

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

DISCUSSION GUIDE #3

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 9:

"We're Going North Like Hell"

CHAPTER 10:

"Go Away—We Have Just Seen Our Husbands Drown"

COMPREHENSION

- What do the *Carpathia's* passengers notice that causes them to suspect something is wrong?

Passengers notice that all the lights are turned on all over the ship, and they smell coffee brewing, despite the time being 1:00 a.m. They realize that the ship is speeding, the cabins are cold, and the faucets produce only cold water. Passengers can hear running feet, engines, and the sounds of muffled commands. They also see the crew carrying blankets and mattresses. The strangest observation is the bitter cold—the ship's original destination is the sunny Mediterranean.
- When the CQD arrives from the *Titanic*, how far away is the *Carpathia*?

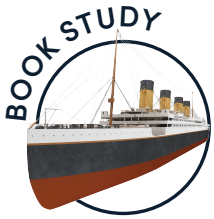
The *Carpathia* is 58 miles away from the *Titanic*.
- Why does Captain Rostron tell his crew to keep quiet about the change in plans?

The captain wants to keep the news from the passengers as long as possible so the crew members are able to do their job while the passengers sleep. Captain Rostron believes that the crew's job will be difficult enough without the *Carpathia's* passengers constantly inquiring about what is happening.
- The *Carpathia* is originally headed toward the warm waters of the Mediterranean. How is the ship able to change course and travel north so quickly to the disaster site of the *Titanic*?

Captain Rostron acts quickly. He orders his crew to cut off all heat and hot water to other parts of the ship, directing his chief engineer to add "every ounce of steam into the boilers." In the engine room, coal is poured, and the entire crew chips in. The *Carpathia* achieves a speed of 17 knots—the crew is surprised that the *Carpathia* can travel that quickly. The author notes that "no one dreamed the *Carpathia* could drive so hard."
- During his speech to the *Carpathia's* crew, what does Chief Steward Hughes ask of each of his men?

Chief Steward Hughes asks each of his men to "do his full duty like a true Englishman."
- Why is it difficult for the *Carpathia* passengers to see the *Titanic* lifeboats in the search area?

In the light of dawn, the scattered lifeboats are hard to distinguish among the multitude of small icebergs in the area.



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COMPREHENSION

- How do the passengers on Collapsible Boat B initially try to get the attention of the *Carthia*? What do they do when that doesn't work?

The passengers shout, "Ship ahoy!" When they realize they're too far away from the other boats to be heard, Officer Lightoller uses his officer's whistle and blows "a shrill blast."

- How do the newspapers handle the news? Why are there no updates from the *Carthia* to the news outlets?

At first, there's little information, except that the *Titanic* had struck an iceberg and vessels rushed to her side. Various newspapers report this initial news, but after that, newspapers make things up to fill the silence resulting from no real updates. *The Evening Sun* runs a headline indicating that all are saved from the *Titanic's* collision. Some of these falsehoods are bolstered by White Star Line's offices insisting that the *Titanic* is still unsinkable. There are no updates from the *Carthia* because Captain Rostron restricts the wireless for official traffic and private messages from the survivors only.

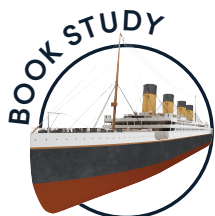
- What are some ways the *Carthia* passengers try to help the survivors once they are on board?

Some passengers on the *Carthia* pitch in by gathering extra toothbrushes, lending clothes, bringing cups of coffee, sewing children's smocks out of steamer blankets brought from the lifeboats, and even lending bunks for sleep.

ANALYSIS

- When the survivors are aboard the *Carthia*, "hardly a word was spoken." Why is silence the dominant reaction? Why do you think people often remain silent when they experience or witness great tragedy?

The theories vary. Reverend P.M.A. Hoques thinks people are too "horror-stricken" to speak. Captain Rostron believes that everyone is far too busy. Lawrence Beesley, one of the second-class survivors, feels "they were neither too stunned nor too busy—they were simply in the presence of something too big to grasp." People react in a multitude of ways because great tragedies are so out of the ordinary and difficult to anticipate or comprehend. The skills necessary to understand a disaster such as this are not something most people use in daily life. Oftentimes, when a person doesn't know how to react to an overwhelming situation, they will go quiet as a coping mechanism.



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ANALYSIS

- Consider Captain Rostron's response to the *Titanic's* distress call, as well as his decision to keep the *Titanic* survivors on the *Carpathia* rather than transfer them to the *Olympia*. What motivates him in each of these moments, and was he effective? How would you evaluate his leadership abilities?

Roston responds so swiftly to the distress call because he wants to do a thorough and stellar job—especially since this is his first experience with this type of serious issue. It's only his second year as a Cunard captain and his third month on the *Carpathia*. He doesn't want to overlook anything. When the *Olympia* suggests the transfer, Captain Rostron thinks it's a terrible idea; he feels that putting the survivors through another transfer at sea would be detrimental. Since the *Olympia* is *Titanic's* sister ship—and thereby looks exactly the same—Rostron recognizes and fears that the sight alone would be like seeing "a hideous ghost." Although he believes his decision to be the correct one, he does check in with Bruce Ismay, White Star President, who "shuddered at the thought" of being transferred again at sea. Captain Rostron wants to protect the survivors of the *Titanic* from further distress and psychological torment.

Student answers about Captain Rostron's leadership will vary but might note that Captain Rostron is an effective leader because he's able to reach the disaster site quickly and because he motivates his crew to aid and receive the survivors. Furthermore, Captain Rostron demonstrates his empathy and thoughtfulness as he considers the various physical and psychological support the survivors will need once aboard the *Carpathia*. His decision shows that, as a leader, he values the comfort and rapid transfer of the survivors more than he values decorum and class considerations.

PERSONAL CONNECTION

- Throughout the rescue efforts, leaders make decisions, act swiftly, and remain in control. Describe a time when you, or someone you know, emerged as a leader. What was the impact?

Student answers will vary.