

Teachers' Guide for Cobblestone

April 2012: Titanic

By Debbie Vilardi

Debbie Vilardi is an author of poetry, lesson plans and works of fiction. She is seeking an agent and publisher for her historical fiction chapter book, "Flood", set during Hurricane Katrina.

Goal: To learn about the sinking of the Titanic, including its heroes, causes and impact on today.

*Always have a parent or trusted adult help with web research.

Before Beginning: Discuss what you know about the *Titanic*. Have you read any books or seen any movies that incorporate this subject? Also, have you experienced life on board a cruise ship? Describe your experience.

"Collision!" by Marcia Amidon Lusted (Pages 2-6)

Vocabulary: bulkheads, stoker, rivets, davits, stern, bow, aft, port, hypothermia

Comprehension:

1. Why did Captain Smith leave the bridge?
2. What warnings had the *Titanic* received?
3. What procedures were in place for avoiding a collision?
4. Why didn't the water tight compartments save the ship?
5. Why did the crew have difficulty preparing the lifeboats?
6. Why did some passengers refuse to board the lifeboats?
7. What caused the passengers to panic?

Math Activities: According to information in the article, what day did the *Titanic* leave port?

Writing Activity: Read "Iceberg Ahead" by Andrew Matthews on page 6. Consider what makes icebergs so dangerous to ships. Write an article warning of the iceberg danger in the North Atlantic. Use the experience of the *Titanic's* encounter as an example within your article.

Research Topics: Captain Edward J. Smith, Charles Herbert Lightoller, William Murdoch, Frederick Barrett, Thomas Andrews, icebergs in the North Atlantic

"No Expense Spared" by Marcia Amidon Lusted (Pages 7-9)

Vocabulary: transatlantic

Comprehension:

1. How did people travel in the early nineteen hundreds?

2. Why did Mr. Ismay decide to build grander ships?
3. Why was the design considered unsinkable?
4. How many classes of cabin did the vessel have?
5. What happened to the *SS New York* as the *Titanic* launched?
6. How was a collision avoided?

Map skills: Trace the *Titanic's* locations from the launching of its hull in Belfast Harbor to its destruction. The coordinates of the sinking vessel are included in the telegraph on page 3.

Math Activity: How many passengers did the *Titanic* pick up after leaving England?

Research: White Star Line, ocean liners, J.P. Morgan, J. Bruce Ismay, British Cunard Line, Harland and Wolff, steamships

"A Floating Palace" by Lori A. Gordon (Pages 10-13)

Vocabulary: amenities, Turkish baths, steerage

Comprehension:

1. Describe some of the first class luxuries aboard the *Titanic*.
2. What amenities did the second-class passengers enjoy?
3. How did steerage class aboard the *Titanic* differ from that of other vessels?
4. Why were these passengers treated better aboard White Star ships than others ships?

Writing Activity: Pretend you are a passenger. Write a diary entry detailing a day aboard ship or a telegram to your friends back home. Consider which class you are. Information in "Kids on the Prowl" on page 13 will help if you write as a child.

Research: *The Shipbuilder*, immigration to the United States by ship, children aboard the *Titanic*

"Angel of the White Star: Violet Jessop" by Duane Damon (Pages 16-18)

Vocabulary: impending, companions (as used on page 16)

Comprehension:

1. How did Violet Jessop react to the news the *Titanic* was sinking?
2. What was Jessop's prior experience with shipboard danger?
3. What instructions did she receive?

4. What did she advise passengers to bring?
5. What did the deck officer throw to Jessop?
6. How did she track the sinking of the vessel?
7. What tragedy struck the *Britannic* while Jessop was aboard?
8. How did she survive?

Writing Activity: If you were Ms. Jessop, would you have returned to work aboard the *Olympic* or would you have sought another line of work? Explain your answer.

Research: Violet Jessop, *Olympic*, *Britannic*

"Titanic Tales" by Molly Troy (Pages 20-23)

Writing Activity: Select one of the stories and research the people involved. Write a biographical essay detailing how they came to board the ship and either reports of their deaths or how the accident affected their futures.

"*Carpathia* to the Rescue" by Barbara D. Krasner (Pages 26-29)

Comprehension:

1. How did the *Carpathia* receive the news about the *Titanic*?
2. How did the *Titanic's* survivors signal the *Carpathia* and how did the *Carpathia* respond?
3. How did Harold Lowe assist other survivors?
4. Why was the *Californian* investigated?
5. What vessel is now believed to have been seen by survivors and why didn't that vessel help?
6. Why didn't the *Californian* receive the distress calls?
7. Why didn't the crew of the *Californian* respond to rockets from the *Titanic*?

Math Activities:

1. How long did it take from the time the *Carpathia* received the first distress call until it reached the lifeboats?
2. The *Titanic* left port on April 10, 1912. The *Carpathia* arrived in New York City on April 18. How many total days did the passengers spend at sea?

Research: *Carpathia*, Harold Cottam, Captain Arthur Rostron, Harold G. Lowe, *Californian*, Captain Stanley Lord, Cyril Evans

"What If?" by Alice Andre-Clark (Pages 30-32)

Comprehension:

1. Why weren't all of the warning telegraphs received and their importance noted?
2. Why weren't there enough life boats for all of the passengers and crew?
3. What factors prevented crew members from filling each lifeboat to capacity?
4. What factors kept third class passengers from being aware of the danger and boarding lifeboats?
5. What was the protocol for firing rockets to signal distress and why didn't the crew follow it?

Discussion: There were three classes of passenger aboard the Titanic. What factors led to being part of a specific class? Does this reflect separations that existed in Europe at the time? How did the distinction of shipboard class affect the likelihood of survival? See the article on page 37, "Hollywood's *Titanic*", for further information.

Writing Activity: Select a "What If" from the article and write a newspaper account of the *Titanic's* maiden voyage as if the circumstance in your selection had occurred.

Research: current lifeboat regulations

"Lessons Learned" by Alice Andre-Clark (Page 33)

Vocabulary: hydrographic

Discussion: Discuss the safety improvements listed in the article and how they have helped passengers and shipping.

Research: William Alden Smith, International Ice Patrol

"Deep Sea Discovery" by Barbara D. Krasner (Pages 34-36)

Vocabulary: rusticles, conservation, corrosive, covenants

Comprehension:

1. What was the result of the first six weeks of searching for the wreck of the *Titanic*?
2. Why did the expedition search for debris instead of the full ship?
3. How did they know the debris they discovered came from the correct vessel?

4. How did robotic devices aid in the discovery?
5. What do you believe happened to the wood in the benches?
6. Describe the evolution of the *Titanic* from a scientific object to a tourist attraction.
7. Why is there concern for the *Titanic* today?
8. What is the role of RMS Titanic, Inc. in preservation?
9. What ruling has the U.S. Federal court made regarding the artifacts from the *Titanic*?

Writing Activity: Write your opinion on the fate of the ship and the artifacts from it. Should we raise only artifacts from the debris field and items within the vessel for study? Should we leave everything to the ocean? Should we raise the ship? Should items be put up for sale to collectors or to museums?

Research: oceanography, Robert Ballard, Jean-Louis Michel, IFREMER, *Argo*, *Alvin*, *Jason Jr.*, remote-operated vehicles, James Cameron, RMS Titanic, Inc.

Activity for the Entire Issue: Compare cruise ships today with the *Titanic*.