

6F: The Titanic Collection

In 1912, the most celebrated ship in the world—the *Titanic*—sank on its maiden voyage. The events surrounding this sinking have fascinated people for over 100 years and involve a rich cast of characters, human aspiration, class divisions, heroism, and cowardice. In this Collection, students explore documents and conduct independent research to better understand the events behind the fateful night in 1912 when the *Titanic* sank in the North Atlantic Ocean. Students build information literacy skills and learn how to construct an evidence-based argument. They are each assigned a passenger from the *Titanic*'s manifest and consider gender and class issues as they research and write narrative accounts from the point of view of their passenger. They also participate in a Socratic seminar in which they rely on their research to examine the complicated issues inherent in the *Titanic* story.

Throughout these activities, students learn to tell the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources; determine if a source is credible; and understand the ethical uses of information. As students reach the end of the unit, they synthesize all of the skills they've developed to tackle a culminating research assignment—part essay, part multimedia project.

Core texts your student will read:

- Introduction from *Sinking of the "Titanic" Most Appalling Ocean Horror* by Jay Henry Mowbray, Ph.D., LL.D
- A Letter from Mary Lines
- Excerpt: "Testimony of Olaus Abelseth" from United States Senate Inquiry
- Excerpt: Chapter 7—"There Is Your Beautiful Nightdress Gone" from *A Night to Remember* by Walter Lord
- Excerpts from public domain: Final Wireless Transmissions Aboard the RMS *Titanic*
- Excerpt: Chapter 6—"Women and Children First!" from *Sinking of the Titanic and Great Sea Disasters* by Logan Marshall
- Untitled Poem read at the *Titanic* Memorial Dedication in Belfast, Ireland—June 1920, anonymous
- "MAY BE WAIFS' MOTHER. Mme. Navratil of Nice Believes Babies Saved from Titanic Are Hers." from *The New York Times*
- Discovery of the *Titanic* by *Lapham's Quarterly* editors
- "Rusticles on Titanic Contain New Iron-Eating Bacteria, Study Says" from *Epoch Times* by Jack Phillips
- Excerpt: "The Iceberg Was Only Part of It" from *The New York Times* by William J. Broad
- Letter from the Dock, Wharf, Riverside and General Workers' Union of Great Britain and Ireland

NOTE: Over 1500 people lost their lives when the *Titanic* sank, including men, women, and children. These passengers came from all walks of life, including many immigrating to the United States. Students may want to discuss their reaction to this disaster, including connections they may make to the immigration journeys of people they know.

What my student will do/learn:

- Students conduct fun and “low-stakes” scavenger hunts to become familiar with the range of texts and images included in this unit.
- Students learn how to construct research questions and identify appropriate and relevant websites and Internet sources for answers.
- Students assume the identity of an actual *Titanic* passenger, then research their experience and write a letter from their point of view.
- Students establish expectations, prepare questions for, and engage in a Socratic seminar, discussing the circumstances and consequences of the *Titanic* disaster.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing a controlling idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to one of the following prompts:
 - a. Research Option 1: Argumentative Essay: Who’s to blame for the loss of life on the *Titanic*? Research a list of several parties involved in the tragedy. Some options include the *Titanic*’s Captain Smith, the telegraph officers, the *Titanic*’s lookouts, the captain of the *Carpathia*, and the White Star Line’s owners and shipbuilders. Research sources in the Collection and on the Internet to collect evidence and prove your case. Write an argumentative essay identifying the guilty party and include 2 pieces of evidence proving their guilt. Be sure to include a list of the resources you used in your research.
 - b. Research Option 2: Informative Essay: Who were the *Titanic* Orphans? Write an informative essay detailing the experience of the 2 young children known as the *Titanic* Orphans. As you conduct your research, be sure to look for relevant facts and concrete details about their lives before they boarded the doomed *Titanic*, how they managed to survive the sinking, and what happened to them after the disaster. Be sure to include a list of resources used while researching this project.
- Students also create a digital timeline to share their essay research with the class.

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student:

1. As you worked to evaluate sources, what did you notice about the credible websites? What advice might you give a friend looking for information on the Internet?
2. What qualities does an effective research question have?
3. What are some facts you learned about the circumstances and/or consequences of the *Titanic* disaster?
4. Can you share the letter you wrote as a *Titanic* passenger? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, “I like how you write that your supper included gruel, making your passenger’s third class experience clearer.”)