

The *Titanic*

1 The story of the *Titanic* is one of the greatest tragedies of the sea. Her tragic fate is also the basis for one of the most popular Hollywood movies of the late 20th century. One reason her story is so fascinating is that she represented the very best of available technology at the time. She was deemed unsinkable; yet four days after setting sail aboard this enormous vessel some of the wealthiest and most influential people of the early 20th century lost their lives.

2 The *Titanic* was the largest and most luxurious ship in the world when she set sail on her first voyage on April 10, 1912. She stretched 882 feet in length - almost three football fields and stood eleven stories high. She was believed to be the safest ship ever built. Within 96 hours, however, this most remarkable vessel would be resting 2.5 miles underwater on the floor of the North Atlantic Ocean. Fewer than one-third (705) of the 2,228 people aboard this magnificent ship would survive to tell their stories.

3 One of the most disturbing things about this terrible tragedy is that it could have been avoided. The telegraph operator aboard the *Titanic* had received numerous warnings about huge icebergs from other ships navigating through the area off Newfoundland, Canada. The operator delivered the messages to the ship's captain. The captain, however, decided to keep the ship sailing at near top speed – over 23 miles per hour, even though it was nighttime and difficult to see. By the time the crew realized an iceberg was looming directly in front of them, it was too late. They could not turn the huge vessel and avoid collision. At 11:40 p.m. on the night of April 14, 1912, an iceberg grazed the side of the ship causing her to take on water. Three hours later, the *Titanic* was a part of history. Over 1,500 people died in the icy waters that night.



Figure 1: Captain Edward John Smith. He ordered the crew to maintain their course and speed despite numerous warnings about icebergs in the area.

4 It would be 70 years before the remains of the *Titanic* would be discovered. In 1985, Dr. Robert Ballard, a marine biologist and oceanographer, located the

vessel. He kept his find a secret for over a year to prevent treasure-seekers from plundering the ship's booty¹. On his second visit, Ballard left a plaque honoring the 1,500 people who died that night and requesting that future explorers leave their grave undisturbed.

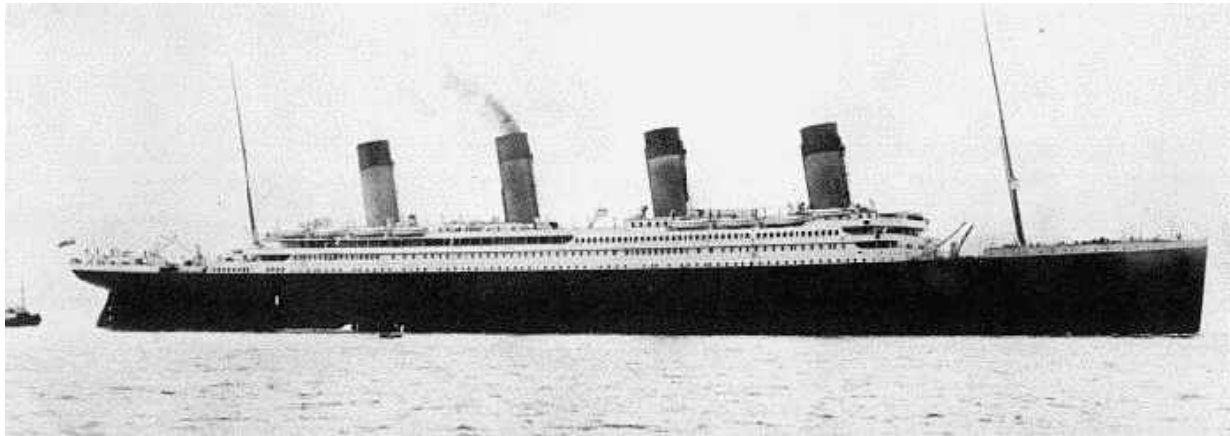


Figure 2: RMS *Titanic* after departing Southampton, England, for New York harbor on April 10, 1912.



Figure 3: The grand staircase of the first class section of the *Titanic*.



Figure 5: Photo taken 10 days after disaster. Michel (Lolo) and Edmond Navratil were traveling with their father. Their father went down with the ship. Lolo, the last remaining male survivor of the sinking of the *Titanic*, died in 2001.



Figure 4: Mr and Mrs. Straus. Given an opportunity to save herself by getting on a lifeboat², Mrs. Straus chose to stay behind with her husband, knowing it meant certain death.

¹ Objects of value taken without permission often by force or violence; often used to refer to items stolen from ships by pirates.

² There were only enough lifeboats for half of the passengers. Men were ordered to remain behind and go down with the ship.

READING – Expository
SOCIAL STUDIES – World History
The *Titanic*

1. Using context clues and your knowledge of root words and affixes, what is the **best** definition for the word plundering?
 - A stealing
 - B hiding
 - C destroying
 - D selling

2. *Irony* is when an event occurs that is the opposite of what is expected. Which statement from the passage is *ironic*, considering the tragedy that occurred?
 - A The *Titanic* was a part of history.
 - B They could not turn the huge vessel...
 - C She was deemed unsinkable;
 - D He kept his find a secret...

3. Which statement **best** summarizes the main idea of paragraph 3?
 - A The captain of the *Titanic* tried to avoid the accident.
 - B The iceberg caused significant damage to the *Titanic*.
 - C Other ships in the area sent warnings to the *Titanic*.
 - D The *Titanic* could have escaped disaster that night.

4. What is the overall purpose of this passage?
 - A to entertain
 - B to inform
 - C to persuade
 - D to explain

5. Which of the following would be a primary source of information about what happened aboard the *Titanic* on April 14, 1912?
 - A the daughter of a survivor of the disaster
 - B the journal entries of a victim of the tragedy
 - C a nonfiction book about disasters at sea
 - D a television documentary on the *Titanic*

6. The writer infers that

- A the Captain was responsible for the tragedy.
- B the *Titanic* was poorly constructed and unsafe.
- C the telegraph operator was to blame for the accident.
- D the sinking of the *Titanic* was not a surprise to most people.

7. Based on information found in the reading, all of the statements are true **except**

- A the last male survivor from the tragedy died several years ago.
- B Dr. Ballard plans to bring the remains of the ship up from the ocean floor.
- C there were not enough lifeboats for all of the people aboard the ship.
- D the *Titanic* had departed from England and was on her way to New York.

8. Marco wants to know more about those people who survived the disaster. He found the following sources on the web. Which of the sources will **most** likely have information about the survivors?

- A The story of the Titanic and the iceberg has grown into a legend of the sea. It took her discovery in 1985 to begin to find the truth behind the myth...www.gma.org/space1/titanic.html
- B Geographical survey of where the ship lies. Various links to numerous stories and news reports of the time.
seawifs.gsfc.nasa.gov/OCEAN_PLANET/HTML/titanic.html
- C Titanic - main page of History on the Net. The sinking of the Titanic is a topic that has almost universal appeal. Passenger and crew biographies, stories of survival.
www.historyonthenet.com/Titanic/
- D On April 10, 1912, the Titanic, largest ship afloat, left Southampton on her The first wish on the part of all was to stay near the Titanic. www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/titanic.htm

READING – Expository

**Links to: SOCIAL STUDIES – World History/Contemporary World
Grades 6 and 7**

The *Titanic*

- 1. A S1 C4 PO1 and PO2 – Gr 6 and 7**
- 2. C S1 C4 PO4 (Gr 6 and 7); S3 C1 PO12 – Gr 7**
- 3. D S3 C1 PO1 – Gr 6 and 7**
- 4. B S3 C1 PO4 – Gr 6 and 7**
- 5. B S3 C1 PO7**
- 6. A S3 C1 PO9 – Gr 6; S3 C1 PO10 – Gr 7**
- 7. B S3 C1 PO5 – Gr 6 and 7**
- 8. C S3 C1 PO6 – Gr 6 and 7**

Average readability: 8.1

Lexile: 1170L