The Imagination of Disaster by Susan Sontag

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
- cultural preoccupations with the memory of WWII
- the advance of technology (the atomic bomb)
- dehumanization of modern life
- living through death

Thesis

Science fiction films are not about science. They are about disaster, which is one of the oldest subjects of art.

Supporting points
- destruction on a huge scale
- a strong invulnerable hero with a mysterious lineage comes to do battle on behalf of good and against evil
- science fiction films are strongly moralistic
- mass trauma exists over the use of nuclear weapons and the possibility of future nuclear wars
- science fiction films contain a vast amount of wishful thinking some touching some depressing (p. 1010)
- Science—technology—is the great unifier (p. 1010)
- the condition of the individual psyche
- the perennial human anxiety about death
- the nightmare these films present is uncomfortably close to reality (p. 1014)