

New York City History

Ship Ablaze: The Tragedy of the Steamboat General Slocum, by Ed O'Donnell (paperback from Broadway Books)

This book is approximately \$10 new from Amazon (if you order with two friends you can get free shipping), there are used copies on Amazon for \$6 or less, which comes to approximately \$10 with shipping. The New York Public Library shows more than 20 copies and the Brooklyn Public Library shows 5.

Read O'Donnell's account of this 1904 disaster with an eye for what it tells us about life (and death) in turn-of-the-century New York City. Pay attention to the kinds of details that O'Donnell is able to offer in recreating the days leading to and following the tragic events.

Identify 3 themes of your own as you read and take 2 pages of notes on each theme. Be sure to include page numbers at the end of each reference, like so (37). If you are typing, please aim for 2 pages per theme, if you are writing by hand, please aim for 3 pages, and if you are using notecards, please complete 10 per theme.

The themes you select should run through the book and should not be limited to a single chapter or even two or three. The notes you take should reflect your completion of the entire book. That is, they should include observations and information/quotes from throughout the book. Be prepared to explain your choice of themes in class discussion in the first week back.

There will be a quiz on the events of the disaster and its aftermath when you return to school.

We will be completing a writing assignment and a research exercise using the book as well. Be prepared to discuss the types of sources that O'Donnell used to give his account the depth and detail it has.