You may have learned back in eighth-grade science class that “for every action, there is an equal, and opposite reaction.” This was most likely taught in the context of a physics lesson. However, the same postulate often holds true within the larger context of examining a phenomenon. That is, any event will produce results some of which are desirable, and others less so.

For example, when disaster strikes, most apparent initially is the suffering, economic impact, loss, and other negatives that resulted from the ‘tragedy.’ For example, a hurricane may produce much loss of property and sometimes injury or loss of life. Less apparent immediately are the more positive outcomes that often result from a disaster. For example, as a result of the hurricane, economies often flourish as large amounts of money of used to repair or replace property. These produce more jobs to manufacture the goods needed to make the repairs, and the extra sales tax generated provides a greater amount of money that can be used for developing new parks, and so on. The same holds true when apparently "bad" things happen, but on a scale less formidable than what is typically considered a disaster. In short, one way to view an event is to consider the negative results (real or potential) as well as its silver lining, or positive results.
In a disaster, the negatives often are the most readily apparent. Most (but not all) of the negative outcomes become apparent within a relatively short time after the event. But as time passes, the number of new negatives produced by the disaster significantly decrease until finally, there are no new negative outcomes. This trend can be depicted by the shape of the negative side of the Yin/Yang phenomena map. The gray area starts out very large because the negative outcomes are most readily apparent initially, but then it dwindles and eventually disappears toward the bottom of the graphic.

Conversely, the positive outcomes may be imperceptible immediately following the event, but they gradually become more obvious. This is depicted by the white side of the Yin/Yang phenomena map.

Naturally, all events are not disasters. Some may seem, at least initially, like very positive occurrences. For example, the building of a new discount superstore in a small town may produce a number of readily apparent benefits (i.e., new construction jobs, prettier and newer place to shop, greater variety of goods at a cheaper price, one-stop shopping, etc.). The negatives of this event may not be apparent until a few months later when most of the small business in the town have to close because they can't compete. Since their stores are closed, there is less money to spend at the discount superstore, and eventually, the superstore may leave the town because it is no longer making enough money to justify staying there. In short, seemingly positive events almost always have a negative side to them. The Yin/Yang phenomena map can be used to facilitate examination an event from this perspective.

SECTION 1: Key Topic
At the top of the Yin/Yang phenomena map is listed the key topic and the section labeled, “is about ...”, a paraphrase of the key topic is noted. For example, in the figure below, the Key topic, Titanic Sinking Disaster, is about how the sinking of the Titanic affected peoples lives then and now.

SECTION 2: Negatives
The various negative outcomes associated with the event are listed here. When possible, those closest to the top of this section should be those most likely to be perceived first. Likewise, at the bottom of this area should be the negative outcomes that become apparent only much later.
How the sinking of the Titanic affected peoples’ lives then and now

- Negative impact on family members who lost someone
- "Survivor’s guilt" experienced by many who made it.
- Families destroyed
- Fortunes lost
- Loss of passengers’ property
- Cowards revealed
- Professional reputations ruined
- Financial loss of investors
- Caused review of maritime safety laws and regulations
  - improved safety regulations
  - lifeboats & safety training
  - improved ship designs
- Created opportunity for financial exploitation
  - increased sales of newspapers
  - books, movies, etc.
  - tours to location
  - selling Titanic artifacts
- Caused society to reflect on unfairness of the class system & practices associated with it

As sad as the sinking of the Titanic was, it resulted in many improvements in society & safety rules in place today

SECTION 3: Positives
Positive outcomes associated with the event are listed here. When possible those that become apparent most readily are listed toward the top of this section.

SECTION 4: So What? What’s important to understand about this?
This section is reserved for noting what is important to understand about the topic and the Yin/Yang phenomena. This can be noted in the form of a summary statement, conclusion, or generative, “basic life truth” statement.

The Yin/Yang phenomena map can be used in a variety of ways. A few are discussed below.

* Examine historical events to understand the positive and negative outcomes associated with each.
* Examine current events as they unfold. As more (positive or negative information) is learned about a current event over the course of days or weeks, add the new information to the map. For example, information about a
presidential scandal could be added to the Yin/Yang map as students read and discuss information about the event.

* Examine the pros/cons of the potential decision. For example, the class is considering taking a field trip to a far-away location that only some students will be able to afford. The Yin/Yang map can be used to facilitate a discussion of this decision.

* Examine beliefs others have about a race or culture. Stereotypical or mythical beliefs can be listed as negatives whereas accurate information about the culture can be listed in the positive section.