

READING COMPREHENSION:

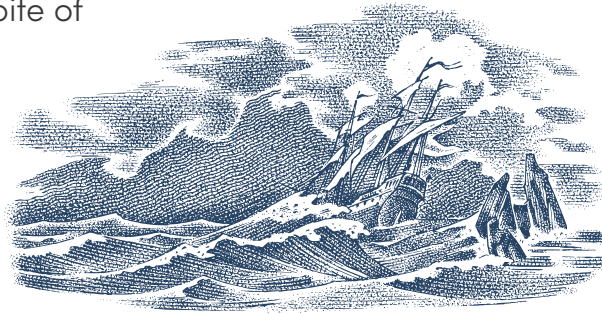
EXCERPT
FROM

THE WRECK OF THE GOLDEN MARY



In the mid-nineteenth century, a ship called the *Golden Mary* is headed from England to California in search of gold. William George Ravender, a distinguished mariner who hails from Penrith, is the ship's captain and the story's narrator.

- 1 We had tastes of bad weather and headwinds, of course; but on the whole, we had as fine a run as any reasonable man could expect for sixty days. I then began to enter two remarks in the ship's log and in my journal: first, that there was an unusual and amazing quantity of ice; second, that the nights were most wonderfully dark, in spite of the ice.
- 2 For five and a half days, it seemed quite useless and hopeless to alter the ship's course so as to stand out of the way of this ice. However, on the sixth day, my chief mate John Steadiman declared that the sea was clear ahead. In open water, the *Golden Mary* sailed forward on a strong breeze, and we went before the wind merrily all night.
- 3 I had thought it impossible that it could be darker than it had been until the sun, moon, and stars should fall out of the heavens and time should be destroyed. The darkness was so profound that looking into it was painful and oppressive—like looking, without a ray of light, into a dense black bandage put as close before the eyes as it could be without touching them. I doubled the lookout, and John and I stood in the bow side by side, never leaving it all night. We were not so much looking out as listening, both with our eyes and ears.
- 4 The next day, I found that the mercury in the barometer, which had risen steadily since we cleared the ice, remained steady. We were sixty-seven days out that day. The ship did her duty admirably, all on board were well, and all hands were as smart, efficient, and contented as it was possible to be.
- 5 When the night came on again as dark as before, it was the eighth night I had been on deck. I had not taken more than a very little sleep in the daytime, my station being always near or at the helm while we were among the ice. At midnight, John Steadiman, who was alert and fresh, said to me, "Captain Ravender, I entreat of you to go below. I am sure you can hardly stand, and your voice is getting weak, sir. Go below, and take a little rest. I'll call you if a block chafes."
- 6 I agreed to do so on the understanding that if I failed to come up of my own accord within three hours, I was to be punctually called. But before I departed, I called John to the rail and bade him listen carefully, for I thought that the waves, as the *Golden Mary* parted them and shook them off, had a hollow sound in them, something that I fancied was a rather unusual reverberation. John listened with the greatest attention. Turning to me, he then said, "Captain Ravender, you have been without rest too long."

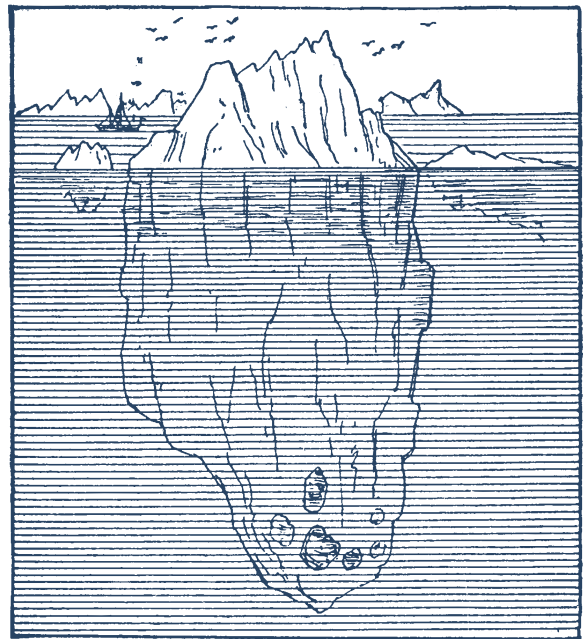


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Continue reading.

- 7 When I left John Steadiman in charge, the ship was still going at a great rate through the water. Though she was making great way, she was under shortened sail and had no more than she could easily carry. All was snug, and nothing complained. There was a pretty sea running, but not a very high sea neither, nor at all a confused one.
- 8 I turned in, as we seamen say, all standing, meaning I did not pull my clothes off—no, not even so much as my coat, though I did remove my shoes, for my feet were badly swelled. I thought, as I looked at the light in my cabin, that I was so tired of and troubled by darkness that I could've gone to sleep in the midst of a million lights. That was my last thought before I went off, except the prevailing thought that I should not be able to get to sleep at all.
- 9 I dreamed that I was back at Penrith again, and was trying to get round the church, which had altered its shape very much since I last saw it, cloven all down the middle of the steeple in a most singular manner. Why I wanted to get around the church I don't know, but I was as anxious to do it as if my life depended on it. Indeed, I believe it did in the dream. For all that, I could not get around the church. I was trying when I came against it with a violent shock and was flung out of my cot against the ship's side. Shrieks and a terrific outcry struck me far harder than the bruising timbers of the ship. Amidst sounds of grinding and crashing and a heavy
- rushing and breaking of water—sounds I understood too well—I made my way on deck. It was not an easy thing, for the ship heeled over frightfully and was beating in a furious manner.
- 10 I could not see the men as I went forward, but I could hear that they were hauling in sail in disorder. I had my trumpet in my hand, and after directing and encouraging them until it was done, my men burned blue-lights, and the ship and all on board seemed to be enclosed in a mist of light under a great black dome.
- 11 The light shone up so high that I could see the huge iceberg upon which we had struck, cloven at the top and down the middle, exactly like Penrith Church in my dream.



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Answer the questions about the *The Wreck of the Golden Mary*.

1. **Part A:** Read the following sentence from paragraph 3.

The darkness was so profound that looking into it was painful and oppressive—like looking, without a ray of light, into a dense black bandage put as close before the eyes as it could be without touching them.

What tone does the simile help convey?

- a. hopelessness
- b. anger
- c. suspicion
- d. frenzy

Part B: What other words or phrases in paragraph 3 help convey this tone?

2. Consider the interaction between Captain Ravender and John Steadiman on the deck before the captain goes below to rest. Identify two details in paragraph 6 that help build suspense.

a. _____

b. _____

3. Why does the captain turn in “all standing” when he goes below deck to rest, and what does this action reveal about Captain Ravender’s feelings?

4. Reread the following excerpt from paragraph 9, and consider the author’s use of repetition of the *-ing* ending in the bold words.

*Shrieks and a terrific outcry struck me far harder than the **bruising** timbers of the ship. Amidst sounds of **grinding** and **crashing**, and a heavy **rushing** and **breaking** of water—sounds I understood too well—I made my way on deck. It was not an easy thing, for the ship heeled over frightfully, and was **beating** in a furious manner.*

How does the author’s word choice and repetition impact the image the author creates in this scene?

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Keep going! Answer the questions below.

- 5.** How is Captain Ravender's dream related to the fate of the *Golden Mary*?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- 6.** Charles Dickens uses personification to describe the ship. Record two examples.
- a.** _____
- _____
- _____
- b.** _____
- _____
- _____
- 7.** Which of the following sentences from the passage foreshadows the collision with the iceberg?
- a.** "In open water, the *Golden Mary* sailed forward on a strong breeze, and we went before the wind merrily all night."
- b.** "I then began to enter two remarks in the ship's log and in my journal; first, that there was an unusual and amazing quantity of ice; second, that the nights were most wonderfully dark, in spite of the ice."
- c.** "There was a pretty sea running, but not a very high sea neither, nor at all a confused one."
- d.** "I had thought it impossible that it could be darker than it had been, until the sun, moon, and stars should fall out of the heavens and time should be destroyed."

