From The Myth of the Eternal Return by Mircea Eliade

Critical Context Essay analysis, presentations and application to the stories

Use these outlines to aid your understanding of the critical essays. Then add your notes and notes from other members of your group to create your overview for your class presentation.

Then have this sheet handy as you read each story in the Disasters and Apocalypse section, looking for parts that apply.

Points of View and Perspectives
- Seeing time as linear or as cyclic
- Tolerating suffering
- Finding blame to ease personal or group pain

Thesis
Without disaster or apocalypse there cannot be regeneration or rebirth. We cannot move to the new unless we destroy the old. Humanity has seen this as happening regularly—in cycles, as spring’s renewal must come after the death of winter. Humanity has also seen this as linear, with a power creating the disaster which some but not all will survive—move to the over side—and create the new.

Supporting points
- Normality of Suffering
  - We can tolerate suffering if it is not gratuitous or arbitrary
  - Pain and suffering must have meaning
  - Pain and suffering must be caused by someone or some thing for us to tolerate it.

- History Regarded as Theophany
  - Historical catastrophes bring the wayward back to the right road by forcing them to look toward the one true God.
  - When the Messiah comes the world will be saved—that which will not be destroyed in order to make the new a better place.
  - We are consoled, misfortune is easier to tolerate if we can sacrifice to get things back to rightness.

- Cosmic Cycles and History
  - Fire renews the world
  - Humanity sees extreme decadence as signaling the triumph of evil and darkness, and therefore an imminent end of the world
  - All sinners are destroyed at the end of the world because the new world will have no sinners, no evil the dead will come back to life and eternity will win out over the passage of time

- Destiny and History
  - Previous eras were better than now and now is better than later
  - No catastrophe is arbitrary
- The cyclic view says that historical events must periodically end the universe so that it can regenerate
- each period of peace is a renewal