

# What can we learn from DISASTERS?

## COMMON CORE

**RI 1** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly.

**RI 3** Analyze interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals).

**RI 5** Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text.

Have you ever learned a lesson the hard way? Unfortunately, sometimes it takes a disaster to teach us to properly plan for danger. In the selection you're about to read, people on an "unsinkable" ship encounter terrible danger at sea—without enough lifeboats for everyone.

**CHART IT** When a disaster happens, we try to find out what went wrong so that we know how to be better prepared in the future. Using a chart like the one shown, list different types of disasters and things we can learn from them. Compare your chart with those of your classmates.

<i>Disasters</i>	<i>What We Can Learn from Them</i>
<i>Fires</i>	<i>We can learn to build safer buildings. More fire drills will help people know what to do in emergencies.</i>



## Meet the Author

### Robert D. Ballard

born 1942

#### Underwater Explorer

Robert D. Ballard, a pioneer of deep-sea exploration, traces his interest in the ocean to childhood walks on the beach in San Diego. He was so fascinated by sea lore and by the crabs washed in by the tide that he decided to spend his life by the water. Ballard is trained as a marine geologist, a geophysicist (a mapper of land and oceans), and a Navy commander. After years of searching, he found one of the most important shipwrecks in history—the remains of the *Titanic*.

#### A World Beneath the Water

The oxygen-poor water at the bottom of the ocean keeps shipwrecks in excellent condition. “There’s probably more history now preserved underwater than in all the museums of the world combined,” Ballard has observed. To help excavate that history, Ballard organizes expeditions to areas rich in shipwrecks. He explores the depths with the help of robots and submersibles, or minisubmarines.

#### Mysteries Solved

Ballard’s discovery solved many mysteries about the *Titanic*’s last hours. For instance, pieces on the ocean floor reveal that the ship broke in two before sinking.

### ● TEXT ANALYSIS: NARRATIVE NONFICTION

**Narrative nonfiction** uses literary elements, such as plot, setting, and conflict, to tell a story. Unlike fiction, though, narrative nonfiction tells a true story about events that really happened. To be accurate, narrative nonfiction relies on source material, such as quotations from real people, facts from reliable accounts, and photographs. As you read *Exploring the Titanic*, notice how literary elements and source material help create a compelling narrative.

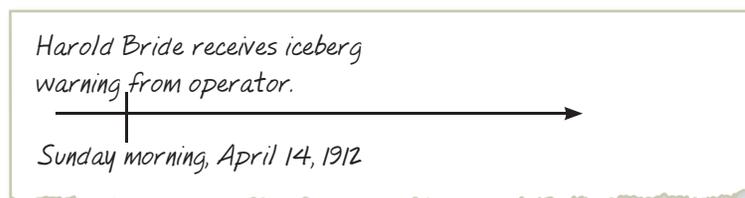
**Review:** **Suspense and Foreshadowing**

### ● READING SKILL: USE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

When writers use **chronological order**, or time order, they present events in the order in which they happened. To help you recognize time order, look for

- calendar dates, such as *Wednesday, April 10, 1912*
- clock time, such as *shortly after noon* and *8:03 P.M.*
- words and phrases that show time order, such as *before*, *later*, *around lunchtime*, and *for the next ten months*

Use a timeline to track the events of the *Titanic*’s final day.



**Review:** **Make Inferences**

### ▲ VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

The boldfaced words help tell the story of this disaster. Use context clues to give a definition for each word.

1. The elegant **accommodations** thrilled the passengers.
2. **Adjoining** rooms kept families together.
3. There were **moderate** prices for less luxurious rooms.
4. Travelers enjoyed the **novelty** of the ship’s first voyage.
5. Some believed they had heard a **prophecy** of tragedy.
6. The crews worked **feverishly** to avoid a collision.
7. They were unable to prevent a **ghastly** disaster at sea.



Complete the activities in your **Reader/Writer Notebook**.

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KEYWORD: HML7-103



# Exploring the TITANIC

Robert D. Ballard

The story of the *Titanic* began before anyone had even thought about building the great ship. In 1898, fourteen years before the *Titanic* sank, an American writer named Morgan Robertson wrote a book called *The Wreck of the Titan*.<sup>1</sup> In his story, the *Titan*, a passenger ship almost identical to the *Titanic*, and labeled “unsinkable,” sails from England headed for New York. With many rich and famous passengers on board, the *Titan* hits an iceberg in the North Atlantic and sinks. Because there are not enough lifeboats, many lives are lost.

The story of the *Titan* predicted exactly what would happen to the *Titanic* fourteen years later. It was an eerie **prophecy** of terrible things to come. **A**

In 1907, nearly ten years after *The Wreck of the Titan* was written, two men began making plans to build a real titanic ship. At a London dinner party, as they relaxed over coffee and cigars, J. Bruce Ismay, president of the White Star Line of passenger ships, and Lord Pirrie, chairman of Harland & Wolff shipbuilders, discussed a plan to build three enormous

## Analyze Visuals ▶

What do the words and images in the poster emphasize?

**prophecy** (prŏf'ĭ-sē) *n.*  
a prediction of the future

## **A** CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Why do you think Ballard begins his narrative with a reference to *The Wreck of the Titan*?

1. *Titan*: In Greek mythology, the Titans were a race of giants. The word *titanic* has come to be applied to any person or thing of great size or power.

# WHITE STAR LINE.

**"OLYMPIC"**  
45,000 TONS.

AND

**"TITANIC"**  
45,000 TONS.

THE LARGEST STEAMERS  
IN THE WORLD.



ocean liners. Their goal was to give the White Star Line a competitive edge in the Atlantic passenger trade with several gigantic ships whose **accommodations** would be the last word in comfort and elegance.

20 The two men certainly dreamed on a grand scale.<sup>2</sup> When these floating palaces were finally built, they were so much bigger than other ships that new docks had to be built on each side of the Atlantic to service them. Four years after that London dinner party, the first of these huge liners, the *Olympic*, safely completed her maiden voyage.<sup>3</sup>

On May 31, 1911, the hull of the *Titanic* was launched at the Harland & Wolff shipyards in Belfast, Ireland, before a cheering crowd of 100,000. Bands played, and people came from miles around to see this great wonder of the sea. Twenty-two tons of soap, grease, and train oil were used to slide her into the water. In the words of one eyewitness,  
30 she had “a rudder as big as an elm tree . . . propellers as big as a windmill. Everything was on a nightmare scale.” **B**

For the next ten months the *Titanic* was outfitted and carefully prepared down to the last detail. The final size and richness of this new ship was astounding. She was 882 feet long, almost the length of four city blocks. With nine decks, she was as high as an eleven-story building.

Among her gigantic features, she had four huge funnels, each one big enough to drive two trains through. During construction an astonishing three million rivets had been hammered into her hull. Her three enormous anchors weighed a total of thirty-one tons—the weight of  
40 twenty cars. And for her maiden voyage, she carried enough food to feed a small town for several months.

As her name boasted, the *Titanic* was indeed the biggest ship in the world. Nicknamed “the Millionaires’ Special,” she was also called “the Wonder Ship,” “the Unsinkable Ship,” and “the Last Word in Luxury” by newspapers around the world. **C**

The command of this great ocean liner was given to the senior captain of the White Star Line, Captain Edward J. Smith. This proud, white-bearded man was a natural leader and was popular with both crew members and passengers. Most important, after thirty-eight years’ service  
50 with the White Star Line, he had an excellent safety record. At the age of fifty-nine, Captain Smith was going to retire after this last trip, a perfect final tribute to a long and successful career.

On Wednesday, April 10, 1912, the *Titanic*’s passengers began to arrive in Southampton for the trip to New York. Ruth Becker was dazzled as she boarded the ship with her mother, her younger sister, and two-year-old brother, Richard. Ruth’s father was a missionary in India. The rest of the

**accommodations**

(ə-kōm’ə-dā’shənz)  
n. rooms and food, especially in a hotel or on a ship or train

**B NARRATIVE NONFICTION**

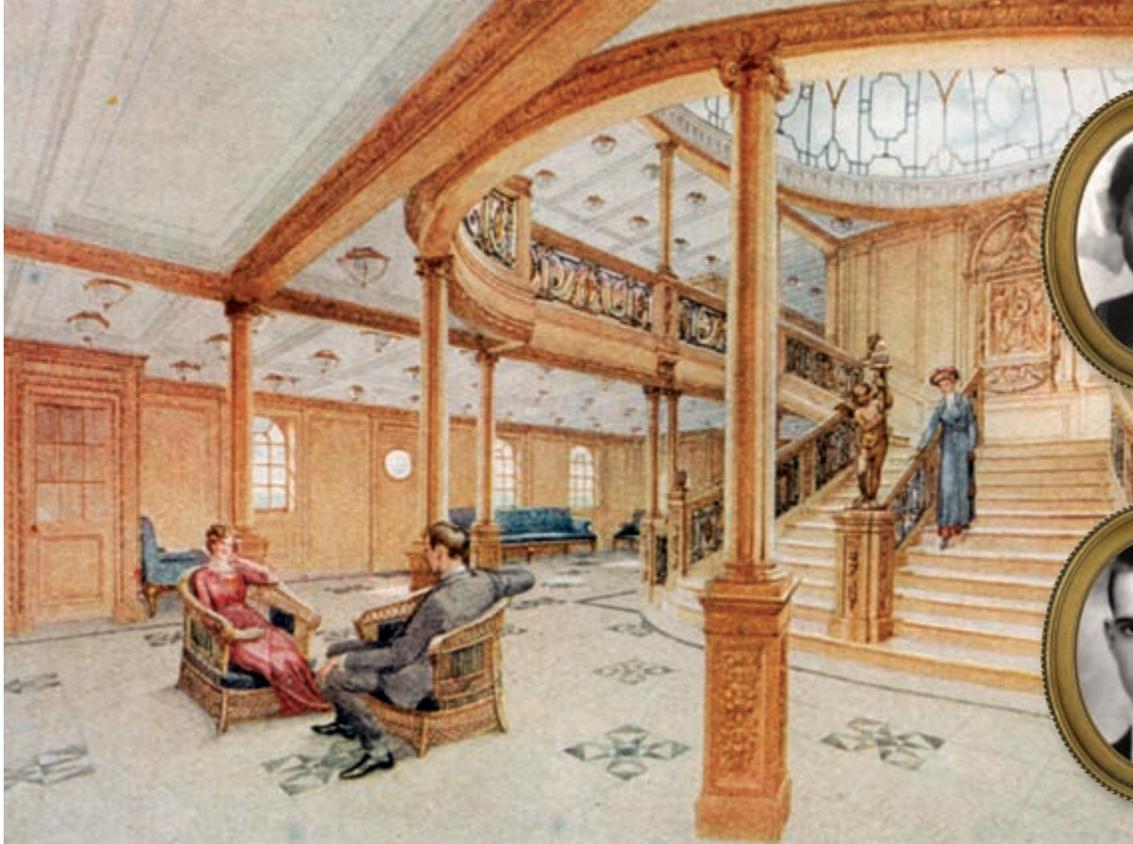
What details help you picture the **setting** of the *Titanic*’s launch?

**C NARRATIVE NONFICTION**

What do the newspaper quotations add to your understanding?

2. **on a grand scale:** in a large or impressive way.

3. **maiden voyage:** very first trip.



Ruth Becker



Jack Thayer

Illustration © Onslow Auctions Limited/Mary Evans Picture Library.

family was sailing to New York to find medical help for young Richard, who had developed a serious illness in India. They had booked second-class tickets on the *Titanic*.

60 Twelve-year-old Ruth was delighted with the ship. As she pushed her little brother about the decks in a stroller, she was impressed with what she saw. “Everything was new. New!” she recalled. “Our cabin was just like a hotel room, it was so big. The dining room was beautiful—the linens, all the bright, polished silver you can imagine.”

Meanwhile, seventeen-year-old Jack Thayer from Philadelphia was trying out the soft mattress on the large bed in his cabin. The first-class rooms his family had reserved for themselves and their maid had thick carpets, carved wooden panels on the walls, and marble sinks. As his parents were getting settled in their **adjoining** stateroom,<sup>4</sup> Jack decided  
70 to explore this fantastic ship. **D**

On A Deck, he stepped into the Verandah and Palm Court and admired the white wicker furniture and the ivy growing up the trellised walls. On the lower decks, Jack discovered the squash court,<sup>5</sup> the swimming pool, and the Turkish bath<sup>6</sup> decorated like a room in a sultan’s palace. In the gymnasium, the instructor was showing passengers the

### ▲ Analyze Visuals

The photographs of Ruth Becker and Jack Thayer are **source material**. How does seeing the faces of these young passengers affect the way you read the selection?

**adjoining** (ə-joi’ning)  
*adj.* next to or in contact with **adjoin v.**

### **D** NARRATIVE NONFICTION

What details about the **setting** do you learn from firsthand observations of people on the ship?

4. **stateroom:** a private cabin on a ship.

5. **squash court:** a walled court or room for playing squash, in which a rubber ball is hit off the walls.

6. **Turkish bath:** steam bath.

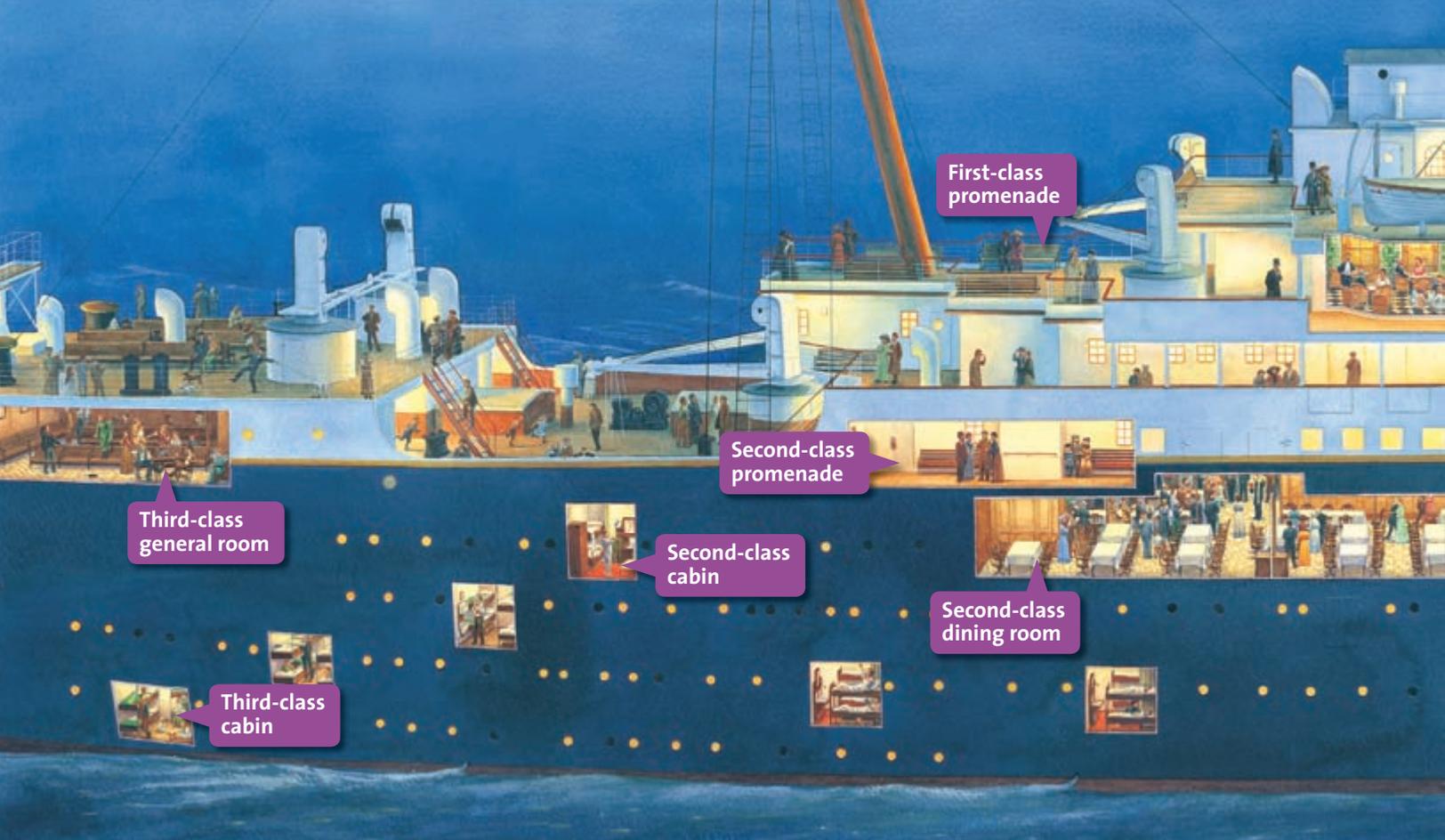


Illustration by Steve Noon © Dorling Kindersley.

latest in exercise equipment, which included a mechanical camel you could ride on, stationary bicycles, and rowing machines.

Daylight shone through the huge glass dome over the Grand Staircase as Jack went down to join his parents in the first-class reception room.

80 There, with the ship's band playing in the background, his father pointed out some of the other first-class passengers. "He's supposed to be the world's richest man," said his father of Colonel John Jacob Astor, who was escorting the young Mrs. Astor. He also identified Mr. and Mrs. Straus, founders of Macy's of New York, the world's largest department store. Millionaire Benjamin Guggenheim was aboard, as were Jack's parents' friends from Philadelphia, Mr. and Mrs. George Widener and their son, Harry. Mr. Widener had made a fortune building streetcars. Mr. and Mrs. William Carter were also friends of the Thayers. Stowed  
90 in one of the holds below was a new Renault car that they were bringing

J. Bruce Ismay, president of the White Star Line, moved about the room saying hello to people. He wanted to make sure that his wealthy passengers were comfortable, that they would feel relaxed and safe aboard his floating palace.

### Language Coach

**Oral Fluency** The first part of the word *Colonel* (in line 82) is spoken as if the middle *l* were an *r*. *Col* sounds like *cur*. The next part, *onel*, is spoken as if the *o* were silent. It sounds like *nel*. Read line 82 aloud, saying *Colonel* correctly.



### ◀ Analyze Visuals

Identify which parts of the ship are dedicated to the first-, second-, and third-class passengers. What differences do you note?

Indeed, when Ruth Becker's mother had asked one of the second-class staff about the safety of the ship, she had been told that there was absolutely nothing to worry about. The ship had watertight compartments that would allow her to float indefinitely. There was much talk among the passengers about the *Titanic* being unsinkable.

100 In 1912, people were divided into social classes according to background, wealth, and education. Because of these class lines, the *Titanic* was rather like a big floating layer cake. The bottom layer consisted of the lowly manual workers sweating away in the heat and grime of the boiler rooms and engine rooms. The next layer was the third-class passengers, people of many nationalities hoping to make a new start in America. After that came the second class—teachers, merchants, and professionals of **moderate** means like Ruth's family. Then, finally, there was the icing on the cake in first class: the rich and the aristocratic. The differences between these groups were enormous. While the wealthy brought their maids and valets<sup>7</sup>

110 and mountains of luggage, most members of the crew earned such tiny salaries that it would have taken them years to save the money for a single first-class ticket. **E**

**moderate** (mōd'ər-īt)  
*adj.* not excessive or extreme; average

### **E** NARRATIVE NONFICTION

Why is it important to understand the way social class influenced the people on the ship?

7. **valets** (vā-lāz'): gentlemen's personal servants.

At noon on Wednesday, April 10, the *Titanic* cast off. The whistles on her huge funnels were the biggest ever made. As she began her journey to the sea, they were heard for miles around.

Moving majestically down the River Test,<sup>8</sup> and watched by a crowd that had turned out for the occasion, the *Titanic* slowly passed two ships tied up to a dock. All of a sudden, the mooring ropes holding the passenger liner *New York* snapped with a series of sharp cracks like fireworks going  
120 off. The enormous pull created by the *Titanic* moving past her had broken the *New York's* ropes and was now drawing her stern toward the *Titanic*. Jack Thayer watched in horror as the two ships came closer and closer. “It looked as though there surely would be a collision,” he later wrote. “Her stern could not have been more than a yard or two from our side. It almost hit us.” At the last moment, some quick action by Captain Smith and a tugboat captain nearby allowed the *Titanic* to slide past with only inches to spare.

It was not a good sign. Did it mean that the *Titanic* might be too big a ship to handle safely? Those who knew about the sea thought that such  
130 a close call at the beginning of a maiden voyage was a very bad omen. **F**

**J**ack Phillips, the first wireless operator on the *Titanic*, quickly jotted down the message coming in over his headphones. “It’s another iceberg warning,” he said wearily to his young assistant, Harold Bride. “You’d better take it up to the bridge.” Both men had been at work for hours in the *Titanic's* radio room, trying to get caught up in sending out a large number of personal messages. In 1912, passengers on ocean liners thought it was a real **novelty** to send postcard-style messages to friends at home from the middle of the Atlantic.

Bride picked up the iceberg message and stepped out onto the boat deck.  
140 It was a sunny but cold Sunday morning, the fourth day of the *Titanic's* maiden voyage. The ship was steaming at full speed across a calm sea. Harold Bride was quite pleased with himself at having landed a job on such a magnificent new ship. After all, he was only twenty-two years old and had just nine months’ experience at operating a “wireless set,” as a ship’s radio was then called. As he entered the bridge area, he could see one of the crewmen standing behind the ship’s wheel steering her course toward New York. **G**

Captain Smith was on duty in the bridge, so Bride handed the message to him. “It’s from the *Caronia*,<sup>9</sup> sir. She’s reporting icebergs and pack ice ahead.” The captain thanked him, read the message, and then posted  
150 it on the bulletin board for other officers on watch to read. On his way

## SCIENCE CONNECTION



An important technological advancement used on the *Titanic* was the wireless. A wireless telegraph is a machine used for transmitting and receiving messages.

### **F** SUSPENSE AND FORESHADOWING

Reread lines 116–130. How does the author use foreshadowing to create suspense?

**novelty** (nŏv’əl-tē) *n.*  
something new, original, or unusual

### **G** CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Reread lines 139–141. What day does Bride pick up the iceberg warning from the operator? Begin your timeline by recording this event. As you read on, record each major event that follows.

8. **the River Test:** a river flowing into the English Channel at Southampton, the city in England from which the *Titanic* set sail.

9. **Caronia** (kə-rō’nē-ə).



Harold Bride

*The Titanic*, Gordon Johnson. Oil on paper. © Margaret Johnson/SuperStock.

back to the radio room, Bride thought the captain had seemed quite unconcerned by the message. But then again, he had been told that it was not unusual to have ice floating in the sea lanes during an April crossing. Besides, what danger could a few pieces of ice present to an unsinkable ship?

Elsewhere on board, passengers relaxed on deck chairs, reading or taking naps. Some played cards, some wrote letters, while others chatted with friends. As it was Sunday, church services had been held in the morning, the first-class service led by Captain Smith. Jack Thayer spent most of the day walking about the decks getting some fresh air with his parents.

160 Two more ice warnings were received from nearby ships around lunch time. In the chaos of the radio room, Harold Bride only had time to take one of them to the bridge. The rest of the day passed quietly. Then, in the late afternoon, the temperature began to drop rapidly. Darkness approached as the bugle call announced dinner.

Jack Thayer's parents had been invited to a special dinner for Captain Smith, so Jack ate alone in the first-class dining room. After dinner, as he was having a cup of coffee, he was joined by Milton Long, another passenger going home to the States. Long was older than Jack, but in the easy-going atmosphere of shipboard travel, they struck up a conversation  
170 and talked together for an hour or so. **H**

At 7:30 P.M., the radio room received three more warnings of ice about fifty miles ahead. One of them was from the steamer *Californian* reporting three large icebergs. Harold Bride took this message up to the bridge, and it was again politely received. Captain Smith was attending the dinner party being held for him when the warning was delivered. He never got

### Language Coach

**Prefixes** A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to form a new word. When *un-* is added to the word *sinkable*, it means “not sinkable.” Reread the question in line 154. What did the captain think was the answer to this question?

### **H** CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

Reread lines 160–170. About how much time passes between these iceberg warnings and Jack's conversation?

to see it. Then, around 9:00 P.M., the captain excused himself and went up to the bridge. He and his officers talked about how difficult it was to spot icebergs on a calm, clear, moonless night like this with no wind to kick up white surf around them. Before going to bed, the captain ordered  
180 the lookouts to keep a sharp watch for ice.

After trading travel stories with Milton Long, Jack Thayer put on his coat and walked around the deck. “It had become very much colder,” he said later. “It was a brilliant, starry night. There was no moon, and I have never seen the stars shine brighter . . . sparkling like diamonds. . . . It was the kind of night that made one feel glad to be alive.” At eleven o’clock, he went below to his cabin, put on his pajamas, and got ready for bed. ❶

In the radio room, Harold Bride was exhausted. The two operators were expected to keep the radio working twenty-four hours a day, and Bride lay down to take a much-needed nap. Phillips was so busy with  
190 the passenger messages that he actually brushed off the final ice warning of the night. It was from the *Californian*. Trapped in a field of ice, she had stopped for the night about nineteen miles north of the *Titanic*. She was so close that the message literally blasted in Phillips’s ears. Annoyed by the loud interruption, he cut off the *Californian*’s radio operator with the words, “Shut up, shut up. I’m busy.”

The radio room had received a total of seven ice warning messages in one day. It was quite clear that floating icebergs lay ahead of the *Titanic*. ❷

High up in the crow’s nest on the forward mast, Fred Fleet had passed a quiet watch. It was now 11:40 P.M., and he and his fellow lookout were  
200 waiting to be relieved so they could head below, perhaps for a hot drink before hopping into their warm bunks. The sea was dead calm. The air was bitterly cold.

Suddenly, Fleet saw something. A huge, dark shape loomed out of the night directly ahead of the *Titanic*. An iceberg! He quickly sounded the alarm bell three times and picked up the telephone.

Illustration by Steve Noon © Dorling Kindersley.



### ❶ NARRATIVE NONFICTION

How does the inclusion of **primary source material**—Jack Thayer’s firsthand observation—help you better understand what it must have been like on the ship that night?

### ❷ SUSPENSE AND FORESHADOWING

Reread lines 187–197. What details in these lines create a sense of worry and dread?

“What did you see?” asked the duty officer.

“Iceberg right ahead,” replied Fleet.

Immediately, the officer on the bridge ordered the wheel turned as far as it would go. The engine room was told to reverse the engines, while  
210 a button was pushed to close the doors to the watertight compartments in the bottom of the ship.

The lookouts in the crow’s nest braced themselves for a collision. Slowly the ship started to turn. It looked as though they would miss it. But it was too late. They had avoided a head-on crash, but the iceberg had struck a glancing blow along the *Titanic’s* starboard bow. Several tons of ice fell on the ship’s decks as the iceberg brushed along the side of the ship and passed into the night. A few minutes later, the *Titanic* came to a stop. **K**

Many of the passengers didn’t know the ship had hit anything. Because it was so cold, almost everyone was inside, and most people had already gone  
220 to bed. Ruth Becker and her mother were awakened by the dead silence. They could no longer hear the soothing hum of the vibrating engines from below. Jack Thayer was about to step into bed when he felt himself sway ever so slightly. The engines stopped. He was startled by the sudden quiet.

Sensing trouble, Ruth’s mother looked out of the door of their second-class cabin and asked a steward<sup>10</sup> what had happened. He told her that nothing was the matter, so Mrs. Becker went back to bed. But as she lay there, she couldn’t help feeling that something was very wrong.

Jack heard running feet and voices in the hallway outside his first-class cabin. “I hurried into my heavy overcoat and drew on my slippers. All  
230 excited, but not thinking anything serious had occurred, I called in to my father and mother that I was going up on deck to see the fun.”

On deck, Jack watched some third-class passengers playing with the ice that had landed on the forward deck as the iceberg had brushed by. Some people were throwing chunks at each other, while a few skidded about playing football with pieces of ice.

Down in the very bottom of the ship, things were very different. When the iceberg had struck, there had been a noise like a big gun going off in one of the boiler rooms. A couple of stokers<sup>11</sup> had been immediately hit by a jet of icy water. The noise and the shock of cold water had sent them  
240 running for safety. **L**

Twenty minutes after the crash, things looked very bad indeed to Captain Smith. He and the ship’s builder, Thomas Andrews, had made a rapid tour below decks to inspect the damage. The mail room was filling up with water, and sacks of mail were floating about. Water was also pouring into some of the forward holds and two of the boiler rooms.

### **K** CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

What is the time order of the events that happen after Fleet spots the iceberg? Record the events on your timeline.

### **L** NARRATIVE NONFICTION

In lines 218–240 the author describes how the passengers react after the collision. **Compare and contrast** the responses of the passengers and the workers in different areas of the ship.

10. **steward:** a worker on a ship who attends to the needs of the passengers.

11. **stokers:** workers who tended the boilers that powered steamships.

Captain Smith knew that the *Titanic*'s hull was divided into a number of watertight compartments. She had been designed so that she could still float if only the first four compartments were flooded, but not any more than that. But water was pouring into the first five compartments. And when the water filled them, it would spill over into the next compartment. One by one all the remaining compartments would flood, and the ship would eventually sink. Andrews told the captain that the ship could last an hour, an hour and a half at the most. **M**

Harold Bride had just awakened in the radio room when Captain Smith stuck his head in the door. "Send the call for assistance," he ordered.

"What call should I send?" Phillips asked.

"The regulation international call for help. Just that." Then the captain was gone. Phillips began to send the Morse code<sup>12</sup> "CQD" distress call, flashing away and joking as he did it. After all, they knew the ship was unsinkable.

Five minutes later, the captain was back. "What are you sending?" he asked.

"CQD," Phillips answered. Then Bride cut in and suggested that they try the new SOS<sup>13</sup> signal that was just coming into use. They began to send out the new international call for help—it was one of the first SOS calls ever sent out from a ship in distress.

Ruth and her family had stayed in their bunks for a good fifteen minutes or so after the room steward had told them nothing was wrong. But Ruth's mother couldn't stop worrying as she heard the sound of running feet and shouting voices in the hallway. Poking her head out of the cabin, she found a steward and asked what the matter was.

"Put on your things and come at once," said the steward.

"Do we have time to dress?" she asked.

"No, madam. You have time for nothing. Put on your life jackets and come up to the top deck."

Ruth helped her mother dress the children quickly. But they only had time to throw their coats over their nightgowns and put on their shoes and stockings. In their rush, they forgot to put on their life jackets.

Just after midnight, Captain Smith ordered the lifeboats uncovered. The ship's squash court, which was thirty-two feet above the keel,<sup>14</sup> was now completely flooded. Jack Thayer and his father came into the first-class lounge to try to find out exactly what the matter was. When Thomas Andrews, the ship's builder, passed by, Mr. Thayer asked him what was going on. He replied in a low voice that the ship had not much more than an hour to live. Jack and his father couldn't believe their ears. **N**

### **M** NARRATIVE NONFICTION

What **conflict** do the people aboard the ship now face?

### Language Coach

**Idioms** An idiom is a phrase that has a meaning different from its individual words. In line 262, Bride "cut in." This means he spoke while others were speaking. He did not actually cut anything. What other word or words could you use in place of the idiom *cut in*?

### **N** MAKE INFERENCES

What can you infer about how Thomas Andrews, the ship's builder, might have felt as he passed through the passenger lounge?

12. **Morse code:** a system used in wireless telegraphy in which numbers and letters are represented by sets of long and short sounds or flashes of light.

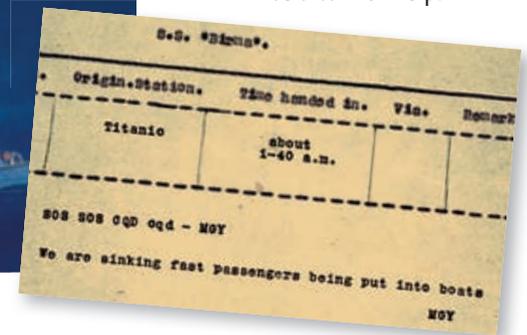
13. **CQD . . . SOS:** standard international distress calls used by ships at sea.

14. **keel:** the main timber or steel piece that extends the whole length of the bottom of a ship.



Illustration by Steve Noon © Dorling Kindersley.

This telegraph message was sent by Bride and Phillips as a call for help.



From the bridge of the *Titanic*, a ship's lights were observed not far away, possibly the *Californian's*. Captain Smith then ordered white distress rockets fired to get the attention of the nearby ship. They burst high in the air with a loud boom and a shower of stars. But the rockets made no difference. The mystery ship in the distance never answered.

290 In the radio room, Bride and Phillips now knew how serious the accident was and were **feverishly** sending out calls for help. A number of ships heard and responded to their calls, but most were too far away to come to the rescue in time. The closest ship they had been able to reach was the *Carpathia*,<sup>15</sup> about fifty-eight miles away. Immediately, the *Carpathia* reported that she was racing full steam to the rescue. But could she get there in time? ○

**feverishly**  
(fē'vər-īsh-lē) *adv.* in a way marked by intense emotion or activity

Not far away, the radio operator of the *Californian* had gone to bed for the night and turned off his radio. Several officers and crewmen on the deck of the *Californian* saw rockets in the distance and reported them  
300 to their captain. The captain told them to try to contact the ship with a Morse lamp. But they received no answer to their flashed calls. No one thought to wake up the radio operator. P

○ **SUSPENSE AND FORESHADOWING**  
Given what you already know about the *Titanic*, what details help create suspense?

On board the *Titanic*, almost an hour after the crash, most of the passengers still did not realize the seriousness of the situation. But Captain Smith was a very worried man. He knew that the *Titanic* only carried lifeboats for barely half the estimated twenty-two hundred people on board. He would have to make sure his officers kept order to avoid any panic among the passengers. At 12:30 Captain Smith gave the orders

P **CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER**  
Record the *Californian's* response on your timeline. At this point, how might disaster still have been minimized?

15. *Carpathia* (kär-pā'thē-ə).

to start loading the lifeboats—women and children first. Even though  
310 the *Titanic* was by now quite noticeably down at the bow and listing<sup>16</sup>  
slightly to one side, many passengers still didn't want to leave the huge,  
brightly lit ship. The ship's band added to a kind of party feeling as the  
musicians played lively tunes.

About 12:45 the first lifeboat was lowered. It could carry sixty-five ◆  
people, but left with only twenty-eight aboard. Indeed, many of the  
first boats to leave were half empty. Ruth Becker noticed that there was  
no panic among the crowds of passengers milling about on the decks.  
“Everything was calm, everybody was orderly.” But the night air was now  
biting cold. Ruth's mother told her to go back to their cabin to get some  
320 blankets. Ruth hurried down to the cabin and came back with several  
blankets in her arms. The Beckers walked toward one of the lifeboats, and  
a sailor picked up Ruth's brother and sister and placed them in the boat.

“That's all for this boat,” he called out. “Lower away!”

“Please, those are my children!” cried Ruth's mother. “Let me go  
with them!” ⓐ

The sailor allowed Mrs. Becker to step into the lifeboat with her two  
children. She then called back to Ruth to get into another lifeboat. Ruth  
went to the next boat and asked the officer if she could get in. He said,  
“Sure,” picked her up, and dumped her in.

330 Boat No. 13 was so crowded that Ruth had to stand up. Foot by foot  
it was lowered down the steep side of the massive ship. The new pulleys  
shrieked as the ropes passed through them, creaking under the weight  
of the boat and its load of sixty-four people. After landing in the water,  
Ruth's lifeboat began to drift. Suddenly Ruth saw another lifeboat coming  
down right on top of them! Fearing for their lives, the men in charge of  
her boat shouted, “Stop!” to the sailors up on the deck. But the noise was  
so great that nobody noticed. The second lifeboat kept coming down, so  
close that they could actually touch the bottom of it. All of a sudden, one  
of the men in Ruth's boat jumped up, pulled out a knife, and cut them  
340 free of their lowering ropes. Ruth's boat pushed away from the *Titanic*  
just as boat No. 15 hit the water inches away from them.

Below, in the third-class decks of the ship, there was much more  
confusion and alarm. Most of these passengers had not yet been able  
to get above decks. Some of those who did finally make it out had to  
break down the barriers between third and first class. ⓑ

By 1:30 the bow was well down, and people were beginning to notice  
the slant of the decks. In the radio room, Bride and Phillips were still  
desperately sending out calls for help: “We are sinking fast . . . women  
and children in boats. We cannot last much longer.” The radio signal

#### ◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT

Reread lines 314–316.  
Notice how the author  
uses **transition words or  
phrases** to unify ideas.  
The phrase “About 12:45  
the first” clarifies the  
order of events. The  
author connects the  
information in the next  
two sentences with the  
word “Indeed.”

#### ⓐ NARRATIVE NONFICTION

How does Ruth's  
mother's pleading  
with the sailor add  
to the **conflict**?

#### ⓑ MAKE INFERENCES

Given the lifeboat  
situation, what do delays  
in getting above decks  
mean for the third-class  
passengers?

16. **listing**: tilting; leaning.



Illustration by Steve Noon © Dorling Kindersley.

350 gradually got weaker and weaker as the ship's power faded out. Out on the decks, most passengers now began to move toward the stern<sup>17</sup> area, which was slowly lifting out of the water.

By 2:05 there were still over 1,500 people left on the sinking ship. All the lifeboats were now away, and a strange stillness took hold. People stood quietly on the upper decks, bunching together for warmth, trying to keep away from the side of the tilting ship.

Captain Smith now made his way to the radio room and told Harold Bride and Jack Phillips to save themselves. "Men, you have done your full duty," he told them. "You can do no more. Abandon your cabin. Now it's  
360 every man for himself." Phillips kept working the radio, hanging on until the very last moment. Suddenly Bride heard water gurgling up the deck outside the radio room. Phillips heard it, too, and cried, "Come on, let's clear out."

Near the stern, Father Thomas Byles had heard confession and given absolution<sup>18</sup> to over one hundred passengers. Playing to the very end, the members of the ship's brave band finally had to put down their instruments and try to save themselves. In desperation, some of the passengers and crew began to jump overboard as the water crept up the slant of the deck. 5

### Language Coach

#### Word Definitions

In line 350, the word *gradually* means "little by little." Reread lines 349–350. What does *gradually* tell you about what happened to the ship's radio signal? What other word could you use in place of *gradually* in this sentence?

### 5 NARRATIVE NONFICTION

Recall the **conflict** you identified on page 114. How do the various people on the ship respond to the conflict?

17. **stern:** the rear end of the ship.

18. **heard confession . . . absolution:** Father Byles had conducted a Roman Catholic religious ceremony in which a priest listens to people confess their sins and then declares them forgiven.

Jack Thayer stood with his friend Milton Long at the railing to keep  
370 away from the crowds. He had become separated from his father in  
the confusion on deck. Now Jack and his friend heard muffled thuds  
and explosions deep within the ship. Suddenly the *Titanic* began to slide  
into the water. The water rushed up at them. Thayer and Long quickly  
said goodbye and good luck to each other. Then they both jumped.

As he hit the water, Jack Thayer was sucked down. “The cold was  
terrific. The shock of the water took the breath out of my lungs. Down  
and down I went, spinning in all directions.” When he finally surfaced,  
gasping for air and numbed by the water, the ship was about forty feet  
away from him. His friend Milton Long was nowhere to be seen. Jack  
380 would never see him again.

Jack Thayer was lucky. As he struggled in the water, his hand came  
to rest on an overturned lifeboat. He grabbed hold and hung on, barely  
managing to pull himself up out of the water. Harold Bride had been  
washed overboard and now also clung to this same boat.

Both Jack and Harold witnessed the mighty ship’s last desperate  
moments. “We could see groups of . . . people aboard, clinging in clusters  
or bunches, like swarming bees; only to fall in masses, pairs, or singly,  
as the great part of the ship . . . rose into the sky. . . .” said Thayer.  
“I looked upwards—we were right under the three enormous propellers.  
390 For an instant, I thought they were sure to come right down on top of us.  
Then . . . she slid quietly away from us into the sea.”

Out in the safety of her lifeboat, Ruth Becker also witnessed the end  
of the *Titanic*. “I could look back and see this ship, and the decks were  
just lined with people looking over. Finally, as the *Titanic* sank faster,  
the lights died out. You could just see the stern remaining in an upright  
position for a couple of minutes. Then . . . it disappeared.” **T**

Then, as Ruth recalled, “there fell upon the ear the most terrible noise  
that human beings ever listened to—the cries of hundreds of people  
struggling in the icy cold water, crying for help with a cry we knew could  
400 not be answered.” In Thayer’s words, they became “a long continuous  
wailing chant.” Before long this **ghastly** wailing stopped, as the freezing  
water took its toll. **U**

Jack Thayer and Harold Bride and a number of other survivors clung  
to their overturned lifeboat, inches away from an icy death in the North  
Atlantic. Numb from the cold and not daring to move in case the boat  
sank under their weight, they prayed and waited for help. Then, as the  
first light of dawn crept on the horizon, a rocket was seen in the distance.  
The *Carpathia* had come to their rescue. 

COMMON CORE RI.5

**T** CHRONOLOGICAL  
ORDER

When writers present events in the order in which they happened, they are using a structural pattern known as chronological order. Often, words such as *after*, *as*, *before*, *now*, and *then*, as well as dates and clock time, indicate time order. Reread lines 369–396. Which words indicate the order in which events happened?

**ghastly** (găst'lē) *adj.*  
terrifyingly horrible

**U** NARRATIVE  
NONFICTION

Reread lines 385–402 and decide which quotation is most memorable. Why do you think so?

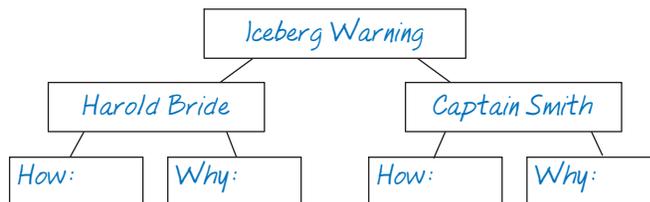
19. **took its toll**: claimed passengers' lives.

## Comprehension

1. **Recall** Why was Captain Smith given command of the *Titanic*?
2. **Recall** What kinds of accommodations did the ship have for first-class, second-class, and third-class passengers?
3. **Summarize** What safety precautions did Captain Smith and other crew members take before and after the collision?

## Text Analysis

4. **Understand Chronological Order** Refer to the selection and the timeline you made to determine about how much time passed between the ship's hitting the iceberg and the survivors' being rescued.
5. **Make Inferences** Use a graphic organizer like the one shown to note how Harold Bride and Captain Smith reacted to the iceberg warnings. Explain why they might have reacted the way they did.



6. **Identify Events** Events are often related by cause and effect—that is, one event brings about another. Referring to your timeline, note which events caused others to happen.
7. **Evaluate Narrative Nonfiction** Ballard could have written the facts about the sinking of the *Titanic* as a piece of informational text. Instead, he wrote a piece of narrative nonfiction; he added **foreshadowing** and **suspense**, and he included the words and experiences of people on the ship. In your opinion, is Ballard's telling an effective way of involving readers in the story? Explain your answer.

## Extension and Challenge

8. **Readers' Circle** The sinking of the *Titanic* has inspired many movies and books. In a group, discuss why this disaster lends itself to storytelling. Find details in the selection to support your views.

### What can we learn from DISASTERS?

What lessons can you learn from the events Ballard describes in this excerpt from *Exploring the Titanic*?

### COMMON CORE

**RI 1** Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support what the text says explicitly. **RI 3** Analyze interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals). **RI 5** Analyze the structure an author uses to organize a text.



# Vocabulary in Context

## ▲ VOCABULARY PRACTICE

Choose the letter of the word that has the same, or nearly the same, meaning as the boldfaced word.

1. an exciting **novelty**: (a) innovation, (b) discussion, (c) solution, (d) occasion
2. working **feverishly**: (a) steadily, (b) carelessly, (c) frantically, (d) sickly
3. have **moderate** success: (a) huge, (b) average, (c) surprising, (d) little
4. elegant **accommodations**: (a) clothes, (b) lodging, (c) manners, (d) jewelry
5. a disturbing **prophecy**: (a) prediction, (b) crash, (c) party, (d) curse
6. a **ghastly** accident: (a) traffic, (b) slight, (c) terrible, (d) funny
7. in **adjoining** rooms: (a) carpeted, (b) decorated, (c) large, (d) connected

## ACADEMIC VOCABULARY IN WRITING

• contemporary • element • identify • influence • structure

What was it like to watch a great **structure** like the *Titanic* sink into the dark ocean? Write a paragraph describing what you would see from one of the lifeboats, as shown in the illustration on page 117. Use at least one Academic Vocabulary word in your paragraph.

## VOCABULARY STRATEGY: ANALOGIES

An **analogy** shows a relationship between pairs of words. You can learn new words from analogies if you first figure out what kind of relationship exists between the words.

For example, *floor : house :: deck : ship* is a part-to-whole analogy. You can read this analogy aloud as “floor is to house as deck is to ship.” The analogy is telling you that a floor is part of a house in the same way that a deck is part of a ship.

To complete an analogy, identify the relationship between the words in the first pair. The words in the second pair should relate to each other in the same way.

**PRACTICE** Choose a word from the box to complete each analogy.

1. musician : band :: captain : \_\_\_\_\_
2. ounce : pound :: foot : \_\_\_\_\_
3. sleeve : nightgown :: collar : \_\_\_\_\_
4. branch : tree :: step : \_\_\_\_\_

staircase	yard
crew	overcoat



## COMMON CORE

**L.5b** Use the relationship between particular words (e.g., analogy) to better understand each of the words. **L.6** Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic words.

Interactive Vocabulary **THINK** central

Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com).  
KEYWORD: HML7-120

## Language

### ◆ GRAMMAR IN CONTEXT: Use Transitions for Coherence

Writing that has **coherence** flows clearly from one sentence to the next and from one paragraph to the next. To unify their ideas within and between paragraphs, writers use transitions. **Transitions** are words and phrases that show how the different parts of a written work are related. Different kinds of transitions show different relationships. Some transitions help clarify the **time order of events**, such as the words *then*, *later*, and *after*. Other words, such as *indeed*, *but*, and *also*, are used to **compare and contrast** or show similarities or differences between ideas. In your writing, be sure to choose transitions that connect your ideas.

*Example:* The captain was going to retire **after** the ship reached New York.

*Example:* She searched for lifejackets for the children. **But** there were none left.

**PRACTICE** Choose the correct transitions in the following sentences.

1. The wireless operator took the iceberg warning to the captain, who read it and (then, first) let the other officers read it.
2. He didn't seem very worried. (Also, Yet), he had a thoughtful look on his face.
3. An iceberg was spotted by the lookout (instead, before) he went off duty.
4. Most people did not hear the ship hitting the iceberg. (Instead, Always), the silence woke them up.

For more help with transitions, see page R32 in the **Grammar Handbook**.

### READING-WRITING CONNECTION



Increase your understanding of the excerpt from *Exploring the Titanic* by responding to this prompt. Then use the **revising tip** to improve your writing.

#### WRITING PROMPT

**Extended Constructed Response: Opinion**  
What is your opinion of the behavior of the *Titanic's* builder, captain, and crew before and during the **disaster**? Could more lives have been saved if they had responded differently? Write **two or three paragraphs**, giving your evaluation.

#### REVISING TIP

Review your response. Look for places where you can use transitions to connect or clarify your ideas.

### COMMON CORE

**L3** Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing.  
**W1** Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

Interactive Revision **THINK** central  
Go to [thinkcentral.com](http://thinkcentral.com).  
KEYWORD: HML7-121