

Many people are skeptical about putting concise meanings on very complex events. Thus, when asked the inevitable — “Why?” — Karen Curtner, the principal of Westside responded, “That is a hard question, and I don’t think there is an answer out there that we are looking for.”

This rush to quick judgment is unlikely to end. In a society addicted to fast food, E-mail and ever-faster computer chips, a demand for instant analy-

sis seems inevitable, even logical. The real question is whether that coexists with a more questioning scrutiny that realizes the pat answers and spin are only part of a much bigger picture.

George Steiner, the literary critic and classicist, is one who is doubtful.

“I think the sound-bite mentality cheapens thought,” he said. “Imagine Dostoyevsky. There are some incidents like this, two boys killing other

children, in his famous diary. Imagine what Dostoyevsky would do with that. He would deal with the transcendently important question of evil in the child. Today the editor would say ‘Fyodor, tomorrow, please, your piece. Don’t tell me you need 10 months for thinking. Fyodor, tomorrow.’ ”