

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

DISCUSSION GUIDE #1

Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion.

CHAPTER 1:

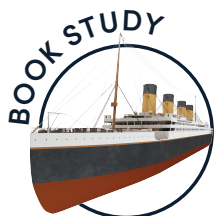
"Another Belfast Trip"

CHAPTER 2:

"There's Talk of an Iceberg, Ma'am"

COMPREHENSION

- Why does the *Titanic* strike the iceberg even though the iceberg has been spotted?
Despite First Officer Murdoch's efforts to reverse the engines and turn the ship to completely avoid the iceberg, it's too late. The ship is too close to the iceberg and collides with it instead.
- Describe what some passengers experience as the iceberg passes.
A passenger describes hearing a scraping noise and jumping out of bed. Out of the portal, he sees a wall of ice go by. Another passenger's porthole is open, and chunks of ice actually fall into his cabin as the ship makes contact with the iceberg.
- How do the first- and second-class passengers react to the news that the ship has collided with an iceberg? What factors contribute to their reactions?
Many of the passengers dismiss the danger, deeming it "nothing serious." This attitude comes, in part, from certain crew members reassuring the passengers that there will only be a delay of a few hours before they'll be on their way again.
- What does Third Officer Groves see from the bridge of the *Californian*? What assumption does he make?
Third Officer Groves notices another ship's lights coming from the east on the starboard side. From the great number of deck lights visible to him, Grove concludes that the ship is a passenger liner. On his own captain's order, he's planning to contact the ship via Morse lamp. When the large ship suddenly appears to put out all its lights, Groves assumes it's intentional—many passenger ships turn out the lights to get the passengers to retire for the night. He doesn't realize that the ship has turned quite suddenly, blocking the lights from his view.
- Who is Thomas Andrews, and how does he know the sinking is inevitable?
Thomas Andrews is the ship's builder, and he's on the maiden voyage of the *Titanic* to resolve any small problems that might arise with the ship itself. He's the first person to determine that the ship is going to sink. He runs the mathematical calculations regarding the flooding of the bulkheads and relays this information to Captain Smith. Andrews knows that the *Titanic* can float with four or fewer compartments flooded with water, but he recognizes that there's no way the ship can still float with five compartments flooded.
- How do some of the passengers on the lower decks react when they sense something is wrong?
Since the third-class passengers have cabins lower in the ship, they feel the impact of the iceberg more strongly than the other passengers. Some of the passengers immediately begin carrying trunks and making their way up to a higher deck. Mrs. Celiney Yasbeck and her husband venture downstairs to the boiler rooms and peek inside, seeing the engineers struggling to make repairs. The couple runs back to their room to get dressed. Other steerage passengers actually play soccer with some of the loose ice that had fallen onto one of the ship's decks.



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

DISCUSSION GUIDE #1

Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion.

CHAPTER 1:

"Another Belfast Trip"

CHAPTER 2:

"There's Talk of an Iceberg, Ma'am"

COMPREHENSION (Continued)

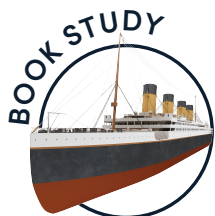
- Why does Captain Smith return to the wireless shack?
 Captain Smith has been told by the ship's builder, Thomas Andrews, that the *Titanic* will sink and that there's no way out. The captain returns to the wireless shack because the situation has worsened and a distress call for assistance needs to be sent immediately.
- What information does Operator Phillips send?
 Operator Phillips sends the *Titanic*'s position, a distress signal, and the ship's call letters, MGY.

ANALYSIS

- Examine the confusion among crew members after the noise from the impact. What do various crew members think has happened, and why is there so much confusion?
 Steward James Johnson believes the noise and shudder are caused by a propeller blade dropping. A rumor spreads among other crew members that the ship has run aground just off of Newfoundland. Even after someone says, "Blimey, we've struck an iceberg," many of the crew still think the ship has run aground. Because there's no clear message from the captain, crew members are left to speculate.
- Why does Officer Evans of the *Californian* feel snubbed by the radio operators of the *Titanic*? How does this influence his behavior, and what's the larger impact of his behavior?
 When Officer Evans tries to warn the *Titanic* of the ice danger, he feels "roughly handled" when the *Titanic*'s first wireless operator snaps at him. Normally, Officer Evans welcomes visits from Third Officer Groves on board the *Californian*, but on the night the *Titanic* sinks, Evans is not in the mood to host Groves. He turns off his wireless at 11:30 p.m. Because the *Californian* was only ten miles away, this small action led to disastrous consequences. Had the *Californian*'s wireless system remained on, the distress call from the *Titanic* would have been heard.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

- Some passengers don't voice their concerns when they feel the ship slanting. Consider a time when you wish you had spoken up about something but decided not to. What was the situation, and what was the impact of your decision to remain quiet at the time?
 Student answers will vary.



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

DISCUSSION GUIDE #1

Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion.

CHAPTER 3:

"God Himself Could Not Sink This Ship"

CHAPTER 4:

"You Go and I'll Stay a While"

COMPREHENSION

- What job are the stewards given, and what makes this job challenging?

The stewards are tasked with going from cabin to cabin in order to notify the passengers to put on life jackets and get up on deck. The first-class stewards have to coax the passengers into life jackets, get them dressed, or even tie their shoes. The stewards are forced to listen to the first-class passengers' complaints about being roused at this late hour.
- Once the passengers have their life jackets on, they're divided into groups on the decks. Why?

Despite the fact that there's an emergency, the class system is still in place. The different social classes only mingle among themselves.
- How many passengers are aboard the *Titanic*, and how many can fit in the lifeboats? Why is there a discrepancy?

There are 2,207 passengers on board, and the lifeboats can only hold 1,178 people. This discrepancy exists because it is widely believed that the *Titanic* is unsinkable, so this detail was overlooked.
- Which passengers are the first ones ordered to board the lifeboats? Why are many of the passengers hesitant to board the lifeboats?

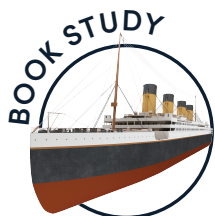
First-class women and children are boarded first, followed by women and children from other classes. Many of the passengers think the emergency is only temporary and they don't want to wait in the dark lifeboat for hours. Some still believe the *Titanic* will not sink—Jacob Astor says, "We are safer here than on that little boat."
- Why is the band playing music while passengers board lifeboats?

The band is directed to play "cheerful" music, implying that the goal is to provide a distraction—and even a source of hope—that will keep the passengers calm and prevent potential panic, violence, and chaos.
- What familiar acronym replaces CQD? What's the historic significance of the *Titanic*'s use of this acronym?

SOS replaces CQD as the international call of distress. At 12:45 a.m., the *Titanic* sends the first SOS call in history.
- When the wireless messages do not result in immediate help, what is the next order the captain gives?

Captain Smith orders Quartermaster Rowe to fire rockets into the sky. He says, "Fire one, and fire one every five or six minutes."
- What does Second Officer Lightoller use as a gauge to know how fast the water is rising on the ship?

Second Officer Lightoller uses the steep, narrow emergency staircase that runs from the Boat Deck all the way down to E Deck as a gauge. As the water climbs, Lightoller monitors which step the water has reached. He can see clearly because the lights on the steps shine through the water.



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

DISCUSSION GUIDE #1

Encourage critical thinking and support your students' literacy development by asking questions during reading. Here are some questions you can ask your readers to engage them in a discussion.

CHAPTER 3:

"God Himself Could Not Sink This Ship"

CHAPTER 4:

"You Go and I'll Stay a While"

COMPREHENSION (Continued)

- What is the capacity of lifeboat No. 1, and how many people are on the lifeboat when it's lowered?
Only 12 people board lifeboat No. 1 before it's launched, even though it was designed to hold 40 people.
- What struggle does the third-class steward face when trying to get steerage passengers into life jackets, and why?
The steward is trying to reassure the steerage passengers that there is no danger, but there's a language barrier since many of them do not speak English. Trying to get the passengers into life jackets is challenging and slow going because many of them do not understand why they would need to put on life jackets in the first place.

ANALYSIS

- Why does the boatswain tell the truth about the danger to the crew members but keep that truth hidden from the passengers?
The boatswain rallies the crew members and is brutally honest with them. He says they "haven't half an hour to live." He also tells them to keep this news to themselves, probably so the passengers do not become alarmed.
- When it comes to the lifeboats, many of the steerage passengers have a different experience than the first-class passengers. What are some of the struggles that the steerage passengers face, and why?
Student answers will vary but may mention that many of the walkways and passages are still sealed off from third-class passengers, so it's necessary for crew members to escort the steerage passengers—women and children only—in small groups up to the Boat Deck. Because a lot of the barriers to restrict third-class passengers are still intact, many steerage passengers who sense danger aim for the upper decks and lifeboats on their own. Some break locks to allow access, some slip under ropes, and some use emergency ladders meant for crews.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

- Consider the items people take with them from their cabins. If you were faced with an emergency evacuation, what items would you take with you?
Student answers will vary.