

Name: _____ Class: _____

Conflicting News Reports on the Fate of the Sinking Titanic

By Various Authors
1912

The RMS Titanic was a British passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in the early morning of 15 April 1912, after colliding with an iceberg. More than 1,500 passengers died as a result of the ship sinking. After the ship sank, there were conflicting reports about what really happened, with nobody knowing for certain whether or not the ship had sunk at the time. As you read, take notes on the similarities and differences of the details presented in the two newspaper articles.

LINER¹ TITANIC KEPT AFLOAT BY WATER-TIGHT COMPARTMENTS BEING TOWED INTO HALIFAX, N.S.

The Washington Times

April 15, 1912

Steamer Virginian Taking Disabled Ship to Port of Refuge. Passengers Transshipped to Other Vessels to Await Arrival of the Baltic,² Which is to Convey Them to New York. Disaster Unparalleled³ in History of Navigation.

[1] MONTREAL, April 15. — A message to the *Montreal Star* from its correspondent at St. Johns, New Brunswick, at 1:15 says that the *Titanic* is being towed toward port⁴ by the Allan liner *Virginian*.

HALIFAX, Nova Scotia, April 15. — Held afloat only by her water-tight compartments the great White Star liner *Titanic* is slowly crawling toward this harbor. Her passengers have been taken off to other vessels, only to have to face a second ordeal,⁵ as they are to be again transferred to the *Baltic*, of the White Star line, this afternoon. The *Baltic* will take them to their journey's end in New York, where they are due next Thursday.



"Newsboy Ned Parfett Announcing The Sinking Of The Titanic" by Unknown is in the public domain.

1. a large ship that carries passengers
2. a ship which was in the vicinity of the Titanic
3. Unparalleled (adjective): having no equal; exceptional
4. taken back to the dock by another boat
5. Ordeal (noun): a terrible experience

The disaster to the *Titanic* was unparalleled in the history of navigation. The largest, most luxurious and best appointed⁶ vessel ever laid down, she seemed proof against any disaster, and it is to the very fact that she was a new steamer that the passengers on board, noted financiers and society leaders, owe their lives.

Hardly another craft afloat could have withstood the terrific shock when the *Titanic*, driving along at better than half speed, although in the midst of icefields, crashed bow on⁷ into a great submerged⁸ mountain of ice which tore away her steel plates.

7 LINER TITANIC WRECKED BY ICEBERG; PASSENGERS TRANSFERRED TO OTHER VESSELS IN MID OCEAN

The Day Book

April 15, 1912

Biggest Steamer Ever Afloat Crumpled Up Like Toy in Nighttime — Wireless⁹ Saves 2,000 Passengers and Crew.

- [5] Halifax, N. S., April 15. — Kept afloat only by her watertight compartments, the great White Star liner *Titanic* slowly is crawling toward this harbor.

Her 1,470 passengers were taken off and put aboard other steamers in mid ocean. They may thank a calm sea and the wireless that they are alive today.

The disaster to the *Titanic* is unequalled in the history of navigation: The largest, most luxurious and best appointed vessel that ever floated, she seemed proof against any disaster.

Hardly another ship afloat could have withstood the terrific shock when the *Titanic*, driving through the night at more than half speed ahead, crashed bow on into a great submerged iceberg.

Just how the accident happened, whether there was a panic among the passengers, is not yet known here. Only the wireless appeals for help came from the stricken ship.

- [10] Captain E. S. Smith, admiral of the White Star fleet of liners and in command of the *Titanic*, realized acutely¹⁰ the danger to his passengers.

The first message was received at the Cape Race wireless station at 10:25 p. m. last night. It was demand for immediate help.

From Cape Race the news was spread far and wide by wireless and by telegraph. Vessel was reached and given the position of the *Titanic*, and urged to make all speed to her aid.

6. **Appointed** (*adjective*): equipped
7. straight into
8. **Submerged** (*adjective*): underwater
9. **radio**
10. **Acutely** (*adverb*): requiring serious attention

The Allan liner *Virginian* was the first. She turned her prow¹¹ toward the wounded giant of the seas, and set out under forced draught.¹² Then the *Carpathia*, of the Cunard line, and the *Baltic*, sister ship of the wrecked vessel, and the Allan liner *Parisian*, were reached, and all proceeded toward the *Titanic*.

Then came a time of cruel waiting. From the moment the first message reached Cape Race station until 12:27 a. m., there came flash after flash from the *Titanic*.

- [15] And each message was the same — “Hurry! Hurry! We are sinking and the passengers may be lost.”

Nothing could be done from the shore. The *Titanic* lay 450 miles south of Cape Race, and 1,150 miles due east of New York. The only hope for her passengers seemed to be from vessels in her immediate vicinity.¹³

At 12:27 a. m. a message was relayed to the shore:

“All women and children among passengers have been put in lifeboats; which are being held ready for lowering at moment’s notice.”

Three times the message was repeated, and then the wireless fell silent, and every attempt made by the stations on shore to get into communication with the sinking liner failed.

- [20] Then communication with the *Virginian* ceased, and those on shore could only wait helplessly.

It is known now that the reason the wireless failed was the atmospheric condition in the ice field in which the *Titanic* was lying helpless, but at the time it was feared that the great liner and her passengers and crew had sunk to the bottom of the sea.

At 8:30 this morning, a brief wireless saying that the *Titanic* was still afloat and proceeding under her own steam was picked up.

The White Star office in New York issued an official statement that it would be impossible for the *Titanic* to sink, no matter how badly she might have been injured.

Shortly after 9 o’clock, a message was received that the *Carpathia*, the *Parisian* and the *Virginian* were “standing by” the stricken ship, and that the *Baltic* was coming up fast.

- [25] Shortly afterwards came another message saying that the transfer of the passengers had been begun.

The first boat loads were rowed to the *Carpathia*. The life boats of the *Titanic* represent the last word in safety. They are wide, and non-sinkable. Each can hold 50 passengers. Only 35 were taken at a time today, however.

The work of transferring passengers at sea always is full of danger. It was less so today than usual. The wind had died down to nothing at all. The sea was comparatively quiet.

11. the front of a ship

12. a way to power an engine

13. **Vicinity (noun):** the area around or near a particular place

Many of the passengers carried their most valuable belongings with them. There was no attempt to move hand baggage. Nearly all the first class passengers of the great liner were financiers or society leaders. A conservative estimate of the value of jewelry and bonds carried among them is \$5,000,000.

There was a great deal of conflict between the wireless messages received this afternoon.

[30] One dispatch [sic] to Montreal declared the *Titanic* had sunk.

The conflict of messages was due to interference with messages and because all wireless messages had to be relayed.

Just what is to be done with the passengers transferred from the *Titanic* has not been decided. They may be transferred at sea again, and put aboard the *Baltic*, and brought to New York. They may stay on the steamers they now are on, and, these, ships may be ordered to Halifax, where special trains are already being got ready for the shipwrecked men and women.

New York, April 15. — The *Titanic* is the greatest of modern leviathans,¹⁴ being even bigger than the monster *Olympic*.

She also is the most luxuriously fitted and furnished vessel ever sent to sea.

[35] She is 888 ½ feet long, with a 92 foot beam. Her registered tonnage is 43,000 tons, and her displacement 66,000 tons. 5,000 passengers could be accommodated aboard her, 600 in the cabins.

She carried a crew of 800 men. Her captain, E. S. Smith, is the veteran of the White Star service.

This was the *Titanic's* maiden voyage. It was not begun well. When she was drawing out from Southampton docks, the suction she created in the harbor dislodged the American liner *New York* from her berth, breaking the two heavy hawsers like pack threads.

The *New York* swung toward the *Titanic*, and narrowly missed plunging into her. This was regarded as a bad omen by the captain and crew of the *Olympic*.

The passengers on the *Titanic* included some of the best known names in America. Mr. and John Jacob Astor, Alfred G. Vanderbilt, Bruce Ismay, Clarence Moore, Mr. and Mrs. Isadore Straus, Countess Rothes, Archie Butt, Mrs. L. Appleton, Mr. and Mrs. Washington Dodge, and Benjamin Guggenheim were among them. Nearly every cabin passenger was a multi-millionaire.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best describes the relationship between the two newspaper [RI.9] articles?
 - A. The first article includes correct information about why the ship sank while the second article incorrectly claims the ship did not sink.
 - B. Both articles included information about the trouble the ship had when it first left harbor.
 - C. The first article includes more details about the passengers on the ship than does the second article.
 - D. Both articles incorrectly claim that the ship did not sink after hitting the iceberg.

2. PART B: Which details best describe the relationship between the two newspaper [RI.9] articles in Part A? Choose two details, one from each article.
 - A. "Held afloat only by her water-tight compartments" ("Liner Titanic", Paragraph 2)
 - B. "Her passengers have been taken off to other vessels" ("Liner Titanic", Paragraph 2)
 - C. "and it is to the very fact that she was a new steamer that the passengers on board, noted financiers and society leaders, owe their lives" ("Liner Titanic", Paragraph 3)
 - D. "Hurry! Hurry! We are sinking and the passengers' may be lost." ("7 Liner Titanic", Paragraph 15)
 - E. "the Titanic was still afloat and proceeding under her own steam was picked up." ("7 Liner Titanic", Paragraph 22)
 - F. "When she was drawing out from Southampton docks, the suction she created in the harbor dislodged the American liner New York from her berth" ("7 Liner Titanic", Paragraph 37)

3. What is the author's main purpose conveyed in the second newspaper article, "7 Liner [RI.2] Titanic Wrecked"?
 - A. to reassure the public that the Titanic is invincible and survived the accident
 - B. to convey the tragedy of incident
 - C. to reassure the public and to describe the details of the rescue of all passengers
 - D. to reveal discrepancies between many different sides of the same story

4. How does the author of the second newspaper article respond to reports that reject [RI.6] information in the first article's account?
 - A. The Allan Liner Virginian provided incorrect information about the events that occurred and now reporters have the true story.
 - B. The author claims that there was interference with messages because all of the wireless messages needed to be relayed, which caused miscommunication.
 - C. The author claims that he received incorrect information that the ship stayed afloat and acknowledges that the ship actually sank.
 - D. The author claims that he thought all passengers were saved, but in reality, he learned that many drowned.

5. Compare and contrast the two newspaper articles. Explain the similarities and differences in each article's point of view about the incident and the rescue of the passengers. [RI.9]
