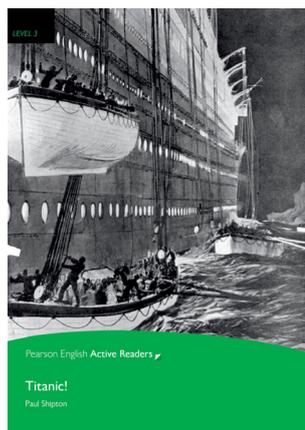


# Titanic!

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## Summary

The tragic story of the *Titanic* is told as it actually happened, and through the eyes of movie director James Cameron. The book begins with a reference to the movie *Titanic* and then goes on to describe the great ship. The history of the ship's construction is outlined, and life on board is described. Then we learn of how and when events unfolded on the night of the disaster and how the crew and passengers reacted. The stories of real people are told and the way the ship sank is graphically portrayed, all accompanied by many facts and figures. An illustrated story about one passenger, Jack Thayer, is included up until Chapter 5.

Worldwide reaction to the sinking—at first disbelief, turning to surprise, sadness, and anger—is described, and some very strange stories about the personal histories of some of the survivors are told. Toward the end of the book we learn about the discovery of the wreck of the *Titanic* in 1985. The final chapter discusses the movie *Titanic* and the interest it generated around the world in the history of that fatal night in 1912.

**Chapter 1:** James Cameron directed the movie *Titanic* and it starred Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet. At the time, in 1997, it was the world's most expensive movie to make, and went on to win eleven Oscars. The ship *Titanic* was the biggest ever built and was thought to be unsinkable. However, before the *Titanic* set sail in 1912, some people had bad feelings about the ship. On leaving Southampton, the *Titanic* nearly had an accident. There were three classes on the ship, and first class accommodation was the height of luxury. Some of the world's richest people were in first class, whereas the third class passengers were poor people looking for a better life in America.

**Chapter 2:** On April 14, 1912, the *Titanic* received numerous ice warnings from other ships. Then, at 11:40 p.m., the ship hit a huge iceberg. The ship's builder, Thomas Andrews, told Captain Smith that the ship was sinking and the first lifeboats were lowered. At first, many of the passengers didn't believe or understand the danger. A distress message was sent and a ship called the *Carpathia* began to travel toward the *Titanic*, but it was too late. Captain Smith saw the lights of another ship close to the *Titanic*, but then they disappeared. The musicians played their last song at 2:10 a.m.

**Chapter 3:** At about one o'clock the front part of the *Titanic* started to sink and now everyone realized the danger. A lot of people tried to get into the lifeboats and an officer stopped them by waving a gun. Some of the doors of the third class section were locked by the crew and maybe as a result, many third class passengers died. As the ship sank lower, the decks got steeper and then the ship started to break in two. At 2:20 a.m. the *Titanic* sank. People in the lifeboats could hear the screams of those in the water.

**Chapter 4:** The people in the lifeboats had a terrible choice. Should they go back and help those in the water and risk dying themselves? Only one lifeboat did go back. The *Carpathia* arrived at four o'clock and the crew began the difficult task of picking up the survivors. They counted 705 people. More than 1,500 passengers and crew of the *Titanic* had died. Some important people survived, including the president of the White Star Line shipping company, and some died, Captain Smith included. Seventy-five percent of third class passengers died.

**Chapter 5:** Many questions were asked when the extent of the tragedy became known. People wanted answers to questions such as why didn't Captain Smith do anything when he received the iceberg warnings and why weren't there enough lifeboats for all the passengers. Also, several strange stories emerged about some of the ship's passengers. In 1985, the wreck of the *Titanic* was discovered by Robert Ballard. It lay in very deep water and it was in two pieces. Some people had plans to bring the ship to the surface. This idea made some of the survivors very angry.

**Chapter 6:** The 1997 movie, *Titanic*, told the true story of the ship and the people who sailed on her. However, it also added a fictional love story between Rose, a young, rich first class passenger, and Jack, a poor artist. The movie

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begins with Rose, a survivor of the disaster and now an old woman, remembering what happened many years ago. Then it goes back in time to 1912 and tells her story and that of the *Titanic*. Today, a lot of people think the sinking of the ship represented the sinking of a dream. Before, there was hope and after, there was despair and a world war.

### About the movie

*Titanic* is a romantic drama. Rose DeWitt Bukater attempts to commit suicide by jumping off the back of the ship, but Jack Dawson convinces her not to do it. After this, they fall in love. Rose's fiancé, Cal, is told of the relationship and orders Rose not to see Jack again. At first, Rose agrees but later she changes her mind and resumes the relationship. The ship then hits an iceberg and starts to sink. Jack dies in the freezing water but Rose is rescued by a lifeboat. She arrives in New York and changes her name to Rose Dawson and begins a new life. At the end, Rose, now 100 years old, drops a diamond into the sea and then dreams of, or joins, Jack in the afterlife.

### Background and themes

Before the invention of the jet, ships were the only way to cross the Atlantic and other seas and oceans. The first steamship crossed the Atlantic in 1819. Before that there were only sailing ships. Bigger and faster ships were developed and by the beginning of the twentieth century, the ocean liner had established its place in the world. Now they were not only means of transportation but also great status symbols for the countries that constructed them.

The *Titanic* was designed and built by a Belfast company called Harland and Wolff. It had a double-bottomed hull that was divided into sixteen watertight compartments. Because four of these could be flooded without causing the ship to sink, it was considered unsinkable.

Many of those who died in the *Titanic* disaster came from prominent American, British, and European families. The glamour associated with the ship and its important passengers ensured that the tragedy became of great public interest. Also, as a result of the disaster, the first International Convention for Safety of Life at Sea was called in London in 1913. The convention set rules requiring that every ship have lifeboat space for every passenger on board.

**Technology versus nature:** The absolute faith in science and technology prior to the *Titanic* disaster, reflected in the fact they called the ship unsinkable and failed to equip it with sufficient lifeboats, could be regarded as an overconfident, almost boastful, challenge to nature. The fact that nature itself, in the form of a huge iceberg, was responsible for the sinking of the "unsinkable" must surely have caused a general feeling of disillusionment and defeat, quite apart from the understandable feelings of sadness and shock.

**Commercial pressure:** Many people have speculated as to whether the disaster could have been averted. Questions have been asked as to why Captain Smith didn't pay attention to the ice warnings from the other ships and slow or even stop the *Titanic*. Could commercial pressure have been behind the need to reach New York in record time, and therefore at top speed?

**The class system:** Looking back to the early 1900s, it is sometimes difficult to appreciate how rigid the class structure really was. The different classes did not mix on the *Titanic*, just as they wouldn't have done on dry land. The survival statistics reveal that a far higher percentage of third class passengers died than those in first class. This could be taken as an indication that a passenger's chances of survival were themselves based on class.

## Discussion activities

### Chapter 1

#### Before reading

1 **Group work:** Put students into small groups and ask them to talk about the disasters involving forms of transport they know about. If possible, allow them to use the Internet to do some research.

*When did it happen? Why did it happen? How many people died? What were the consequences? Do you think it was possible to stop this disaster from happening?*

Suggested examples: the *Hindenburg* Zeppelin disaster, the Twin Towers in New York, the *Concorde* crash in Paris, the sinking of the *Lusitania* by a submarine.

**While reading** (at the end of p. 3)

2 **Discuss:** Find out which students have seen the movie *Titanic* and ask them to tell the other students about it.

*Did you enjoy the movie? What did you think about the love story? Did you believe it? Did you like the way the director used computers to make some parts of the movie? What was your favorite part in the movie? Was there anything you didn't like about it? Were the actors good?*

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## After reading

- 3 Group work:** Divide the class into groups of three. Tell each group to imagine the life of a passenger from either first class, second class or third class. *Who are you? What do you do in your normal life? Why are you on the ship? What is your room on the ship like? What do you do on a normal day on the ship? What food do you eat? What are you going to do when you get to America?*

## Chapter 2

### Before reading

- 4 Pair work and research:** The passengers on the *Titanic* had a last meal before the ship sank. Ask students to discuss in pairs what they would choose as the menu for a last meal. Get feedback from the class. Now tell the students to do some research on the Internet to find out what was on the first class menu the night of April 14, 1912.

### After reading

- 5 Write:** Put the students into pairs. Tell them to imagine they were the Captain on the *Titanic* and they have to write a diary based on the times in Chapter 2. The diary must say what is happening and also the Captain's feelings at the time.

## Chapter 3

### Before reading

- 6 Discuss:** Tell the students they are on a ship and it is sinking. On the board write a list of items a passenger might possess (e.g. clothes, photos, camera, a portable music player, books, money, jewelry, diary, mobile phone, etc.). Elicit other items from the students. In groups, students have to choose three items before getting on a lifeboat, giving reasons why. They might have to be on the lifeboat for up to a week. Get feedback from the whole class.

### After reading

- 7 Pair work:** Put the students in pairs and tell them they are musicians, or disc jockeys, on a sinking ship and they have to choose the last song they would play. Students should give reasons for the song they choose. It could be their favorite song, a song that would calm the passengers, a funny song, or a song with an appropriate title. All the class then votes for the best song.

## Chapter 4

### After reading

- 8 Role play:** Organize the students in groups of four and tell them they are on the *Titanic* and have to fight

for a place in a lifeboat. Give each student a role card.  
*Student A: You are a 70-year-old doctor. You helped many people with serious illnesses.*  
*Student B: You are a 15-year-old student. You are a very good piano player and have written some very good music.*  
*Student C: You are a 28-year-old woman who doesn't work. You have two young children who are waiting for you in America.*  
*Student D: You are a 50-year-old woman who is an important person in her country's government.*  
 Allow students time to elaborate their character and think of reasons why they should have a place in the lifeboat. Students then present their arguments to the rest of the group and each student votes for one person (not themselves) to get in the lifeboat.

## Chapter 5

**While reading** (the questions at the bottom of p. 41)

- 9 Pair work:** Put the students into pairs and ask them to think of possible answers to the questions and to think of further questions that might have been asked.

### After reading

- 10 Write:** Put the students into small groups. Tell them to create an illustrated newspaper article about the sinking of the *Titanic*. The drawings can be done by the students. Include details of the sinking, interviews with survivors, interviews with the friends and relatives of the survivors, and your newspaper's reaction to the sinking.

## Chapter 6

### Before reading

- 11 Research:** Divide the class in two. Using the Internet, tell one group to find good reviews of the movie and the other group to find bad reviews. Students compare the reviews they have found in small groups and summarize the points that are being made.

### After reading

- 12 Pair work:** Put the students into pairs and tell them to imagine they are screenwriters and they have to write a scene to take place in a new *Titanic* movie. Tell the students the movie can be set in the present day or in 1912. It could be a love scene, it could involve some very bad people or it could show some people doing very brave things.