

The Titanic

By Sarah Gudgeon

I. Read

RMS Titanic, the luxury British passenger liner, sank on its maiden voyage from Southampton in England to New York in America. A maiden voyage is a ship's first sailing. The 262 metre long vessel hit an iceberg in the middle of the night on 15 April 1912. There were 2112 passengers on board and not enough lifeboats to save them. 1503 people died and most of their bodies could not be found. The ship broke into two pieces and many of the people still on board froze to death in the icy waters. The band continued to play music on the deck right until the very end and the behaviour of these and other crew members was admirable. The captain, Edward J. Smith, stayed on board with his men and went down with his ship. Some of the passengers also chose to face the disaster with dignity; Benjamin Guggenheim is said to have sat up on deck, in his best evening wear drinking a brandy and smoking a cigar with his valet.



In October 1985 the ship was found at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean and some artefacts belonging to the passengers are on display in the Maritime Museum in Nova Scotia, Canada. Over the years the tale of the Titanic has fascinated people all over the world; numerous films have been made about the tragic sailing, the most famous is James Cameron's 1997 epic starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet, and there is endless speculation about those final moments on board. But why are people still fascinated by

the story? Is it the fact that so many of the passengers were from the elite classes and that their luxury adventure ended in disaster? Is it because the gallantry of some of the crew members seems so alien to young people today, growing up in a society that seems to be all about ME ME ME? Whatever the reason, the story of the Titanic looks set to sail on into the next century.

If you want to find out more, why not visit the Liverpool Museums this summer; you can look at the fashions of the time, hear the music played on board and make your own miniature Titanic. If you happen to be in America then stop off at the Titanic Branson, the world's largest museum attraction in Branson, Missouri. The museum is a ship-shaped permanent exhibition where you can walk around and bump into 'passengers' and 'crew' from the Titanic. You can get a feel for what life was like for those on board before they hit that fatal iceberg.

2. Answer true or false.

- a. The RMS Titanic was an American passenger liner.
- b. A maiden voyage is a long journey from England to America.
- c. There were a lot of life boats for the passengers.
- d. Many of the passengers froze to death in the Atlantic Ocean.
- e. A lot of the crew behaved very well.
- f. The ship wreck of the Titanic was never found after it sank.

3. Factfile. Find out six interesting things about the Titanic. Make your own factfile.

Example:

Time taken to build the Titanic	26 months
Price of a first class ticket	\$4,700
Ship's travelling speed at time of incident	22.5 knots- very fast!
Number of beer bottles on board	20,000
Number of courses eaten at dinner	11
Number of dogs on board	9 - two were rescued!

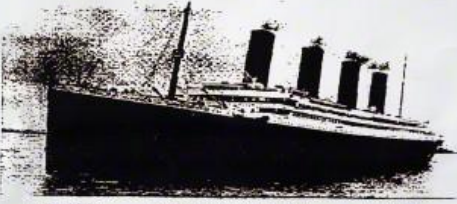
4. Why do you think we are still fascinated by the tragedy of the Titanic? Discuss with a partner.

Teacher's Notes

2. Answer true or false: a. false b. false c. false d. true e. true f. false

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