

## The Titanic



The Titanic must be one of the most famous ships ever built. She set off on her maiden voyage in April 1912, crossing from Southampton in England to New York City in America. In between, she would make stops at France and Ireland. The Titanic was such a huge ship that she weighed more than 46 000 tons and was about 270 meters long.

Thought to be virtually unsinkable, she was built such that any flooded compartment could be sealed off quickly and easily, preventing the spread of water through the ship. Passengers would then have ample time to be rescued since the builders of the ship believed that in the worst scenario, the Titanic would probably take two to three days to be completely submerged.

That fateful night, the temperature was close to zero degree Celsius. Two lookouts stationed at a high point on the ship were freezing but they had to be alert to watch for any signs of danger that the giant ship might face. In that temperature, icebergs-huge mountains of ice floating in the sea -- were a constant threat. It was already close to midnight, so the darkness that surrounded them greatly impeded their field of vision. Even if they perceived

any dangerous icebergs, it might be too late to avert a disaster. The moonless sky only worsened the situation.

Then the worst happened. One of the lookouts spotted a huge iceberg right in the path of the Titanic. He immediately rang the alarm. The captain of the ship reacted just as promptly and ordered the Titanic to change her direction. For a few moments, it seemed as if a disaster had been avoided as the Titanic glided past the iceberg. Then suddenly, the ship hit the ice. As a result of the huge size of the ship, the passengers did not feel much of the impact, but the damage was done. The first six compartments of the ship were flooded and immediately sealed off. However, the six compartments were located at the front of the ship. The additional weight caused it to tilt forward. Consequently, sea water entered the ship again. The front of the ship became so heavy that the propellers, located at the end of the ship, were lifted out of the water.

The captain realized that all the passengers would have to be evacuated. Yet, all the lifeboats combined could only save less than half the passengers on the ship.

At 2.20 a.m., the Titanic vanished below the sea. Along with her went more than 1500 people, including the captain, the designer of the ship and many famous people. In just about three hours, the Titanic ironically went from being an unsinkable ship to a ship that lay at the bottom of the ocean.

***Answer the following questions using complete sentences.***

1. Which country was the Titanic headed for ?
2. Why was the Titanic virtually unsinkable ?
3. According to the passage, what were the ship builders confident of in case of Titanic was about to sink ?
4. Which word in paragraph 3 has the same meaning as 'hindered' ?
5. What was the lookouts' job ?
6. Explain clearly how icebergs can be a threat to any ship.
7. In what way had the moonless sky 'worsened the situation' (paragraph 3) for the lookouts ?
8. Why did it seem 'as if a disaster had been avoided' (paragraph 4) ?
9. Explain clearly what the 'additional weight' (paragraph 4) refers to.
10. From the last paragraph, explain clearly the irony of the Titanic being hailed as unsinkable.