Drew, it is a tough question to answer because it was a no-win situation. If they examined the shuttle closer and told the astronauts the situation, it might have resulted in adverse reactions on the part of the astronauts that could have decreased their chances for survival. Nonetheless, I think telling the astronauts would have been the right thing to do. It seems to me that keeping them on the dark and hoping everything worked out was a cowardly course of action. The astronauts should have been informed so that they could be in full-awareness of their situation rather than being blissfully unaware. Perhaps there are things the astronauts would have liked to of said or done on the shuttle before reentering.

The main factor that made it so tragic seems to be the inadequate number of life boats for all of the ship’s crew and passengers. Perhaps, even with more lifeboats, the death toll still would have been large. However, I think that the fact that there deliberately were not even enough lifeboats is something that makes the tragedy even more morally objectionable. It was an act of obvious carelessness and unconcern for people’s well-being. It also shows the overconfidence of the ship’s builders in believing the vessel did not need lifeboats because it was supposedly unsinkable. The lack of lifeboats, although more a factor after the collision had already occurred, seems to me to be the biggest factor in the tragedy.

Michael, it seems that most of the blame for the Texas City Explosion does not lie on the ship catching fire, but rather the circumstances that allowed the fire to turn into a seemingly unnecessarily large explosion. To prevent this, the docks could have had regulations and procedures in place to keep ship’s carrying highly flammable cargo separate from each other so that a fire on one ship could not spread to the others. Additionally, the docks should have been better prepared to fight chemical fires. The fact that the fire was able to get out of control shows that the fire department there was unprepared. Finally, there should have been regulations in place to prevent ship’s carrying hazardous cargo from docking near the oil storage facility.

Mariah, I had never heard of the safe-life design principle before. It makes intuitive sense, but I didn’t know it had an actual name. I think that automobiles would benefit from a fail-safe design in any of their mechanical components. This would prevent the car from breaking catastrophically and crashing in the event that something goes wrong. Instead, if something breaks in a fail-safe system, the owner can notice, bring the car in, and have it repaired. Less dangerous systems that are rigorously monitored can have a safe-life design, such as machinery in a factory assembly line. This machinery can be isolated from people while it is running, so if it fails unexpectedly, it will not injure anyone.

Alonna, it seems to me that people often try to find something and especially someone to blame in cases such as this. I suppose it gives a sort of solace if we can pin the event on one cause. A similar situation seems to be the case with regards to the disaster I studied (the *USS Princeton*). Contemporaries of the disaster did not want to assign any blame, but historians seem very eager to blame the two, main people who worked on the ship. I think that there is no need to assign blame and that doing so oversimplifies the situation. In the case of the bridge, it is understandable that our knowledge was not advanced enough to understand the interactions of aerodynamics and bridges.

Jordan, I was hoping there would be a more exciting cause of the flood, such as some unlikely coincidence causing a massive object to crash into the tank. Instead it just turns out that the tank was terribly designed and could not even prevent molasses from leaking out from the time it was built. I would have thought that if the tank leaked, it would have been in the company’s interest to repair it rather than let their valuable molasses drip out. Another similar tragedy that involved blatant negligence was the *Titanic* which did not have nearly enough life boats for all its passengers and crew. Although the sinking of the ship wasn’t caused by negligence, that disaster was made much worse by the lack of lifeboats.