

# A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

## DISCUSSION GUIDE #2

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 5:

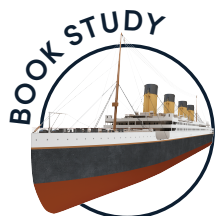
"I Believe She's Gone, Hardy"

### CHAPTER 6:

"That's the Way of It at This Kind of Time"

## COMPREHENSION

- Which prominent businessman tries to get on lifeboat No. 4 to accompany his wife, and what happens?  
John Jacob Astor tries to join his wife on lifeboat No. 4. He's told by Second Officer Lightoller that no men are allowed to board a lifeboat until all the women are on.
- How many people remain on board the *Titanic* when there's only one regular lifeboat left to deploy? How many seats are available on the boat?  
There are 1,600 people still on the *Titanic*, and there are only 47 seats available on this final regular lifeboat.
- What does the crew do to ensure only women board the last remaining collapsible lifeboat?  
Second Officer Lightoller orders the crew to lock arms in a wide circle around Collapsible Boat D.
- What does Captain Smith tell the crew at 2:05 a.m.?  
Captain Smith tells his crew that they have done their duty, and he gives them permission to abandon their posts. He also tells them, "It's every man for himself."
- Describe the overall feeling aboard the *Titanic* once the last regular lifeboat departs.  
Student answers will vary but may mention that there's a sense of calm. The text says that all the excitement and confusion are over once the last lifeboat departs. Jack Thayer stands on the deck, wistfully thinking about his life, his loved ones, and the future he'll never get to see. Colonel Gracie says to himself, "Good-bye to all at home." Some passengers stand quietly, lost in thought, while some pace the deck. The band still plays, and within the ship itself, a heavy, eerie silence hangs throughout the deserted rooms.
- What happens to Collapsible Boat B?  
It lands upside down in the water.
- Ten miles away, aboard the *Californian*, Second Officer Stone and Apprentice Gibson watch the *Titanic*. To them, the *Titanic*'s lights seem to look low. What incorrect assumption do they make?  
Stone and Gibson think that the *Titanic* is sailing away because the lights look low. In reality, the lights are fading because the ship is sinking.



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## ANALYSIS

- Describe the various behaviors Mr. Bruce Ismay exhibits aboard the *Titanic*. How does his shifting relationship with the crew and others on the ship connect to the tragedy at large?

Ismay is motivated by his own needs. When he wants to feel powerful or important, he acts with authority, giving orders like he does when the ship is at Queenstown. For example, he tells the chief engineer what speed he expects for various parts of the voyage. It's clearly not his job, but that of the captain. Sometimes he acts as if he's part of the crew, shouting orders regarding the lowering of the lifeboats. However, during many parts of the voyage, Ismay acts only as a first-class passenger, enjoying the benefits and prestige of a lavish lifestyle. When his fear takes over, Ismay jumps aboard lifeboat C, disregarding the "women and children first" policy and acting as just another passenger. Based on his shifting roles, it's reasonable to infer that the crew does not respect him.

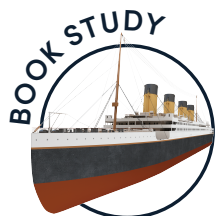
- The author lists all the items that go down with the ship as the bow plunges into the ocean, rendering the ship vertical. Why do you think he does this?

The author lists the wide variety of items—everything from grand pianos to wicker chairs to a small mantel clock—not only to paint a picture of a tumultuous and chaotic scene but also to illustrate the small and large items that are lost to the sea. Having the list of items, separated by ellipses, makes a stronger impression on the reader.

## PERSONAL CONNECTION

- In the rush to get women and children into lifeboats, some passengers act selflessly while others act selfishly. Who in your life is selfless, and how have they demonstrated that quality?

Student answers will vary.



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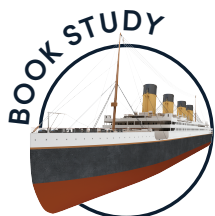
"There Is Your Beautiful Nightdress Gone"

### CHAPTER 8:

"It Reminds Me of a Bloomin' Picnic"

## COMPREHENSION

- In response to the *Titanic* disaster, what new procedures do ships follow when ice is involved?  
Ship captains must take ice warnings very seriously. They either slow down or avoid the ice completely.
- What international rules regarding safety and disaster preparedness are adopted after the sinking of the *Titanic*?  
The International Ice Patrol is established, and Coast Guard cutters ferry icebergs away from shipping lanes. The winter shipping lane is moved further south for extra protection. Part-time wireless is no longer allowed. Instead, every passenger ship has a 24-hour radio watch. Ships must have enough lifeboats for everyone on board, and the loading of lifeboats by class distinction is abandoned.
- What assumption does Colonel Gracie make, and what is his reaction when he realizes his error?  
Colonel Gracie assumes that all the women have exited the *Titanic*, and he's horrified to see the women and children streaming up from steerage.
- What difficulties do the swimmers face?  
The swimmers face the frigid water temperature—at 28°F, it's below freezing. They also experience difficulty swimming to and climbing aboard the lifeboats that still have room.
- What does Fifth Officer Lowe do with the lifeboats, and why?  
Officer Lowe ties together five of the boats because he wants to row back and rescue any people swimming in the water. He knows it makes sense to only use one boat for rescue duty. First, he reorganizes the passengers on the boats, dividing them among four boats. Then, Officer Lowe takes volunteers to help as oarsmen on Boat No. 14 for the rescue mission.
- What are some examples of the kind gestures that took place on board the lifeboats?  
Student answers will vary but might mention that Lawrence Beesley tries to tuck a blanket under the toes of a crying baby, and Edith Russell entertains another baby with a toy pig. Hugh Woolner shares cookies with four-year-old Louis Navatril. Mrs. Astor lends a steerage woman a shawl to comfort her cold daughter, Third Officer Pittman wraps a sail around Mrs. Crosby to stop her shivering, Mrs. Brown wraps a sable coat around a stoker's freezing legs, and a sailor gives his stockings to Mrs. Dodge.
- What is unique about Collapsible Boat B, and how does Officer Lightoller command the boat so the passengers don't drown?  
Collapsible Boat B is still upside down in the water. Officer Lightoller takes command of the boat and knows it's necessary to keep the boat balanced. He orders the 30 men to stand up and form a double column. As the boat moves with the ocean, he shouts orders such as, "Lean to the right," "Lean to the left," or "Stand upright." It is Lightoller's hope that these movements will counteract the swell of the sea, and it works.



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## ANALYSIS

- How were third-class passengers discriminated against in the midst of the *Titanic's* sinking? What evidence from earlier in the text suggests that the third-class passengers would suffer in greater numbers than other passenger classes as the tragedy unfolds?

Due to the class system on the *Titanic*, the third-class passengers' cabins are located on the ship's lower decks and thus farther from the Boat Deck, lifeboats, and information. Compared to other classes on the ship, so few third-class passengers are saved. A major reason for this is that access to the Boat Deck is barred, and in general, most of the steerage passengers are neglected, ignored, or forgotten, left to figure things out for themselves during the disaster. As a result, only 23 out of 76 third-class children are saved—more first-class men are actually saved than third-class children.

- How does the author build the claim that the sinking of the *Titanic* changes how society thinks about wealth?

At the turn of the twentieth century, the popular people in society were not movie stars or sports figures, as they are today. They were wealthy people. The papers highlighted the social lives of wealthy families and individuals, reinforcing class and status as the defining characteristics of society. But after the sinking of the *Titanic*, people began questioning the value of wealth. Ministers preached that the sinking was a "heaven-sent lesson to awaken people from their complacency, to punish them for top-heavy faith in material progress." The author writes: "If wealth meant so little on this cold April night, did it mean so much the rest of the year?" He also notes that the sinking of the *Titanic* "marks the end of the old days, and the beginning of a new, uneasy era."

## PERSONAL CONNECTION

- In response to the *Titanic's* sinking, new policies are established to take precautions against another unthinkable disaster, and people reflect on society's focus on wealth as an indication of worth. Think about a time when you or someone you know could have been more proactive about something. How would things have been different?

Student answers will vary.