

Writing Historical Disaster Fiction

This final assignment provides you with the opportunity to demonstrate your creative mastery of the historian's craft, by asking you to answer a research question through historical fiction. This paper will take the form of a narrative of approximately 10 pages, *with* footnotes and a bibliography. The final paper for this course is meant to assess both your command of the historiography of natural disasters, and your ability to critically analyze and use primary sources. It should follow the formatting guidelines stated on the syllabus, as well as the citation procedures detailed in Kate Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers*.

Assignment: Write a piece of well-cited historical fiction set during or in the aftermath of a natural disaster from American history.

Begin this paper by asking the following questions:

- What might observers of or participants in a natural disaster have felt, seen, or heard?
- How might their stories differ from the traditional narratives of particular disasters?

Your paper should clearly indicate the following aspects:

- Characters' social status, economic status, profession, age and gender.
- How the above attributes impacted their experience of a disaster.
- How they survived or died.
- How life was different after the disaster – be specific.

Remember that this is a paper for a history class. The historical work of the paper will be done in the footnotes and contextual information. This means that your creative decisions about characters' lives, experiences and actions should be rooted in either primary or secondary sources. Use footnotes to explain why you put your characters in particular circumstances, and how what you know about American history, and the history of disasters informed your decisions.