

Trouble at Sea

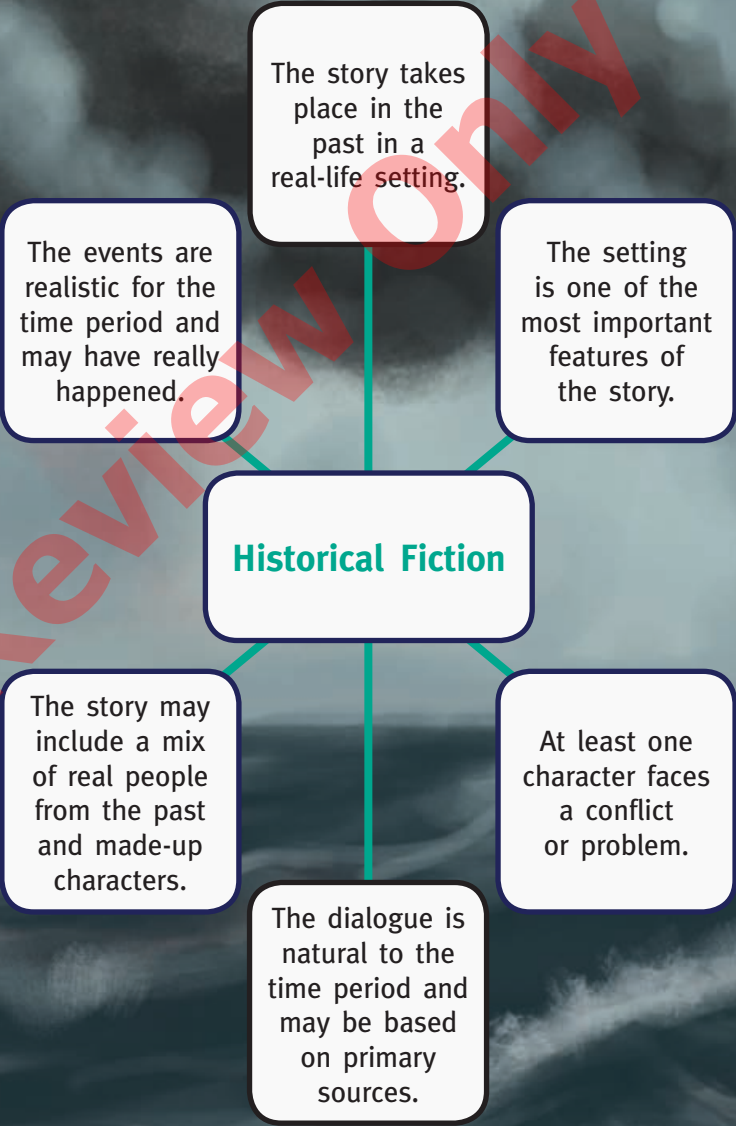


**HISTORICAL FICTION
LITERATURE**

Level	T/40
Lexile®	650L

Historical Fiction

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The Sinking

2:14 p.m., Friday, May 7, 1915

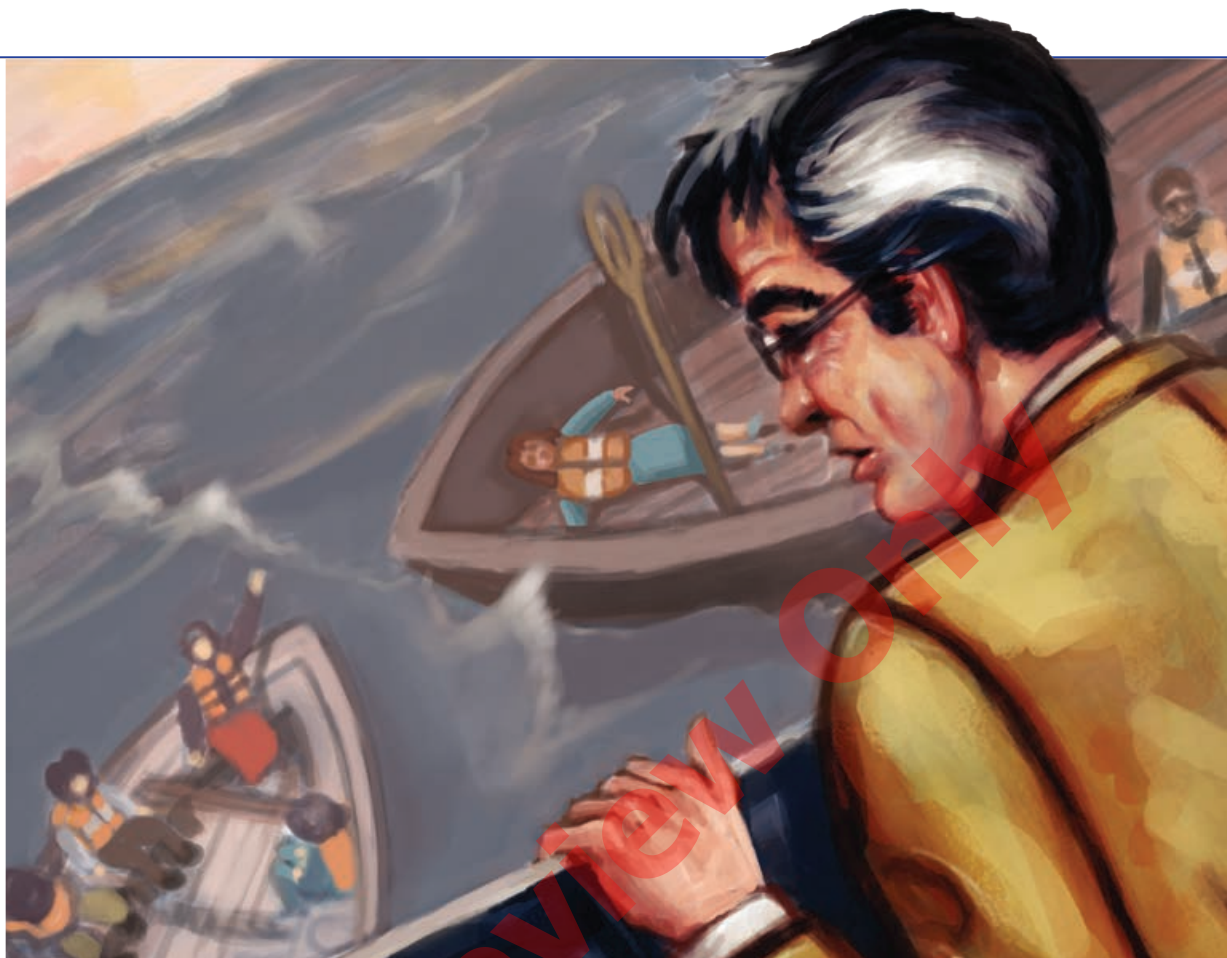
Celtic Sea, eleven miles south of Kinsale Head, Ireland

The *Lusitania* groaned and tilted. Anna's feet flew out from under her. Her shoulder hit the wall, sending a sharp pain down her arm.

"Save us!" a man cried.

A baby wailed. It was pitch-black inside the sinking ship. However, at the end of the hall, a beam of light shone down from the hatch at the top of the stairwell. Anna stumbled toward it. With one hand, she gripped the railing, and with the other, she held on tightly to Miss Eleanor, her nanny. Together they made their way toward the daylight.





On deck, a crew member handed her a life vest. In front of her, Professor Holloway held on to the side of the ship to keep his balance.

“Here, ladies!” the professor shouted over the screams of the passengers.

Anna and Miss Eleanor wobbled toward him.

Nearby, crew members readied a lifeboat.

Anna shoved her life vest over her head. While Miss Eleanor fumbled with her own straps, the professor tightened the straps on Anna’s life vest and guided Anna toward the lifeboat. A crew member’s rough hands lifted Anna into the boat. She landed with a thud on the vessel’s wooden floor.



Anna saw a crew member help Miss Eleanor into another lifeboat. Anna panicked. She and her nanny were separated!

“Lower the lifeboats,” a crew member commanded.

“Miss Eleanor!” Anna cried.

“You’ll be fine,” she called back.

“Hold tight, Anna!” The professor shouted from the deck. Anna remembered the words he spoke to her only a few days earlier: *Be careful what you wish for.*

Anna tensed as her lifeboat slowly edged toward the water. Then with a shudder, the lifeboat stopped. Anna looked back up to the deck. Her heart jumped in her throat. She watched as two men shoved the professor aside. Then, they leapt over the ship’s rail. She gripped her seat so tightly her fingers turned white.

With a loud crack, the men crashed into the boat. It flipped over. Anna and the other passengers plunged into the ice-cold water.

A Floating Palace

May 1—six days earlier

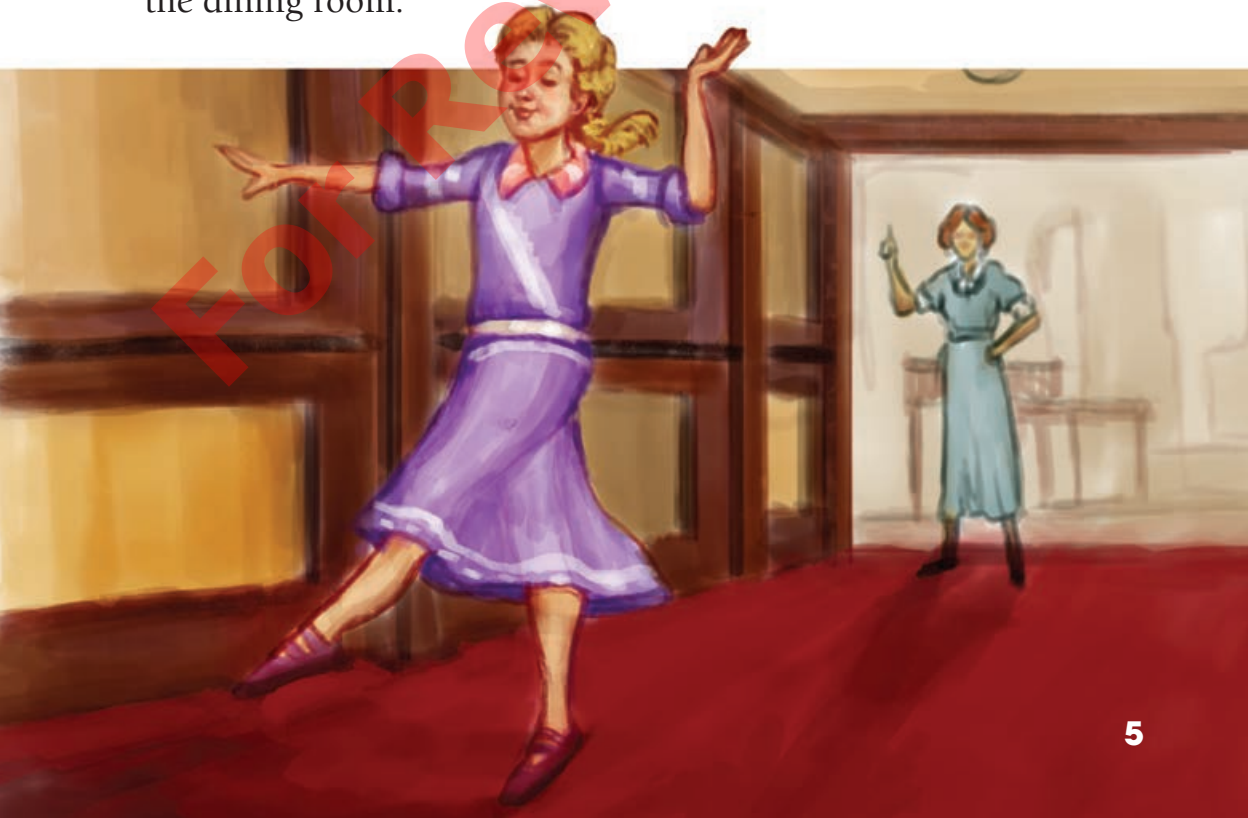
Atlantic Ocean, 150 miles due east of New York Harbor

It's like a floating palace, Anna thought as she skipped down the long hallway to the dining room of the *Lusitania*, her skirt billowing behind her.

The ocean liner she had boarded had everything: staterooms for the passengers, several dining rooms, a doctor's office, a library, a music room, even an elevator. The first-class dining room had a high dome with gilded inlays. It was the nicest room she'd ever seen—and on a ship!

"Walk like a lady," Miss Eleanor scolded.

Anna slowed her step and folded her hands in front of her, proper and ladylike, as a butler bowed and opened the door. He escorted her and Miss Eleanor to their assigned table in the dining room.



There, already sitting at their table, was a man with graying hair and glasses, writing in a small notebook. He stood and bowed.

Without introducing herself first, Anna asked, “Are you a writer?”

“Yes, I am. My name is John Bernard Holloway. I’m an author and a professor from Oxford, England. You may call me professor,” the man responded. Behind his glasses, his eyes twinkled.

“You may call me Anna.” Anna held out her hand for the professor to shake, the way she’d seen the boys and men do. Miss Eleanor frowned at the gesture.

The professor motioned for Eleanor and Anna to sit down. When they were seated, the professor asked, “Where are you from, Anna?”



"I'm from England, but my family lives in New York. They're sending me back to England to make a proper lady of me, but I want to have adventures."

She propped an elbow on the table and rested her chin on her fist.

"That's exactly why you're going," Miss Eleanor said. "You've been running wild like a street urchin."

The professor laughed as he turned to Miss Eleanor. "My daughter was the same way at her age. Give her time."

No boarding school will ever tame me, Anna decided.

"What kinds of books do you write?" she asked the professor.

"I'm the author of stories for children," said the professor. "I was in America to launch a new book, but now I'm headed back home to my family."

Anna clapped her hands in excitement. "Maybe I've read your book!"

"I've written about a boy who goes to war."

Anna shook her head. "My parents only let me read books about girls. They are so unbelievably dull. All they do is tell girls what will happen if they don't behave. The characters never do anything adventurous!"

Ideas raced through Anna's head.

"Maybe you can write a book about a girl who has a great adventure!" she said.

The professor cleared his throat. "Sometimes adventures aren't so wonderful. They can be scary, too, especially now that all of Europe is at war."

"Bah this war! I want an adventure and a book about it!"

"Be careful what you wish for," the professor said.

Be careful what you wish for. Anna didn't understand at first what he meant. But by the end of the *Lusitania's* first week at sea, as the ship neared the Irish coast, strange things began to happen. His warning would soon make sense.

Just before sundown, one of the ship's crew members told Miss Eleanor to keep the curtains closed in their stateroom.

"The captain has ordered a blackout," he said.

A sign went up in the dining room: No Lights Allowed on Deck.

At breakfast the next morning, Anna picked up a discarded newspaper from a chair. She read an ominous message on its front page:

TRAVELERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles ... that travelers sailing ... do so at their own risk.

Anna shuddered. "Miss Eleanor, did you know about this warning?" she asked.

"You shouldn't believe everything you read in the papers," her nanny responded. "Your parents would never send us into danger."

When Anna walked the deck, she saw the crew securing lifeboats outside the ship's railing. The professor stopped by her side. "I told the captain he should have a lifeboat drill. Maybe he took my advice."

"A lifeboat drill would be fun! Like a pretend adventure!" said Anna.

“Drills aren’t all fun and games. They prepare you for when things go wrong,” replied the professor. He shaded his eyes with his hand and looked out over the water with a serious expression.

“What are you looking for?” Anna asked.

“U-boats,” he answered. “The German submarines that torpedo ships and sink them.”

When Anna had heard people talking about U-boats, she imagined them as giant sharks that circled the ships, ready to take a big bite.

“Do you think there are any U-boats in these waters?” she asked.

“I hope not, Anna. That’s an adventure we certainly don’t wish to have.”

