



# You Wouldn't Want to Sail on the Titanic!

Language Arts / Social studies

Reading Level: ★★★

## Learning Objectives

- **Reading/Literary Analysis Strategy:** Students will identify main ideas and supporting details.
- **Writing/Presentation Strategy:** Students will write narratives establishing plot, setting, point of view, and conflict.
- **Connect to Social Studies:** Students will summarize key events of an era.
- **Connect to Science:** Students will conduct research on icebergs.

## Before Reading (15 minutes)

### Summary

Sailing aboard the world's most luxurious ocean liner sounds fabulous – especially since it had been declared unsinkable! But watch out – did anyone plan for icebergs? You'll find out how the famous ship Titanic was built, what it was like, who set sail on it, and the terrible fate that its passengers met

### Vocabulary

- **berth (burth)** A bed or small compartment on a ship where people sleep, or a place at a dock where a ship stays; After their fancy meal, the couple was tired and went to their berth for the evening.
- **bridge (brij)** On a ship, the central control area; The ship's captain rushed to the bridge to steer clear of danger.
- **dry dock (dry dok)** A place for building or repairing ships, that can be filled with water or drained; It would be fascinating to watch the construction of a ship in dry dock.
- **emigrant (EM-uh-grunt)** A person who leaves his or her country to move to another; At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many emigrants moved from Europe to the United States.
- **hull (huhl)** the body of a ship; A ship's hull can weigh thousands of tons.
- **porthole (PORT-hohl)** a small, circular window in the side of a ship; The passengers peered from the portholes at the storm outside.



## Parts of the Book

- Have students flip through the book. What are some of the features they see on each page? Point out that every two-page spread has its own title, some cartoon drawings, the main text, and smaller text with additional information. When students read, encourage them to look at the pictures, read the main text first, and then go back to read the other text.
- Have students look at the table of contents. Based on the titles, which section do they think will be most exciting? Then ask them to look at the index. How many different pages mention “lifeboats?” What do students predict the book will say about lifeboats?

## Pre-Reading Discussion (5 – 10 minutes)

Ask students the following questions:

- What do you know about the Titanic?
- Have you ever been on a ship or boat? What safety measures were in place?
- What do you think it would be like to go on a cruise? (If any students have been on one, ask them what was it like.)
- Why do you think people wanted to sail on the Titanic?
- Explain that the Titanic was set to sail between Southampton, England, and New York. If possible, point out these places on a map.

## Reading (Group or Silent)

- If students are reading silently to themselves, try to make sure they have comfortable, well-lit spots to read. Remind them to try to visualize the events as they read. What do they see in their heads? The pictures can help them.
- If you or students are reading aloud, pause after each section to verify that students understand. Do they need any vocabulary defined? Does the text make sense?
- While reading the book, have students identify facts they find surprising. They might jot down notes on a list of surprising facts.

## After Reading Activities

### Reading Strategy: Summarizing (20 minutes)

- Divide the class into four groups. Have one group summarize how the Titanic was built. Have a second group summarize the preparations for its first trip. The third group should summarize what happened on board, and the fourth group should summarize what happened after the ship hit the iceberg. Finally, have the groups share their summaries with the class.



- **Comprehension and discussion questions:**  
What made the Titanic different from previous ships? (It was the biggest and most luxurious ship ever, and it was supposed to be unsinkable.)  
This book provides many statistics about the Titanic: its size, number of passengers, amount of cargo, etc. Which ones do you find most surprising or impressive? (Student can refer to the lists they made while reading.)  
What were some of the jobs on board the ship? Which ones do you think would be more desirable? Which ones would be less desirable? (Some jobs included captain, officers, seamen, stewards and stewardesses, chefs, storekeepers, electricians, firemen, etc.)  
What were the three different classes of passengers? (First class – most wealthy, second class – in-between, steerage – often poorer people emigrating to America)  
Why do you think some rich and famous people wanted to sail on the Titanic? (It was luxurious and they wanted to be the first to experience it.)  
What were two factors that might have caused the Titanic to be damaged by icebergs? Hint: See p. 22. (It was going very fast and the crew forgot to bring binoculars.)  
Do you think it was fair to put women and children on lifeboats first? Why or why not? If you were in charge, how would you decide who gets to go on a lifeboat?  
What were some changes that happened as a result of the Titanic’s disaster? (Ships had to have enough space on lifeboats for all passengers and they had to have drills. They also had to have 24-hour radio watch.)

### Connect to Social Studies (30 minutes each)

- The book makes reference to a number of the Titanic’s rich and famous passengers: John Jacob Astor VI, Benjamin Guggenheim, Mr. and Mrs. Isidor Straus, and Colonel Archibald Gracie. Invite students to use print or online resources to find out more about them; for example, how did they become rich? What were their accomplishments? What were some interesting facts about their lives? Did they survive? They might also want to find out more about Captain Smith. Have them present what they discovered as an oral presentation or make a poster about the person.
- The book also mentions that many of the passengers in steerage were emigrants going to the United States to start a new life. If online resources are available, have students go on an Internet scavenger hunt at the Ellis Island website. Copy and distribute the **Ellis Island Scavenger Hunt** reproducible so that each student using a computer has one.

### Connect to Science (30 minutes each)

- Remind students that it was a small iceberg that caused the sinking of the Titanic. If online resources are available, ask students to conduct research on icebergs and write a short summary. Follow the path below to conduct research:

Go to: <http://goafterschool.grolier.com>.

Click on **Grolier Online Kids** under Look it Up!



Type **iceberg** in the Find it Fast box and click on **GO**.  
Click on any of the articles displayed on the search results page.  
You can also click on the **Websites** or **Weblinks** button to visit related websites on icebergs.

Write a summary that includes answers to these questions:  
What is an iceberg?  
How do icebergs form?  
Do icebergs melt?

### Writing/Presentation Strategy (30 minutes)

- Ask students to imagine being a survivor of the Titanic. Have them write a journal entry describing their experience once they learned the ship was beginning to sink. How did they find out about what was happening? What were the sights, sounds, and smells they experienced? They should include a description of what happened once they were in a lifeboat.
- Arrange students in groups, and ask them to write a skit about how different passengers react when they learn the ship has hit an iceberg. Within the groups, each student should decide what kind of character he or she is (what class, age, personality, reason for sailing), and then they can work together to create their skits. Do the passengers cooperate? Try to help each other? Argue? Finally, have them present their skits to the class.
- Copy and distribute the **Titanic Acrostic Poem** reproducible so that each student has one. Ask students to create an acrostic poem about the Titanic. They should use a descriptive word or phrase beginning with each letter in Titanic that tells about the ship, its voyage, and its tragic ending. For example, the first line might be: Tragic ending. Be as descriptive as possible. If time allows, ask students to illustrate the poem when finished.

### Assessing the Learning Experience (10 minutes)

- Use the **Activity Assessment Grid** to record how well students presented their summaries, skits, and participated in class discussions.
- Review the **Ellis Island Scavenger Hunt** and **Titanic Acrostic Poem** reproducibles for completion, effort, and accuracy.
- **Assessment Questions**  
Why do you think people still study about the Titanic today?  
What were some remarkable features of the ship? What should have been changed?