

The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Lesson Plan

Learning Objectives: To develop and practise scanning, note-taking, retelling, reading for specific information

Preparation Time: 0 minutes

Completion Time: 60 minutes

Skill/Grammar: Reading, Speaking

Age/Level: Upper Secondary/Upper Intermediate

Resources: The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Worksheet, The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Answer Key

Warm-Up (5 minutes)

- 1 Elicit what students already know about this event after looking at the picture on **The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Worksheet**. Ask *Wh-* questions to find out if they know what, where, why, when and how the event happened.

Reading (15 minutes)

- 2 Put students in pairs. One student should read the Morgan Robertson text (page 4). The other student should read the Millvina Dean text (page 5).
 - Students scan for specific information to complete the relevant half of the table.

Reading Answer Key:

	Morgan Robertson	Millvina Dean
Name of ship	<i>Titan</i>	<i>Titanic</i>
Year	1898	1912
Travelling from _____ to _____	New York England	Southampton New York
Made of _____	steel	steel
Number of lifeboats	24	20
Number of passengers	3,000	3,000
Speed	25 knots	23 knots
Month	April	April
Weather	fog and storms	clear skies, close to freezing
Time of accident	around midnight	11.40 p.m.
Cause(s) of accident	hit an iceberg travelling fast bad weather	hit and iceberg travelling fast no moon

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Speaking (15 minutes)

- 3 Students use their notes to retell the story they read to their partner. The partner listens and takes notes.
- 4 Students highlight the similarities between the two stories. The main differences are the weather and the year.
- Elicit that Morgan Robertson wrote his book before the real event happened. Ask students how they can explain the similarities between the two stories.

Reading (20 minutes)

- Students read both texts carefully to complete the tasks.

Key:

- 5
- __9__ He and the little girl are rescued.
- __7__ He carries a little girl onto the iceberg.
- __1__ He is a Royal Navy officer.
- __11__ He is a civil servant in the government.
- __4__ He is working on the *Titan*.
- __8__ He kills a polar bear.
- __5__ He sees the iceberg.
- __3__ He starts drinking.
- __10__ The little girl and her mother are reunited.
- __6__ The *Titan* hits the iceberg.
- __2__ The woman he loves rejects him.
- __12__ The woman sends him a letter.

- 6
- a She was the youngest passenger and the last remaining survivor.
- b They were going to start a new life in the United States.
- c The ship they were going to travel with was cancelled due to a coal strike.
- d It was the biggest passenger ship ever built, it was its first voyage, there were many famous businessmen and celebrities.
- e The skies were clear and the water was calm. These were ideal conditions.
- f He heard an incredibly loud crash.

The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Lesson Plan

- 7 The ship owners had not thought they needed any more as they believed the strong steel plating of the *Titanic* made it unsinkable.
- 8 There weren't enough lifeboats and they followed the principle of women and children first.

Closure (5 minutes)

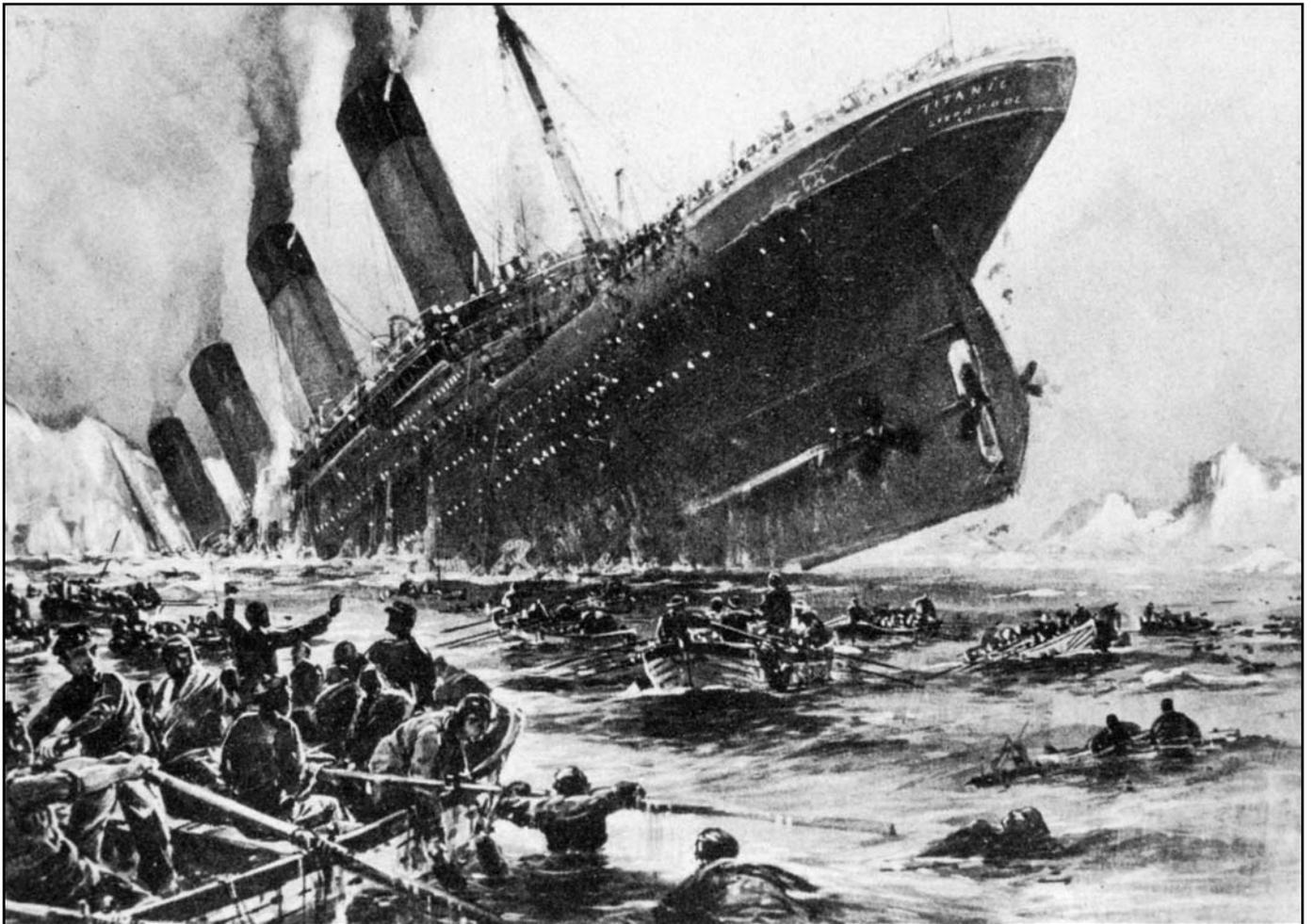
- Students discuss why they think the sinking of the *Titanic* is such a famous event and why people are still interested in this story today.

Pearson ELT

The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Worksheet

Warm-Up

- 1 **Look at the picture. What do you know about this event?**



The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Worksheet

Reading

- 2 **Read ONE of the texts and use the information to complete part of the table (find the texts on pages 4 and 5).**

	Morgan Robertson	Millvina Dean
Name of ship		
Year		
Travelling from _____ to _____		
Made of _____		
Number of lifeboats		
Number of passengers		
Speed		
Month		
Weather		
Time of accident		
Cause(s) of accident		

The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Worksheet

Speaking

- 3 **Use your notes to tell a partner about the information in the text you read. As you listen to your partner, take notes to complete the other part of the table.**
- 4 **How can you explain the similarities between the two stories?**

Reading

- 5 **Read the Morgan Robertson text more carefully and put these events about John Rowland's life in chronological (time) order.**

- _____ He and the little girl are rescued.
- _____ He carries a little girl onto the iceberg.
- 1 He is a Royal Navy officer.
- _____ He is a civil servant in the government.
- _____ He is working on the *Titan*.
- _____ He kills a polar bear.
- _____ He sees the iceberg.
- _____ He starts drinking.
- _____ The little girl and her mother are reunited.
- _____ The *Titan* hits the iceberg.
- _____ The woman he loves rejects him.
- _____ The woman sends him a letter.

- 6 **Read the Millvina Dean text more carefully and answer the 'Why?' questions.**
- a Why was Millvina one of the most famous passengers on the *Titanic*?
 - b Why were they going to New York?
 - c Why were they travelling on the *Titanic*?
 - d Why were they excited?
 - e Why did the captain order the ship to proceed at its maximum speed?
 - f Why did Millvina's father wake up?
 - g Why did the *Titanic* not have enough lifeboats?
 - h Why did Millvina's father stay on the boat?

Closure

- 7 **Why are people still interested in the sinking of the Titanic?**

The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Worksheet

Morgan Robertson (1861–1915)

Morgan Robertson was a popular writer of sea stories at the turn of the century. He was born on 30 September 1861 to Andrew Robertson, a ship's captain on the North American Great Lakes. When he was still a teenager, he decided to follow in his father's footsteps and ran away to join the Merchant Marines. He spent the next ten years of his life at sea. Upon his return, he decided to turn his hand to writing. He wrote novels and short stories about the subjects he knew and loved, ships, sailing and the sea. Today, his stories are no longer popular. In fact, if it hadn't been for a short novel called *Futility*, first published in 1898, we probably would not remember him today.

Futility is a story about a sailor called John Rowland who is working on a British passenger ship called the *Titan*. He had once been a highly-respected officer in the Royal Navy but, after the woman he loved rejected him, he had turned to drink and ended up losing everything. As luck would have it, this woman is one of the passengers on board the *Titan*. She is travelling across the North Atlantic from New York to England with her husband and her young daughter who is called Myra. Rowland is very upset when he sees her with her family.

In the story, the *Titan* is the biggest passenger ship ever built. It can carry 3,000 passengers and travel at a speed of 25 knots (about 29 miles/46 km per hour). The story is set in April and it is, therefore, not surprising that the ship has to pass through thick fog and severe storms. As its steel body is considered to be indestructible, the decision is taken to sail on through the bad weather at full speed.

One foggy night, around midnight, Rowland is on lookout duty when he sees a dark shadowy shape appear as if from nowhere through the fog in front of them. He calls out to warn the captain that they are about to crash into a huge iceberg, but it is too late. Nothing can be done to avoid the accident. The *Titan* quickly begins to sink. Rowland manages to save the woman's daughter, Myra, by carrying her up onto the iceberg. He saves her life a second time by killing a polar bear that attacks her. They are eventually rescued by a passing ship. The *Titan* had only been equipped with twenty-four lifeboats, the minimum number required by law. This was only enough to rescue 500 of the passengers. Myra's mother was one of these lucky few but her father was not so fortunate.

Mother and daughter are eventually reunited. Rowland gives up drinking and starts to work very hard. He gets a good job as a civil servant in the government and regains his position in society. In the very last lines of the book, he receives a letter from his former lover. She tells him that Myra misses him and keeps asking to see the man who saved her life. She adds that they would both be happy to see him again. It is left up to the reader to imagine the happy ending.

The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Worksheet

Millvina Dean (1912–2009)

Millvina Dean was one of the most famous passengers on the *Titanic*. Not only was she the youngest, but in 2007 she gained the somewhat unenviable title of being the last remaining survivor. She spent the last few years of her life attending historical conventions and exhibitions, appearing in documentaries, signing autographs and helping history come alive for numerous groups of visiting school children. With her death, on 31 May 2009, exactly ninety-eight years after the launch of the *Titanic*, the last living link to this great tragedy was lost to a world that is still fascinated with the sinking of the ship.

Millvina had only been nine weeks old when her parents carried her and her brother aboard the *Titanic* in Southampton, England, on a cold April day in 1912. The family was full of hope about starting a new life in the United States. Millvina was too young to remember anything that happened aboard the ship, but it did change her life forever.

The family had not planned to travel aboard the *Titanic*. However, the ship they were going to travel with was cancelled due to a coal strike and they were transferred to the *Titanic*. They were very excited about this because the *Titanic* was the biggest passenger ship ever built and this was its first voyage. Up in first class, there were many famous businessmen and celebrities.

Two days into the journey from Southampton to New York, temperatures had dropped close to freezing. There was no moon that night but the skies were clear and the water was calm. In these ideal conditions, the captain, Edward J. Smith, ordered the ship to proceed at its maximum speed of 23 knots, or approximately 26 miles per hour (43 km per hour).

At 11.40 that night, Millvina's father woke up after hearing an incredibly loud crash. He went to investigate and quickly discovered that the ship had collided with a large iceberg. He ran back down to his cabin and woke up his wife and children. He ordered them to get dressed as quickly as possible and go up onto the deck.

As the ship began to sink, passengers were loaded onto the lifeboats. It quickly became apparent that there were not enough lifeboats to rescue everyone. Although the *Titanic* could hold 3,000 passengers, it only had twenty lifeboats. This was the minimum required by law. The ship owners had not thought they needed any more as they believed the strong steel plating of the *Titanic* made it unsinkable. Now that disaster had struck, the captain and crew had to face the fact that only half of the passengers could be saved. They followed the principle of women and children first.

Millvina, her mother and her brother were among the lucky ones. They were loaded aboard a lifeboat and after a short time drifting at sea, were picked up by one of the ships that had come to the rescue. Her father, however, was not so fortunate. He had to say goodbye to his young family and remain behind with the other men to wait for the inevitable end.

Millvina's mother returned to Southampton with her family. Hopes of a new life in the United States were over. They lived on money given to them by charitable organisations that had been set up to help survivors of the disaster. After such a tragic start, Millvina lived an unremarkable life until she reached old age when fame found her again as the last living survivor. Although she could remember nothing about the tragedy, she was a living reminder of what had happened on that fateful night.

The Sinking of the *Titan/Titanic* Answer Key

Reading

2

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