the purpose of the prompt with minor lapses in accuracy or completeness.	Accurately presents details from reading materials relevant to the purpose of the prompt to develop argument or claim.	Accurately and effectively presents important details from reading materials to develop argument or claim.
Development	Attempts to provide details in response to the prompt, but lacks sufficient development or relevance to the purpose of the prompt.	Presents appropriate details to support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim, with minor lapses in the reasoning, examples, or explanations.	Presents appropriate and sufficient details to support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim.	Presents thorough and detailed information to effectively support and develop the focus, controlling idea, or claim.
Organization	Attempts to organize ideas, but lacks control of structure.	Uses an appropriate organizational structure for development of reasoning and logic, with minor lapses in structure and/or coherence.	Maintains an appropriate organizational structure to address specific requirements of the prompt. Structure reveals the reasoning and logic of the argument.	Maintains an organizational structure that intentionally and effectively enhances the presentation of information as required by the specific prompt. Structure enhances development of the reasoning and logic of the argument.
Conventions	Attempts to demonstrate standard English conventions, but lacks cohesion and control of grammar, usage, and mechanics. Sources are used without citation.	Demonstrates an uneven command of standard English conventions and cohesion. Uses language and tone with some inaccurate, inappropriate, or uneven features. Inconsistently cites sources.	Demonstrates a command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Cites sources using appropriate format with only minor errors.	Demonstrates and maintains a well-developed command of standard English conventions and cohesion, with few errors. Response includes language and tone consistently appropriate to the audience, purpose, and specific requirements of the prompt. Consistently cites sources using appropriate format.
Content Understanding	Attempts to include disciplinary content in argument, but understanding of content is weak; content is irrelevant, inappropriate, or inaccurate.	Briefly notes disciplinary content relevant to the prompt; shows basic or uneven understanding of content; minor errors in explanation.	Accurately presents disciplinary content relevant to the prompt with sufficient explanations that demonstrate understanding.	Integrates relevant and accurate disciplinary content with thorough explanations that demonstrate in-depth understanding.

Background for Students

In 1889 Johnstown, PA was a booming coal-and-steel town wedged in a deep valley between the Allegheny Mountains and Laurel Ridge and situated at the confluence of the Little Conemaugh River and Stoney Creek. Like many towns throughout Pennsylvania, Johnstown was home to a diverse community of citizens.

To celebrate Memorial Day weekend that year, many people from neighboring towns and as far away as Pittsburgh took the train to Johnstown to visit friends and relatives. Unfortunately, the weather took a turn for the worse with torrential rainfall of an estimated 6-10 inches.

On the afternoon of May 31, 1889, a dam--located 15 miles northeast of Johnstown on the Little Conemaugh River--broke, sending a tidal wave of debris-filled water on a collision course with anything and anyone in its path. As the wave smashed through downtown Johnstown, it destroyed homes, businesses and killed 2,209 men, women, and children. This terrible event gained national attention and left many asking what could have caused this tragedy.

Your task is to read and analyze information from primary and secondary sources so you can prepare a written argument about what caused the Johnstown Flood of 1889.

Extension

No extension is developed for this Task.

Section 2: What Skills?

Preparing for the Task

TASK AND RUBRIC ANALYSIS > TASK ANALYSIS: Students will be able to understand and explain the task's prompt and rubric.

BRIDGING CONVERSATION > ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: Students will be able to connect the task and new content to prior knowledge, experiences and to new content.

TASK ENGAGEMENT: Students will be able to connect visual information related to the topic to prior knowledge, experiences and to new content.

Reading Process

ACTIVE READING > ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY: Students will be able to identify and understand words and phrases that are essential to understanding a text.

ACTIVE READING > ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students will be able to use and cite sources appropriately.

ACTIVE READING > NOTE-TAKING: Students will be able to comprehend and identify important facts and evidence in each text they read.

POST-READING > CONTENT COMPREHENSION: Students will be able to compare and contrast information presented in the different texts.

Transition to Writing

LINKING READING TO WRITING: Students will be able to begin linking reading results to writing task.

Writing Process

ORGANIZING IDEAS: Students will be able to organize brainstorming ideas/first draft of writing into an article format for magazine submission.

REVISION > PEER EDITING: Students will be able to provide feedback and offer editing suggestions on another writer's work.


REVISION: Students will be able to improve the structure and elements of their previous draft.


EDITING: Ability to proofread and make final changes for submission.



Section 3: What Instruction?

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
Preparing for the Task				
30 mins	TASK AND RUBRIC ANALYSIS > TASK ANALYSIS: Students will be able to understand and explain the task's prompt and rubric.	STUDENT NOTES ON UNDERSTANDING THE TEACHING TASK AND RUBRIC FOR WRITING ARGUMENTATION. Silently read the LDC Teaching Task and background information and review the LDC Rubric for writing argumentation then spend a few minutes with your partner discussing each. In your notebooks explain, in your own words, what it is that you are being asked to do then write down what you think are key skills that you need to develop/hone to successfully complete the Task.	Student identifies at least 4-5 skills necessary to complete the teaching task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pass out copies of the LDC Teaching Task with Background Information. ● Pass out copies of the LDC Rubric for writing argumentation. ● Use a Think-Pair-Share strategy and allow students to discuss Task, background information and Rubric before facilitating a whole group discussion. ● Create a list on the whiteboard/chalkboard: invite students to voluntarily share from their notes the key skills they identified and write them on the board then ask other students to add to the list. ● Share examples of final LDC writing products (from past students and professional writers) who write for Pennsylvania Heritage magazine and keep them available for students to preview throughout the duration of the Task.

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
40 mins	BRIDGING CONVERSATION > ACTIVATING PRIOR KNOWLEDGE: Students will be able to connect the task and new content to prior knowledge, experiences and to new content.	GROUP DISCUSSIONS ON DISASTERS IN THE UNITED STATES How do you define what a disaster is? Are there different types of disasters? What causes disasters? What are the effects of disasters? What can we understand about the Johnstown Flood in terms of when it occurred and its impact?	No Scoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose is to place the Johnstown Flood in the context of disasters in the United States. Students will understand how the Johnstown Flood fits into this context in terms of time frame (chronological) and impact on human life (magnitude). Ask students to define what a disaster is. Encourage students to identify and classify disasters as natural and man-made then encourage students to talk about any disasters in which they may have been personally involved. Before class, identify 12 - 15 natural and man-made disasters that have occurred in American History over the past 100 years or so excluding war-related battles (e.g. San Francisco earthquake, Johnstown Flood, Katrina, Galveston Cyclone, Great Chicago Fire, Dust Bowl, Oklahoma City bombing, Terrorist Attacks of 9/11, etc.). Print the name of each disaster on a piece of 8 1/2 x 11 card stock paper then print the corresponding death toll for each disaster on a separate (different color) of 8 1/2 x 11 cardstock paper. Put students into small groups then pass out the disaster cards first. Direct students to work together to place all disaster cards in chronological order on a wall in the classroom or hallway - students can use computers/handheld Smart devices to complete a search on when (date) each disaster happened. Next, direct students to select a death toll card and match it to each disaster. Students must work collaboratively within their own small group and with other groups. Teacher will reveal when each disaster occurred (dates) along with the correct corresponding death toll then teacher will facilitate a whole group discussion about what type of disaster each one was and the cause and effect for each disaster. Teacher will ask students if they can identify any patterns to when certain disasters occurred (summer/fall for hurricanes, spring/summer for tornados, etc.). Finally, teacher will ask students to compare the death tolls from various disasters with the death toll that resulted from the Johnstown Flood - have students rank the severity of the Johnstown Flood in terms of loss of life as compared to other past American disasters.

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
1 hr	TASK ENGAGEMENT: Students will be able to connect visual information related to the topic to prior knowledge, experiences and to new content.	STUDENT ANALYSIS (WORKSHEET) OF PHOTOGRAPHS Using the Library of Congress analysis protocol of Observe, Reflect and Question and the analysis tool, record your analysis of the primary source photographs of the Johnstown Flood provided to you.	No scoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purpose is for students to analyze primary source photographs of the Johnstown Flood to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build visual literacy skills. Connect a primary source photograph to people, places, and events that are described in the book. Comprehend the actual physical effects the disaster had on the town of Johnstown, PA. Teacher and students will use the Library of Congress analysis protocol of (Observe, Reflect, Question) to complete an analysis of primary source photographs. Students will use the Library of Congress online primary source analysis tool (worksheet) to enter their responses as they analyze photographs. Teacher will use the Library of Congress' Teacher Guide for analyzing photographs and prints to aid with facilitation of the analysis of primary source photographs. Teacher can view the attachment below that has links to specific primary source photographs from the Library of Congress.
Additional Attachments: 🔗 Library of Congress online primary source analysis tool 🔗 Library of Congress Teacher Guide for analyzing photographs and prints.  📄 List of primary source photographs from the Library of Congress				
Reading Process				
Not provided	ACTIVE READING > ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY: Students will be able to identify and understand words and phrases that are essential to understanding a text.	VOCABULARY LIST As you closely read and analyze the text-based primary and secondary sources, underline/highlight words and phrases that are unfamiliar to you. Use your notebooks to create an ongoing list of essential vocabulary. Make sure that you follow-up by defining new words/phrases that you have identified from your reading.	Work meets expectations if students are able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> list appropriate words and phrases on an ongoing basis. provide accurate definitions. identify the use of historical language and relate it to modern language examples. seek assistance when necessary to understand difficult words/phrases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher and/or students can preview the video to learn strategies on how to use context clues to give meaning to words used in a text. Students will use their notebooks to keep an ongoing list of vocabulary words. Each day, in class, teacher will review words with students. Students may be randomly selected to share specific words/phrases that they have identified and define them in their proper context. (When necessary) facilitate a whole group discussion of the contextual use of words/phrases to aid in the understanding of the text as a whole.
Additional Attachments: 🔗 Video - How to Use Context to Determine the Meaning of Words.				

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
30 mins	ACTIVE READING > ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students will be able to use and cite sources appropriately.	CITATION OF SOURCES/AVOIDING PLAGIARISM Define "plagiarism" and list ways to avoid it. Use online resources to help you create proper citations of sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides accurate definition. Lists several appropriate strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute and review the handout on plagiarism from The Writing Center at UNC. Give students access to the Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University to assist them with creating citations. <i>Optional</i> - students can use an online citation generator (e.g. Son of Citation, EasyBib, BibMe, etc.) Discuss academic penalties for plagiarism.
Additional Attachments: 🔗 The Writing Center at UNC - Plagiarism 🔗 The Purdue OWL: Research and Citation website				
1 hr and 30 mins	ACTIVE READING > NOTE-TAKING: Students will be able to comprehend and identify important facts and evidence in each text they read.	NOTE TAKING As you read each text, use the Cornell Notes graphic organizer to make a list of information and evidence that looks to be the most important causes of the Johnstown Flood. Avoid plagiarism by using quotations to indicate direct quotes from a text and proper bibliographic citations for each source you use. * D.I. use the Stop-Point-Thinkmark graphic organizer for students who struggle with reading comprehension. In your notes, identify gaps in your knowledge/information to inform/direct your research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies relevant text-based evidence. Identifies gaps in knowledge/information to inform/direct research. Includes information to support accurate citation (for example, source and page numbers for specific ideas, quotations when quoting directly). Organizes notes in a coherent manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach a sample format for note taking (e.g. Cornell Notes). Teacher can preview the video for suggestions on how to teach the Cornell note taking method. Differentiation Strategy (D.I.): use the Stop-Point-Thinkmark graphic organizer for students who may struggle with reading comprehension. Teacher will chunk segments of text and structure specific questions to lead students to better comprehension of the text and identification and citation of information and evidence that they can use to support their writing. Teacher will regularly review student notes to ensure they are in the assigned format (or in another format that gathers the needed information effectively).
Additional Attachments: 🔗 YouTube Video - How to Take Cornell Notes  📄 Stop Point Thinkmark graphic organizer - master copy				

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
40 mins	POST-READING > CONTENT COMPREHENSION: Students will be able to compare and contrast information presented in the different texts.	VENN DIAGRAM/NOTES Reflect on everything you know from your readings and respond to these question prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the same information presented in different texts? Do you see similarities in the information? Any differences? Do any of the authors make an argument about what factors led to the flood? Do you agree? Disagree? 	No scoring.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give students time, in class, to compare and contrast information from multiple texts. Use a Venn diagram as an organizational tool to help students organize information and draw comparisons among different texts. Invite students to share and discuss their findings. After the discussion, allow them to add notes.
Transition to Writing				
1 hr	LINKING READING TO WRITING: Students will be able to begin linking reading results to writing task.	FIRST DRAFT/BRAIN DUMP Using your notes from your reading of primary and secondary sources, your Venn Diagram and reflection notes completed in class, write a brain dump to convince an audience about what caused the Johnstown Flood of 1889. Provide specific reasons for the flood and use evidence from the texts to support your reason. Don't stop your writing to make corrections or changes - just capture all of your knowledge and understandings about what caused the Johnstown Flood of 1889.	Student drafts include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> emerging argument(s) of the primary cause(s) of the flood. evidence from the texts to support their argument. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show students examples of a first "brain dump" or draft Circulate around the room to provide guidance if necessary as students are writing (e.g., pointing them toward their notes, to go back to certain texts, classroom discussions).
Additional Attachments:  ReadWriteThink: Implementing the Writing Process  Magazine Article Planner (graphic organizer)				
Writing Process				

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
2 hrs	ORGANIZING IDEAS: Students will be able to organize brainstorming ideas/first draft of writing into an article format for magazine submission.	DRAFT OF MAGAZINE ARTICLE Using your first draft, write a draft magazine article that addresses the teaching task, including evidence from the text to support your argument. Be sure to follow the structure and elements of a magazine article (as discussed in class) and incorporate the criteria in the scoring rubric provided to you.	The draft: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follows the structure of a magazine article Incorporates elements of a magazine article Includes an argument Provides evidence from the text 	One hour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In large class discussion, review structure and elements of a magazine article. Be sure to highlight the purpose and structure of opening and closing paragraphs and importance of the controlling or main idea. Suggested small group strategy: Hand out a sample magazine article (does not have to be on the topic) and LDC rubric for student work. In small groups, students annotate and "score" the sample magazine article using the rubric. Students then share out in large group discussion about the structure/elements of the magazine article and how the article does/doesn't meet the criteria of the LDC scoring guide. Second hour: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce students to the magazine article template, reviewing the structure/sections. Students then take their turn in turning their first draft into a magazine article using the magazine article template.
40 mins	REVISION > PEER EDITING: Students will be able to provide feedback and offer editing suggestions on another writer's work.	PEER REVIEW Complete a review of a peer's draft.	Annotated paper and scoring guide completed for a peer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review strategies for doing a peer review using the LDC rubric, discussing strategies for giving feedback. Note they are building on the review they did on the magazine article sample. Students first work individually to do the peer review. Students then work in pairs to share their feedback with each other.
Additional Attachments: <div>  Peer Review Look For List </div>				
1 hr and 15 mins	REVISION: Students will be able to improve the structure and elements of their previous draft.	REVISED DRAFT Using the feedback from the peer review, refine your magazine article's argument, analysis, logic, organization and evidence used. Decide what other ideas and/or evidence should be included and what needs to be taken out of the article.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides complete draft with all parts. Supports the introductory paragraph in the later sections with evidence and citations. Improves on earlier draft. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do mini-lesson on how to revise written work using feedback. For example, in large group conversation, present a few sentences or paragraph that has feedback suggesting revisions. Have students offer suggestions in how to improve the sentences or paragraph (could be verbal suggestions, on paper that they post on the wall and then discuss as a group, etc) Students then work alone to revise their article. teacher circulates to answer questions and offer suggestions.

PACING	SKILL AND DEFINITION	PRODUCT AND PROMPT	SCORING GUIDE	INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
45 mins	EDITING: Ability to proofread and make final changes for submission.	DRAFT WITH FINAL EDITS Review your latest draft for typos, spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, etc and make the necessary corrections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of edits from past draft. • Edited copy free from distracting surface errors. 	<p>This is the last step toward a finalized draft. Suggested strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mini-lesson on spelling and grammatical mistakes that you and students have identified in previous drafts of the magazine article, as well as common errors that the class has been/continues to make. • Students work individually to correct their draft for surface errors. You could also choose to have students switch their paper with a peer to do one last read for typos, spelling and grammar errors.

Instructional Resources

No resources specified

Section 4: What Results?

Student Work Samples

No resources specified

Teacher Reflection

Teacher Resources - a PDF document is uploaded under the Texts section of this module. It is intended to serve as a reference list of various primary sources that can be used throughout this module. It is not intended to be an all-inclusive reference list. Excerpts from many of these primary sources were used not only to corroborate information in McCullough's book, but to help students understand the places, people and circumstances surrounding the Johnstown Flood of 1889.

Student Support - the LDC rubric for writing argumentation was used to assess student writing products. A breakdown, by scoring element, was further studied to provide specific information about student needs. It was discovered that students needed more support to develop these writing skills (1) Development, (2) Organization, and (3) Conventions of writing argumentation. * This was the first time students completed a structured LDC writing task for this module.

For future iterations of this module I would consider establishing a writing lab within the social studies classroom. I would dedicate physical space and try to set up 2-3 computer workstations that had bookmarks to online resources (YouTube videos, websites, etc.) to which students could refer as they develop their writing products. I would create posters (visual aids) that remind students of the steps for developing a written argument and for applying standard English conventions in their writing. Optimally, I would enlist the assistance of other teachers and perhaps advanced students to work one on one with students in the writing lab. The lab would be available before and after school and during prep and lunch periods.

All Attachments

 **List of primary sources on the Johnstown Flood : <https://s ldc.org/u/51kdnr0875mvalsgqt3yuthdo>**