



Reading Guide



A Night to Remember

by Walter Lord



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INTRODUCTION

Published forty-three years after the 1912 sinking of the *Titanic*, Walter Lord's *A Night to Remember* is the definitive account of that fatal accident. With chilling details gathered from interviews with more than sixty survivors as well as from several other sources, Lord recounts the *Titanic*'s collision with an iceberg, filling of the lifeboats, and rescue by the ship *Carpathia*. Following the experiences of passengers and the crew, readers relive the last moments of the "village" aboard the world's largest ocean liner.

Of the eleven books writer Walter Lord (1917–2002) penned, *A Night to Remember* is by far his most famous. On account of his expertise, he often lectured at meetings of The Titanic Historical Society, Inc. When director James Cameron began filming the 1997 movie *Titanic*, Lord was called in as a consultant.

As students read *A Night to Remember*, ask them to think about some of the book's important themes and messages. What lessons does the story of the *Titanic* have to offer current and future generations? In what ways do we experience the influence of the *Titanic* in our lives today?

USING THIS READING GUIDE

This reading guide presents lessons to support the teaching of Walter Lord's *A Night To Remember*. Organized by sections of grouped chapters, the lessons preview key vocabulary words and include close reading questions. The lessons identify a key passage in each section that help guide students through an exploration of the essential ideas and events in *A Night to Remember*. Key passages also serve as the jumping-off point from which students can engage in their own StudySyncTV-style group discussions.

Each section of the reading guide also includes a list of comparative texts—provided in *A Night to Remember* Novel Study Unit on StudySync—that accompany each section. For each comparative text, the reading guide includes important contextual notes and ideas for relating the text to *A Night to Remember*.

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

TEXT SECTIONS

6 FOREWORD AND CHAPTER 1: “Another Belfast Trip”

A Night to Remember begins with an eerie account of *Futility: The Wreck of the Titan*, a novel by Morgan Robertson. Written fourteen years before the sinking of the *Titanic*, Robertson tells the story of a huge ship called the *Titan* that hit an iceberg and sank, killing most of its passengers. After this ominous beginning, Lord moves on to describe the *Titanic*'s collision with an iceberg. Lord also relates the reactions of both crew and passengers throughout the ship. Although a few men in the boiler room realize the extent of the damage, most on board assume the ship is fine and had simply run aground.

9 CHAPTER 2: “There’s Talk of an Iceberg, Ma’am”

As the lower rooms in the *Titanic* flood, reactions to the collision vary. On the deck, passengers throw ice at each other while down below crew members work hard to pump the water from boiler room 5. Captain Smith meets with Thomas Andrews, the Managing Director of Harland & Wolff Shipyard, to determine the extent of the damage.

12 CHAPTER 3: “God Himself Could Not Sink This Ship”

Many aboard the *Titanic* shrug off the disaster, unconvinced it's as dire as crewmembers say. Herded by stewards, passengers put on warm clothing and head to the boat deck, clinging to whatever possessions they deem most important. Crew members struggle to find enough people to fill the first lifeboats. Unaware there's a shortage of lifeboats, the majority of people prefer to wait aboard the *Titanic*, certain the damage can be repaired.

15 CHAPTERS 4 AND 5: “You Go and I’ll Stay a While” and “I Believe She’s Gone, Hardy”

As the ship continues to sink, passengers can no longer deny the severity of the situation. Couples and families are split as women and children are ushered aboard lifeboats. Many men chivalrously stay behind. Third-class passengers, stuck down below, fight their way to the boat deck in search of rescue.

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

- 18 **CHAPTER 6: “That’s the Way of It at This Kind of Time”**
With the exception of four collapsible boats tangled in ropes, the lifeboats have left. The men and women still aboard the *Titanic* are told to fend for themselves. Some jump overboard and swim for the departing lifeboats. The band plays a hymn as the ship turns perpendicular and sinks into the ocean.
- 21 **CHAPTER 7: “There Is Your Beautiful Nightdress Gone”**
The sinking of the *Titanic* had a lasting impact on disaster preparedness. During future rescues, the lives of the rich were no longer prioritized over the lives of the poor; ships now were required to carry enough lifeboats for all passengers; and icebergs were deemed serious and potentially deadly threats.
- 24 **CHAPTER 8: “It Reminds Me of a Bloomin’ Picnic”**
From their lifeboats, survivors listen to the screams of swimmers, hoping to be saved before they freeze to death. Although the lifeboats have space for more people, only one boat returns on a rescue mission. Then, the night goes silent. At dawn, a distant cannon goes off, and the passengers floating at sea know that they will finally be saved.
- 27 **CHAPTERS 9 AND 10: “We’re Going North Like Hell” and “Go Away—We Have Just Seen Our Husbands Drown”**
Passengers aboard the *Carpathia* awaken to the bustle of stewards and the rocking of the engine jostling at maximum capacity. Their boat is headed north, toward the *Titanic*. By the time they arrive, the giant ocean liner has sunk. One by one passengers are brought aboard the *Carpathia*. In New York, newspapers report on the *Titanic*’s troubles. With little information about how the ship sank, journalists invent stories. Crowds fill the White Star Line offices demanding answers. By the time the *Carpathia* arrives in the city, excitement has piqued. More than 40,000 spectators come to the docks to witness the survivors disembark.
- 30 **“Facts About the *Titanic*,” “Acknowledgments,” and “Passenger List”**
In the final pages of *A Night to Remember*, Lord includes basic facts about the disaster and discusses his exhaustive reporting process. Unreliable memories, poor reporting, and wishful thinking are only some of the many obstacles he encountered while writing this book. On the other hand, his appreciation for the survivors, relatives of survivors, and passengers aboard the *Carpathia* is tremendous.

FOREWORD AND CHAPTER 1: "Another Belfast Trip"

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 1, Paragraphs 5-9

In this passage, Frederick Fleet, one of the ship's lookouts, spots the iceberg straight ahead. He follows protocol, ringing the warning bell three times and calling the bridge, but the voice that answers is courteous and detached. The system set in place to protect the ship from hitting ice does not seem to be working.

WHY IT'S KEY

Any reader of *A Night to Remember* knows what happens to the *Titanic*. The ship hits an iceberg and sinks. Nonetheless, Lord manages to create suspense, focusing on small details that contributed to the disaster. In many ways, the reader is put in the position of a detective, scanning the text for answers that explain why the disaster occurred and how the events took place.

Style: The person on the other end of the phone speaks with a "curiously detached courtesy." In ordinary circumstances, this description wouldn't stand out, but readers are alert for clues that help them understand a disaster of this magnitude. Lord's writing style is understated, and yet the details he chooses to include leave readers on the edge of their seats.

Foreshadowing: In a story where readers already know the outcome, foreshadowing might seem unnecessary, but Lord uses this technique to magnificent effect. Fleet spies something "even darker than the darkness." Although readers know that he's spotted the iceberg that will be the demise of the *Titanic*, this ominous phrase could also refer to the catastrophic events yet to come.

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Discussion Prompt: Although *A Night to Remember* is based on serious research and reporting associated with top-notch journalism, Lord’s writing style often mimics that of a novel. What elements of journalism and novels can you identify? What are the pros and cons of using the techniques of novel-writing—dialogue, scene description, and sensory details—when writing non-fiction? In your opinion, how well does Lord balance these two stylistic influences?

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.6; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

complacent

com•pla•cent *adjective*

Smug and self-satisfied

After winning yet another award for her contributions, Jordan knew she was at risk of becoming complacent on the job.

futility

fu•ti•li•ty *noun*

Uselessness; the lack of justification, purpose, or resolution for an effort

The futility of looking for her wallet in the dark led us to call off the search until tomorrow.

myriad

myr•i•ad *noun*

A large number; multitude

When the night sky is cloudless, you can see a myriad of stars.

galley

gal•ley *noun*

The kitchen on a ship or airplane

Below deck, the chef prepared lunch in the galley.

jolt

jolt *noun*

An abrupt bump; a violent jerk

The bus went over a pothole and several sleeping passengers awoke with a jolt.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: What characteristics do Morgan Robertson’s fictional ocean liner Titan share with the *Titanic*?

Sample Answer: Not only do the two boats strikingly similar, they also displaced nearly the same tonnage of water, were almost the same length, were capable of traveling between twenty-four and twenty-five knots, and carried 3000 passengers. Both the *Titan* and the *Titanic* were considered unsinkable but they each sank after hitting a large iceberg.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: How does Lord capture the reader’s attention in the foreword?

Sample Answer: The details about Morgan Robertson’s novel *Futility* are a chilling way to begin *A Night to Remember*. By mentioning the story of a fictional ship, it reminds the reader the sinking of the *Titanic* was a real tragedy, one so sad that it seems almost unbelievable.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: How do various passengers interpret the “jolt”?

Sample Answer: Steward James Johnson thinks the ship dropped a propeller, and Major Peuchen concludes that a heavy wave struck the ship, but James McGough knows the ship hit an iceberg because chunks of ice fell through the porthole into his cabin.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: What part of the ship does the iceberg damage?

Sample Answer: The iceberg slices the starboard side of the ocean liner, and subsequently, the boiler rooms fill with water.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 5: How does the crew aboard the Californian react when they spot the *Titanic*?

Sample Answer: The crew considers contacting the ship, but when they see the lights go out, they assume the captain is encouraging passengers to go to bed. They don’t realize the ship has been hit.

CCSS: RI.8.1

COMPARATIVE TEXTS

Text: *Futility: The Wreck of the Titan* by Morgan Robertson

Compare to: Foreword of *A Night to Remember*

Connection: Written in 1898, fourteen years before the *Titanic* sank, Robertson’s novel, *Futility: The Wreck of the Titan*, tells an eerily similar story. When the *Titan* was built, the ship was designed to be the fastest and fanciest the world had yet seen. Like the *Titanic*, it was considered to be unsinkable, and so ordinary safety precautions, such as including enough lifeboats and life preservers for all passengers and crew, were overlooked. An iceberg was the only object deemed large enough to damage the *Titan*. Even so, the ship was scheduled to travel as fast as possible via the northern route, which had a greater number of icebergs, thus increasing the probability of collision.

CHAPTER 2: “There’s Talk of an Iceberg, Ma’am”

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 2, Paragraphs 72-77

After accounting for how many holds have flooded, Thomas Andrews, the Managing Director of Harland & Wolff Shipyard and Captain Smith realize that the ship will not stay afloat. Although the ship is only slightly listing, five of the holds have flooded, enough to tilt the front of the boat and cause other compartments to overflow. The ship is doomed and both men know there is nothing they can do to stop it.

WHY IT’S KEY

Captain Smith and Andrews are leaders for both the passengers and crew. Although they quickly realize the severity of the situation, the true test of their leadership is seen in their response to this knowledge.

The Mechanics: A positive feedback loop occurs when a process amplifies itself. The output of a situation causes the input to increase, which then increases future output. In the case of the *Titanic*, the breach in the wall is an example of a positive feedback loop. The more the cabins flood, the more the ship sinks, which exposes the interior of the ship to even more water. Although the captain could have sealed off four flooded compartments and remained afloat, five flooded compartments cause the ship to sink faster than anyone can fix. There is nothing the men can do to save the ship.

Pacing: At this point, the sinking ship is a slow-moving disaster. Even though the ship has already begun to list toward the bow and lower levels are quickly flooding, people on the upper decks have yet to realize the ship is in jeopardy. Consequently, while some passengers and crew are scrambling to safety, others are enjoying themselves by drinking, playing games, or engaging in conversation, oblivious to the catastrophe unfolding around them.

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Discussion Prompt: What is Smith’s obligation to his ship, passengers, and crew? What would you do if you were in Captain Smith’s position?

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

largesse

lar•gesse *noun*

Generosity in giving gifts

The extravagant party favors were just another example of her largesse.

incongruous

in•con•gru•ous *adjective*

Inharmonious; out of step with surroundings

A horse galloping down the airport runway was incongruous, to say the least.

unperturbed

un•per•turbed *adjective*

Unconcerned; without worry

She continued to sing, unperturbed by the looming storm.

promenade

pro•me•nade *noun*

A public walkway

Like movie stars, we sauntered down the promenade in our new dresses and high heels.

bulkhead

bulk•head *noun*

A dividing wall between rooms or compartments in a ship or plane

I could hear water slamming against the other side of the bulkhead, but it was completely dry on my side of the wall.

anticipate

an•tic•i•pate *verb*

To think of or predict what will happen in the future

We anticipate fifty people coming to the picnic on Saturday.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: How do passengers realize that the ship has stopped moving?

Sample Answer: Jack Thayer notices that there no longer is a breeze coming through his porthole, Mrs. Harris observes that her dresses no longer sway on their hangers, and Lawrence Beesley notes that his lulling mattress has gone still.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: What do people do with the pieces of the iceberg that have come aboard the ship? Do they seem worried?

Sample Answer: Some passengers use the ice to cool their cocktails, while others playfully throw ice at each other. Few people realize that they're in trouble.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: What happens in boiler room 5?

Sample Answer: At first, the room floods and the lights go out, but with the help of a pump, the stokers manage to clear the flood water. The men watching laugh because they think it's a joke.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: How does the author describe Captain Smith in this chapter? Use specific evidence from the text.

Sample Answer: Lord describes Captain Smith as “worshipped by crew and passengers alike” and that “no one was better equipped” to figure out what was going on. He investigates the incident and almost immediately tells the radio operator to call for help.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 5: What does Miss Shutes overhear the officer saying? What might his remark foreshadow?

Sample Answer: Despite the comfort that the officer provides Miss Shutes, she overhears him saying that they “can keep the water out for a while.” The officer’s remark indicates that the water is going to eventually flood the ship, as they can only stop the flooding for a short amount of time.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 6: Why doesn’t the *Californian* respond to the *Titanic*’s distress call? Why is this significant?

Sample Answer: Third Officer Groves, the man in the *Californian*’s wireless office, didn’t wind the clock that ran the magnetic detector. This is significant because if the *Californian* had responded to the distress call, maybe more people could have been saved.

CCSS: RI.8.1

CHAPTER 3: “God Himself Could Not Sink This Ship”

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 3, Paragraphs 61-64

Although the ship is sinking, many of the passengers are still unconvinced of the danger they face. Women refuse to board the lifeboats, preferring the cheerful atmosphere on the deck of the *Titanic*. The band is playing ragtime and people are telling jokes. Many deny that they are in the midst of a real disaster.

WHY IT'S KEY

Had you been aboard the *Titanic*, it might be easy to say how you would react, but during the actual crisis, communication was disorganized. It's hard to imagine making the choice not to get onto a lifeboat, but as passengers had been told the ship was unsinkable, it's understandable why so many chose to deny to catastrophic reality of the situation.

Social Class: Even as the ship sinks, the *Titanic* maintains its glamorous image. As officers fill and launch the lifeboats, the ship's band plays ragtime, a festive genre of music, incongruous with the urgency of the disaster at hand.

Tone: As Mrs. Stuart White climbs into lifeboat No. 8, her friend jokes that she won't be able to get back onboard without a pass. Such playful banter is surprising, considering the circumstances, and reveals the faith passengers have in the unsinkable ship.

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Discussion Prompt: What disaster preparedness measures were in place aboard the *Titanic*? What should have been done differently? Refer to specific examples from the text to support your response.

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

steward

ste•ward *noun*

An employee responsible for taking care of passengers aboard a plane or ship

The steward knocked on our cabin door to tell us that dinner would be served shortly.

diligent

dil•i•gent *adjective*

Being conscientious, thorough, and industrious in one's work

She is a diligent student, always completing her homework every night.

aft

aft *noun*

The back end of a ship or plane

The passengers seated in the aft of the plane feel the most turbulence.

stern

stern *noun*

The back end of a ship or plane

The captain stood at the stern of the boat and surveyed the horizon for weather.

auspicious

au•spi•cious *adjective*

Favorable; indicative of good fortune

Seeing two shooting stars was an auspicious sign for the year to come.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: Why do people aboard the *Titanic* have such different reactions to the news that the ship is sinking?

Sample Answer: Some passengers are fast asleep, so when they awaken, they see no proof that the ship is in danger. Those who are farther below deck witness water gushing through cracks in the walls of the ship and feel a greater sense of danger.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: What do passengers choose to bring with them as they evacuate? What do their choices reveal about their values?

Sample Answer: Some passengers choose jewels and money, signaling their concern for wealth, but others bring more sentimental objects, such as a Bible. A few people choose to bring objects such as warm clothes or a compass, showing that they are trying to be prepared and practical.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: How many classes are aboard the ship and how are they different from one another?

Sample Answer: There are three classes aboard the *Titanic*. The first class is the richest of the three classes; they have stewards, expensive clothing, and fancy jewelry. Second-class passengers are considered part of the working class, and third-class passengers are the poorest of the three groups.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: How many passengers can the lifeboats carry and why is this a problem?

Sample Answer: The lifeboats can carry up to 1,178 people, but there are 2,207 people aboard the *Titanic*. Consequently, there are not enough lifeboats to accommodate all the ship's passengers.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 5: How do passengers respond when they are told to board the lifeboats?

Sample Answer: Many passengers are reluctant to board, assuming that they have plenty more time on the *Titanic*. Women and children are the first to be helped onto the lifeboats. It is only after all the women and children are aboard the lifeboats that couples and single men are allowed to join them.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 6: What did the *Titanic* crew do to call for help? How did one of their actions make history?

Sample Answer: When Philips switched from "CQD" to "SOS" it was the first time "SOS" had ever been used. They also tried using lamps, and setting off fire rockets to signal their need for help.

CCSS: RI.8.1

COMPARATIVE TEXTS

Text: "The Fish" by Marianne Moore

Compare to: Chapter 3 of *A Night to Remember*

Connection: "The Fish," like many poems by Moore, is both ambiguous and beautiful. It appeals directly to the senses of sight and sound, yet upon closer reading, reveals hidden depths of meaning. The poem appears to be about marine life, but it's clear that Moore asks deeper questions, not unlike those brought up by the various experiences of passengers and crew aboard the *Titanic*: How do denizens of the natural world coexist? How do we deal with death and confront our own mortality?

CHAPTERS 4 AND 5: “You Go and I’ll Stay a While” and “I Believe She’s Gone, Hardy”

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 4, Paragraphs 70-72

Still in disbelief, passengers on the lifeboats witness the sinking *Titanic*, which looks majestic even as it goes down. Ragtime music plays and the promenade is bright. The boats paddle toward the *Californian*, which still has not registered the disaster. The fate of the *Titanic* is undeniable, and those on the lifeboats can do nothing for those still aboard the liner.

WHY IT’S KEY

This is the first moment Lord’s perspective shifts to those aboard the lifeboats. The fate of those aboard the lifeboats and those on the ocean liner have diverged. Any chance of survival lies with the distant lights of the *Californian*. As the lifeboats head toward the steamer, the passengers must acknowledge the tragedy they’ve just escaped.

Imagery: Part of the mastery of Lord’s writing occurs through imagery, the ability to represent scenes through the five senses: taste, touch, sound, sight, and smell. It’s hard to believe Lord wasn’t aboard the *Titanic* given his attention to detail. Readers can practically hear the ragtime music still playing as the well-lit ship lists to one side.

Style: Even death is majestic for those aboard the *Titanic*. As the ship sinks, Lord compares it to “a sagging birthday cake.” This metaphor shows the dissonance between perception and reality. Even as death nears, the ocean liner still appears festive.

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Discussion Prompt: During this scene, what is the atmosphere like on the lifeboats? How does it compare to the passengers’ attitudes in the previous chapter?

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

punctilious

punc•ti•li•ous *adjective*

Precise, careful, accurate

The pianist's punctilious performance would have benefited from a little more passion.

steerage

stee•rage *noun*

The portion of a ship reserved for passengers with the cheapest fare

Passengers in steerage shared bathrooms and slept in bunkbeds.

urgent

ur•gent *adjective*

Requiring immediate action or attention

A broken leg requires urgent medical care.

immaculate

im•ma•cu•late *adjective*

Spotless, free from error or stain

Fresh from the drycleaner, the shirt was immaculate without a trace of the paint I'd spilled on it.

resumed

re•sumed *verb*

Continued action, after a pause

After the interruption, he resumed his exercise routine.

rollicking

rol•lick•ing *adjective*

Carefree, joyful, or high-spirited

The rollicking poodles tossed and turned in the grass beneath the maple trees.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: How does a person's gender impact their chance of boarding a lifeboat?

Sample Answer: As women and children are considered to be more vulnerable, they are told to board the lifeboats while men (including teenage boys) are forced stay behind. Lowe even threatens to shoot a young boy, in order to get him to leave a lifeboat.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: How do the wives react when their husbands tell them to board the lifeboats? Do their reactions differ? Use specific examples from the text in your response.

Sample Answer: Some wives agree to leave in order to be with the children, but others refuse to abandon their husbands. For example, Mrs. Straus would not board a lifeboat, saying, "Where you go, I go."

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: What is the experience of the third-class passengers as the lifeboats are filled?

Sample Answer: Many of the third-class passengers are stuck in the steerage staircase and don't know how to navigate the hallways to get to the boat deck. A steward tries to guide passengers up the halls to the main deck, but he loses passengers along the way. A language barrier prevents some passengers from understanding the circumstances and instructions. In some places, armed seamen block the entryway to the first-class boat deck.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: How does Chief Officer Wilde respond when the boat starts to list toward one side?

Sample Answer: He instructs everyone to stand on the starboard side of the ship, which temporarily reduces the listing and evens out the deck.

CCSS: RL.11-12.1

QUESTION 5: What role does the crew play as the final lifeboat is filled?

Sample Answer: Crew members lock arms to prevent men from boarding the final lifeboat. They ensure that only women and children are able to board. Even though the ship is sinking, they still are determined to do their duty.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 6: Are you surprised by some of the choices passengers and crew make during the evacuation of the ship? Why or why not?

Sample Answer: (Answers will vary) I'm surprised by the behavior of Lowe, who threatened to shoot a young boy, but I'm also surprised that many of the men did not sneak onto the lifeboats. It seems strange that they cared more about being chivalrous gentlemen than about surviving.

CCSS: RI.8.1

COMPARATIVE TEXTS

Text: *The End of Airports* by Christopher Schaberg

Compare to: Chapter 5 of *A Night to Remember*

Connection: Transportation has changed dramatically over the last century, but the main objective—to get people and things from place to place—has stayed the same. In *The End of Airports*, Schaberg shares his observations from working at the Bozeman, Montana regional airport. Although passengers are often familiar with the processes of checking in, loading, and unloading an airplane, it takes many more processes to keep an airport running officially. Similarly, *A Night to Remember* offers readers the chance to imagine life working aboard the *Titanic*.

CHAPTER 6: “That’s the Way of It at This Kind of Time”

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 6, Paragraphs 71-74

In stories told later, Archie Butt’s death is described in numerous different ways. Miss Young recalls his fond farewell. Mrs. Henry B. Harris says he was “a pillar of strength” loading the lifeboats, though none of the other men working the boats recall seeing him. Mrs. Walter Douglas remembers him quietly standing off to one side. Similarly, the final moments of millionaire John Jacob Astor are described in several different ways. It is said that he shook hands with an admirer. Some say that he left on a lifeboat, while others report that he sank with the *Titanic*, alongside Butts.

WHY IT’S KEY

Up until this moment, Lord’s narration has been authoritative and singular. He acknowledges multiple perspectives but leaves no room for doubt that his version of the story is correct. For this first time, Lord concedes that various conflicting versions of the *Titanic*’s last moments exist.

Authority: Authority refers to the credibility an author has in their storytelling. Addressing multiple versions of a story can be challenging for an author. On the one hand, if an author picks what they think is “the best” version of a story, critics may point out discrepancies. On the other hand, if an author includes multiple versions, readers may wonder why they can’t decide on “the right” version to tell. Lord’s skill as a reporter is admirable. He acknowledges his limitations as a journalist by addressing discrepancies in the retelling and attributing these variations to specific people.

Eyewitness Accounts: Eyewitness accounts are notoriously untrustworthy, which is perhaps one of the reasons that so many conflicting stories exist about these important figures’ deaths. In the chaotic moments before the *Titanic* went down, it would’ve been hard to verify everyone’s whereabouts while also worrying about one’s own survival. Further complicating the matter, newspapers competed to tell the “best” and most thrilling accounts, which didn’t always produce the most truthful or accurate reports.

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Discussion Prompt: Although Walter Lord was not aboard the *Titanic*, he manages to recount the passengers' final experiences in great detail. Is he a credible source? Are there places in the text where his storytelling is weaker or stronger?

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.6; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

davit

da-vit *noun*

A small crane aboard a ship used to lower lifeboats

The lifeboat hung from the davit and bumped against the side of the ship.

ventilator

ven-ti-la-tor *noun*

A machine used to circulate air in a room

Stale air is a sure indicator that the ventilator has broken.

gallant

gal-lant *adjective*

Brave and heroic, particularly referring to the behavior of men toward women

The gallant knight rescued the princess from captivity.

fortify

for-ti-fy *verb*

To make someone or something stronger

She gazed longingly at the lavish meal on the table, knowing it was only thing that could fortify her at this time.

bewildered

be-wil-dered *verb*

To bring about confusion

We were bewildered by the magician's trick.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: What new instructions does Captain Smith give his crew?

Sample Answer: Rather than telling his crew members to man the lifeboats, Captain Smith tells his men to leave their posts. "It's every man for himself," he says.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: At what point are the third-class passengers allowed onto the boat deck? Why is this ironic?

Sample Answer: At 1:30 a.m., the women are ordered to move to the boat deck, and at 2:00 a.m. the men are told to join them. At this point, the boat has begun to tip forward, and most of the steerage passengers would rather stay where they are. The poop deck, a third-class deck where many have been waiting, stays above water far longer than the boat deck. Ironically, the third-class passengers are invited into the area designated for first-class passengers only when that space is no longer safe.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: What is the mood of the passengers and crew, knowing that the last lifeboat has left? Use a specific example from the text in your response.

Sample Answer: Some of the crew were happy they could smoke uninterrupted, while “the passengers were just as calm.” Some tried to jump off the ship and swim toward the lifeboats, but for the most part, they just “stood waiting or quietly paced the boat deck.”

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: What regrets does Wireless Operator Jack Phillips have?

Sample Answer: At 11:00 p.m., the *Californian* wired the *Titanic* to warn the crew about icebergs. Phillips told the *Californian* to keep quiet. After that point, despite hours of trying, he wasn’t able to get in contact with the ship.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 5: What music does the band play when the bridge of the *Titanic* dips underwater?

Sample Answer: Bandmaster Hartley taps his violin and the band switches from ragtime to the Episcopal hymn “Autumn.”

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 6: How do Second Officer Stone and Apprentice Gibson interpret the *Titanic*’s low position on the horizon?

Sample Answer: Instead of assuming that the boat is sinking, the men think that the *Titanic* is steaming away. They don’t realize the seriousness of the situation.

CCSS: RL.11-12.1

COMPARATIVE TEXTS

Text: *South* by Sir Ernest Shackleton

Compare to: Chapter 6 of *A Night to Remember*

Connection: At the outset of World War I, Shackleton sets out with his crew to make the first transcontinental crossing to Antarctica via the South Pole. *South*, Shackleton’s memoir of the journey, recounts his crew’s survival when their ship, the *Endurance*, becomes trapped in the ice. Both Captain Smith of the *Titanic* and Captain Shackleton of the *Endurance* lose their ships in the cold climates near our planet’s poles and must make difficult decisions regarding the humans and ships in their care.

CHAPTER 7: “There Is Your Beautiful Nightdress Gone”

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 7, Paragraphs 20-25

The sinking of the *Titanic* marked a turning point in the privileges given to first-class passengers. Only four years prior, in 1908, Captain Sealby of the White Star Liner *Republic* announced to the passengers on his sinking ship that lifeboats were meant for women and children first, then the passengers in the first cabin, followed by everyone else. Although the press initially praised the gallantry of J. Bruce Ismay, manager of the White Star Line, and the first-class passengers for their behavior during the crisis, public opinion shifted quickly. Some male survivors were even criticized for taking a spot on a lifeboat at the peril of others.

WHY IT'S KEY

Lord argues that the *Titanic* was the last ocean liner voyage in which the upper class were unquestioningly afforded rescue privileges. Although the *Titanic* had no rule in place with regard to giving first-class passengers priority access to lifeboats, culture and practice ensured that they were rescued first. Days after the sinking was reported, public opinion shifted.

Theme: The sinking of the *Titanic* not only changed the lives of survivors, it also had a tremendous impact on public opinion about class and safety. Lord writes that “a new standard of conduct [emerged] for measuring the behavior of prominent people under stress.” Behavior during times of crisis was now subject to public scrutiny.

Class: Although discussion about class privilege is fairly common today, the idea that the upper class had a right to a better quality of life than the poor was taken for granted in the early 1900s. According to Lord, the *Titanic* changed that assumption. No longer were the lives of the wealthy deemed superior to the lives of the poor.

YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

Discussion Prompt: Lord argues that after the sinking of the *Titanic*, first-class passengers would never have it so good again. What changed for first-class passengers after the *Titanic* sank? In your opinion, were these changes good or bad?

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

casualty

ca•su•al•ty *noun*

A person who is killed or wounded in war or in some other disaster

A young man from our town was the only casualty when his platoon was sent into battle last year.

legislators

le•gi•sla•tors *noun*

People who create laws

In a representative democracy, voters in each district elect legislators to serve their best interests.

forestall

fore•stall *verb*

To prevent or preempt a future action or event by engaging in an action ahead of time

The primary job of the disaster preparedness team is to forestall unnecessary casualties.

pendulum

pen•du•lum *noun*

A weighted rod that swings back and forth; can also be used to refer to the oscillation of opinions

Some people interpreted the flashing lights in the sky as emanations from another world.

vicarious

vi•ca•ri•ous *adjective*

Felt or imagined through the experiences of someone else

Listening to my cousin's international adventures gave me a vicarious thrill.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: What new safety precautions were taken after the *Titanic* sank?

Sample Answer: After the *Titanic* sank, the winter shipping lane was shifted south, and the American and British governments established the International Ice Patrol to search for icebergs. Additionally, ships became required to carry enough lifeboats for all passengers.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: Did each class of passenger receive equal access to lifeboats? Use a specific example from the text in your response.

Sample Answer: No, they did not. The majority of the women and children who died were second- and third-class passengers, who had unequal access to lifeboats unlike first-class passengers.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: What critique does Lord make of the newspapers' portrayal of the *Titanic*?

Sample Answer: The deaths of wealthy men and women were given more coverage than the deaths of lower-class passengers. Rather than covering all passengers equally, Lord believes the press ignored the experiences of the poor.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: How did race and ethnicity factor into the retelling of that fateful night?

Sample Answer: Without facts to back up these claims, stowaways were described as Japanese. Those who rushed the boats were “probably Italian.” Anglo-Saxons were generally characterized as gallant and chivalrous.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 5: In what ways did the sinking of the *Titanic* mark the beginning of a new era?

Sample Answer: The *Titanic’s* sinking undermined the confidence people had in technology. After 100 years of steady industrial advancement, the public’s certainty about the safety and quality of new machines began to waver. People no longer believed in an “unsinkable” ship.

CCSS: RI.8.1

COMPARATIVE TEXTS

Text: *The Girl Who Came Home* by Hazel Gaynor

Compare to: Chapter 7 of *A Night to Remember*

Connection: As Lord observes, accounts of the *Titanic* typically focus on the lives of rich passengers, but the crew and third-class passengers suffered the most when the great ship went down. Gaynor’s historical novel *The Girl Who Came Home*, based on the true story of Lahardane, Ireland—the city that suffered the greatest loss of human life when the *Titanic* sank—considers the experiences of the Irish crew members who worked aboard the *Titanic*.

Text: *Disaster Preparedness* by Heather Havrilesky

Compare to: Chapter 7 of *A Night to Remember*

Connection: In Havrilesky’s 2010 memoir *Disaster Preparedness*, she takes paranoia to a new level. Fires, tornadoes, nuclear war, and meteor crashes haunted her childhood daydreams, and to combat her fears, she and her sister Laura strategized survival plans. The two girls decided that adults were unreliable during emergencies; children were better off doing disaster preparation unsupervised. Unlike the unprepared crew aboard the *Titanic*, Havrilesky was obsessed with planning for disasters.

CHAPTER 8: “It Reminds Me of a Bloomin’ Picnic”

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 8, Paragraphs 8-16

After the ocean liner vanished beneath the surface, swimmers screamed for help. Although many of the lifeboats had plenty of room, only No. 14 returned to the sink site to rescue swimmers. In the end, only thirteen of an approximate 1,600 people were saved. The night grew quiet and a tranquil feeling came over the men and women aboard the lifeboats.

WHY IT’S KEY

Although many of the stories about the *Titanic* include acts of extraordinary bravery, the night was also marked by moments of cowardice and risk aversion. Lord offers no satisfying explanation as to why so few aboard the lifeboats sought to rescue the swimmers. For the most part, the lifeboats weren’t full, signifying that the survival rate could have been higher.

Point of View: The narrative voice moves quickly from one point of view to another. In some moments, the reader follows a single survivor’s narrative. In other paragraphs, the point of view shifts in each sentence from one retelling to another. In this passage, Lord offers his own assessment. His voice is clinical as he shares sobering numbers of the drowned. In the following paragraph, the narrative tone switches again, as Lord observes the uncanny calm that settled over the group.

Tone: After the rush and frenzy of loading the lifeboats and watching the *Titanic* go down, those aboard the lifeboats finally have their first moment of calm. The quiet feels strange. The great ship is gone and most of the swimmers clamoring for rescue have drowned. No rescue boat is in sight, and there are many more hours before the sun appears on the horizon.

YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

Discussion Prompt: Put yourself in the position of the *Titanic* survivors. Pretend that your class is on a lifeboat together in which part of your group is hungry, some people are freezing, and others have food. The men try to act chivalrous, and several people attempt to give orders. Have a conversation in which you all try to achieve your personal goals. Is it possible to be brave while also trying to survive? Use evidence from the text in your response.

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

flotilla

flo•til•la *noun*

A group of boats; a fleet

Like a flock of migrating geese, the flotilla moved across the lake.

bedlam

bed•lam *noun*

Mayhem; a chaotic uproar

When the lion escaped, the zoo turned into a scene of bedlam.

agile

a•gile *adjective*

Fit and able to move around quickly and easily

The agile acrobat cartwheeled and did several backflips across the mat.

tiller

til•ler *noun*

A bar attached to the superior part of a boat's rudder that is used for steering

She pushed the tiller as far left as it would go and the slow-moving boat began to turn.

coxswain

cox•swain *noun*

The person in charge of steering and navigating a small boat

The coxswain yelled at her crew to row harder.

tranquil

tran•quil *adjective*

Peaceful and quiet

Nick's tranquil picture of the sun setting over the sea created a calming effect on viewers.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: How does Fifth Officer Lowe assist in rescuing swimmers? How are his actions different from those on the other lifeboats?

Sample Answer: Lowe brings together several lifeboats and tells the rescued passengers that he is their new leader. He instructs the best rowers to use lifeboat No. 14 to go back and rescue people calling out for help. Even though the other lifeboats have room for more people, the occupants are too afraid to return to the sink site. Lowe is the only person who uses a lifeboat to rescue others.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: According to Lord's account, what pros and cons did the passengers aboard the lifeboats consider when deciding whether or not to rescue swimmers?

Sample Answer: Rescue by lifeboat was the only way swimmers' lives could be saved. While some passengers advocated rowing back to the *Titanic*, others worried that their boats would be tipped over or swamped by swimmers desperate for rescue.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: In what ways was the experience aboard the lifeboats like a picnic? Use specific details from the text.

Sample Answer: The water was still, like a pond in a park, and the passengers chatted, shared food, and looked after one another's children.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: What difficulties did the men and women aboard the lifeboats encounter after the *Titanic* sank?

Sample Answer: Not only was the temperature freezing, many were also soaking wet. Additionally, one of the collapsibles was sinking, and passengers argued about directions, smoking, and drinking alcohol. As there was no rescue boat in sight, spirits were low.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 5: To what does Lord attribute the survival of Chief Baker Charles Joughin?

Sample Answer: Lord writes that Joughin lived "thanks to a remarkable combination of initiative, luck and alcohol." Joughin was also clever when he decided to collect bread from the pantry, and throw deck chairs into the ocean.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 6: How does the first rescue ship signal its arrival? How do the survivors respond to the sight of the rescue ship approaching? Use specific examples from the text in your response.

Sample Answer: The ship launches a cannon, and many passengers cheer and try to signal to it. Some burn hats and newspapers, and one woman even waves her cane. Abelseth tries to convince a man to celebrate, but the man couldn't wait any longer to be rescued. When the ship finally approaches, "it was too late for the man to know" that help had arrived.

CCSS: RI.8.1

COMPARATIVE TEXTS

Text: *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel

Compare to: Chapter 8 of *A Night to Remember*

Connection: In Martel's novel, when Pi Patel turns sixteen, his parents decide to move the family and their zoo from Pondicherry, India to North America. Both humans and animals board the Japanese freighter *Tsimtsum* and set out for their new home. Disaster strikes when a storm sinks the vessel. Pi escapes in a small lifeboat along with a zebra, an orangutan, and a spotted hyena. After the hyena kills the zebra and the orangutan, Pi discovers that Richard Parker, a hungry tiger, is hidden beneath a tarpaulin. Frightened, Pi builds himself a raft out of flotation devices, which he tethers to the boat's stern. Like the passengers at sea on the lifeboats, Pi must strategize his next move while still in shock from the disaster he just survived.

CHAPTERS 9 AND 10: “We’re Going North Like Hell” and “Go Away—We Have Just Seen Our Husbands Drown”

KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 10, Paragraphs 91-92

Over time, true stories about the *Titanic* emerged, but the fabricated and sensational stories made up by newspapers are best remembered. “Legends,” writes Lord, “are part of great events.” The world mourned the sinking of the *Titanic*. Flags flew at half-mast, theaters closed, and U.S. President Taft exchanged condolences with British King George V.

WHY IT’S KEY

The *Titanic*’s demise had a profound impact on the world. Although the reporting was not entirely accurate, the magnitude of the disaster was immediately clear and people around the world mourned for the ship and its passengers.

Myth: The initial stories about the *Titanic* were reported in the absence of real information, and though many of them were fabrications, they survived in people’s memories. Many experiences were sensationalized. Although Lord acknowledges that mythmaking is a common, even natural, occurrence in the wake of a disaster, he also makes a subtle argument for the importance of his own research and writing. Unlike many of the legendary stories of the *Titanic*, his writing is based on research and fact.

Impact: Passengers aboard the *Titanic* came from every social class and many different countries and cultures. Consequently, though not all communities were affected equally, the disaster impacted everyone. This is reflected in the solemn responses from leaders and businesses around the world.

YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

Discussion Prompt: Why do you think the sinking of the *Titanic* impacted the world so profoundly? Why does the story of the *Titanic* continue to fascinate us today? Support your argument with details from the text.

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3; RI.8.6; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

gangway

gang•way *noun*

A raised path or platform

Standing alone on the gangway, the captain addressed his crew.

derricks

der•ricks *noun*

A crane with a pivoting arm, often found on ships

The crew prepared the derricks to haul the cargo aboard.

furtive

fur•tive *adjective*

Secretive, so as to avoid being noticed

Jane gave a furtive glance around the kitchen before peeking at her birthday cake.

preoccupied

pre•oc•cu•pied *verb*

To be worried about something so that it predominates one's thoughts

Vivian was so preoccupied with her history homework that she didn't hear her mother come home.

gunwale

gun•wale *noun*

The upper edge on the side of a ship or boat

When a wave rocked the boat, I lost my balance and fell against the gunwale.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: What preparations does the *Carpathia* crew make as they speed toward the *Titanic*?

Sample Answer: Stewards collect blankets and prepare warm food and drinks. Crew members position the derricks, drop ladders, and prepare the lifeboats for lowering. The doctor sets up separate makeshift first-aid stations for each class of passenger.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: How does Lord describe the Arctic?

Sample Answer: The towering icebergs are "white, pink, mauve, [and] deep blue." Chunks of ice bob in the choppy water. A pale crescent moon sits above the horizon.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: What distinction does Lord make between seamen and boatmen?

Sample Answer: Seamen work on liners and understand the mechanics of engines, whereas boatmen understand how the wind behaves and know how to operate sails.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: How does the sinking of the *Titanic* impact the manager of the White Star Line?

Sample Answer: Ismay spends his time aboard the *Carpathia* alone in his cabin. He retires from his job, buys an estate in Ireland, and lives the rest of his life in isolation.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 5: Why do the newspapers report false stories about the *Titanic*?

Sample Answer: Until the *Carpathia* returns to New York City, the only information journalists have is what they intercept on the radio. In the absence of verified facts, many journalists make up stories in order to be able to publish something.

CCSS: RI.8.1

COMPARATIVE TEXTS

Text: “*To Build A Fire*” by Jack London

Compare to: Chapter 9 of *A Night to Remember*

Connection: In London’s famous short story “*To Build A Fire*” a prospector and his dog set off across the Canadian Yukon on their way to an encampment. Even though an old man has forewarned the traveler with morbid tales regarding the effects of extreme cold, the protagonist shrugs off these warnings. Over several hours and many miles, the traveler’s circumstances deteriorate. London demonstrates the dangers of underestimating and not respecting the wilderness. As in *A Night to Remember*, pride and survival are intricately linked.

“Facts About the *Titanic*,” “Acknowledgments,” and “Passenger List”

KEY PASSAGE | “Facts About the *Titanic*” Paragraphs 16-20

While researching, Lord uncovers no less than four first-class passengers named as the man who escaped in women’s clothing. These accusations, Lord writes, are the product of gossip and mudslinging. In fact, third-class passenger Daniel Buckley admitted that he wore a shawl over his head. Although Lord was able to solve this riddle, there are countless other mysteries about the night the *Titanic* sank that will never be resolved.

WHY IT’S KEY

In these paragraphs, Lord reveals his process as a reporter. Rather than taking information at face value, he gathered stories and checked them against each other. Not only does Lord establish his credibility as an investigator, he also admits the limitations of research.

Unreliable Sources: Not all the sources Lord spoke with were reliable. Some intentionally lied, while others simply forgot the details. His research consisted of eyewitness reports, testimonies, and journalistic techniques as the primary sources.

Gender: As women were allowed onto the lifeboats before men, and first-class and second-class passengers were permitted to board before third-class passengers, Daniel Buckley’s chances of making it onto a lifeboat were slim. By wearing a shawl over his head, he was able to sneak onto a lifeboat and save his own life. Issues surrounding gender persisted after the *Titanic* sank, when men accused each other of pretending to be a woman in order to survive. Their accusations imply would be preferable to a few hours spent in women’s clothing.

YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

Discussion Prompt: How did Lord go about collecting information for this book? What limitations did he encounter and where was he successful in gaining source material? Is there anything you would have done differently during the investigative process?

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.6; SL.8.1.A, SL.8.1.C, SL.8.1.D

VOCABULARY

keel

keel *noun*

An elongated structure or a flat blade at the bottom of a boat to keep the boat upright and prevent it from getting blown sideways

In the winter, the boat is stored above water with its keel visible.

meticulously

me•ti•cu•lou•sly *adverb*

Done with great attention to detail; with extreme thoroughness

The surgeon meticulously scrubbed his hands before entering the operating room.

vindictive

vin•dic•tive *adjective*

Feeling or expressing a strong desire for revenge

When she insulted the friend who had hurt her feelings, she was just being vindictive.

mudslinging

mud•sling•ing *noun*

The practice of tarnishing another's reputation through false or unfair reports

Politicians did their best to avoid the journalist, who was easy to anger and known for mudslinging.

gracious

gra•cious *adjective*

Marked by courtesy and kindness

Dean was a gracious host, always taking the time to make sure his guests were comfortable.

CLOSE READ

QUESTION 1: What examples of unreliable memories does Lord offer?

Sample Answer: Not only do survivors remember the *Titanic* as being larger than it actually was, passengers recall golf courses, tennis courts, and a herd of cows aboard the ship. He also notes that witnesses report more women and fewer men being lowered onto the lifeboats.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 2: Who did Lord consult with to create this book? Does this seem like a reliable way to uncover the truth?

Sample Answer: He got in touch with sixty-three survivors of the *Titanic*. He also contacted relatives of the survivors, as well as passengers aboard the *Carthage*. As he was not present that night, I think it is the only option available to him. By interviewing survivors, he was able to learn about their experiences firsthand.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 3: What lasting impact did the *Titanic* have on the Countess of Rothes, Mrs. Noel MacFie? Does it seem that the survivors were able to move on with their lives?

Sample Answer: While dining out with friends, the Countess had a feeling of intense cold and horror, triggered by the orchestral song "The Tales of Hoffman," the last after-dinner music played before the *Titanic* sank. I don't think Mrs. MacFie was able to ever fully move on because although she survived, the memory of what happened that night haunted her.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 4: According to Lord, which newspapers exhibited the most reliable coverage of the tragedy, and which newspapers were the worst?

Sample Answer: Lord praises *The New York Times'* coverage, but he disparages other New York papers for being unreliable. Surprisingly, he reports that local newspapers did a better job telling the stories of those involved in the disaster.

CCSS: RI.8.1

QUESTION 5: Whose names are not reported in the passenger list?

Sample Answer: The names of maids, nurses, and manservants are not included in the passenger list; they are only listed under the names of their employers.

CCSS: RI.8.1

COMPARATIVE TEXTS

Text: *Without You, There Is No Us* by Suki Kim

Compare to: “Facts About the *Titanic*,” “Acknowledgments,” and “Passenger List”

Connection: Journalism changed considerably in the century since Lord wrote *A Night to Remember*. He conducted research over decades and talked to numerous people linked to the *Titanic*. In contrast, author Kim entered North Korea in 2011 under the pretense of being an English professor at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology. In addition to teaching, Kim conducted research and ultimately published *Without You, There Is No Us*, a non-fiction book about staying in the notoriously secretive nation.

Text: “Address to the Nation on the Explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger”

by Ronald Reagan

Compare to: “Facts About the *Titanic*,” “Acknowledgments,” and “Passenger List”

Connection: In the aftermath of tragedies such as the sinking of the *Titanic*, Americans often look to political leaders for guidance. On January 28, 1986, millions of Americans watched a live television broadcast of the Space Shuttle *Challenger* violently exploding just seventy-three seconds after takeoff, killing all seven people on board. It was the tenth mission for the *Challenger*, but the first to carry an ordinary citizen into space, a teacher from New Hampshire named Christa McAuliffe. That evening, President Ronald Reagan addressed the nation, including the many schoolchildren who witnessed the disaster, and lauded the bravery of the fallen crew.

WRITE TO REVISIT

INFORMATIONAL WRITING

Prompt: Pick a passenger from *A Night to Remember* and see if you can find their survival story online. Some passengers will be easier to track down than others, but a good place to start is the *Encyclopedia-Titanica*, which can be found at www.encyclopedia-titanica.org. Learn about the person's heritage, their history, and their experiences, and then think of a creative way to tell their story: a presentation, a website, a poem, a short film, etc. The medium is up to you, but it should communicate what you learned about that person and what lesson or lessons they have for future generations.

CCSS: RI.8.1; RI.8.2; RI.8.3; W.8.2; W.8.3; W.8.7

PERSUASIVE WRITING

Prompt: When deadly accidents happen today, companies and individuals are often taken to court and sometimes made to serve time in prison. In your opinion, who or what was responsible for the sinking of the *Titanic* and the lives lost at sea? Write a persuasive essay of at least 400 words, arguing your case. Be sure to cite as much evidence as you can from *A Night to Remember*. Feel free to place blame on a person, company, attitude, procedure, or anything else that can be supported with evidence.

CCSS: RI.8.1; RI.8.2; RI.8.3; W.8.1

CREATIVE WRITING

Prompt: One of Lord's criticisms is how journalists and the media focused on the *Titanic's* first-class passengers. Pretend you are a reporter in 1912. Using information provided in Lord's book, or using other resources, write a newspaper article about the *Titanic*. Your article should focus on the experiences of the second- and/or third-class passengers. You may choose to interview a fictional passenger and ask about their experience, or include factual statistics. Be sure to incorporate specific, descriptive details in an article of 300 words or more.

CCSS: RI.8.1, RI.8.2, RI.8.3; W.8.1, W.8.3



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