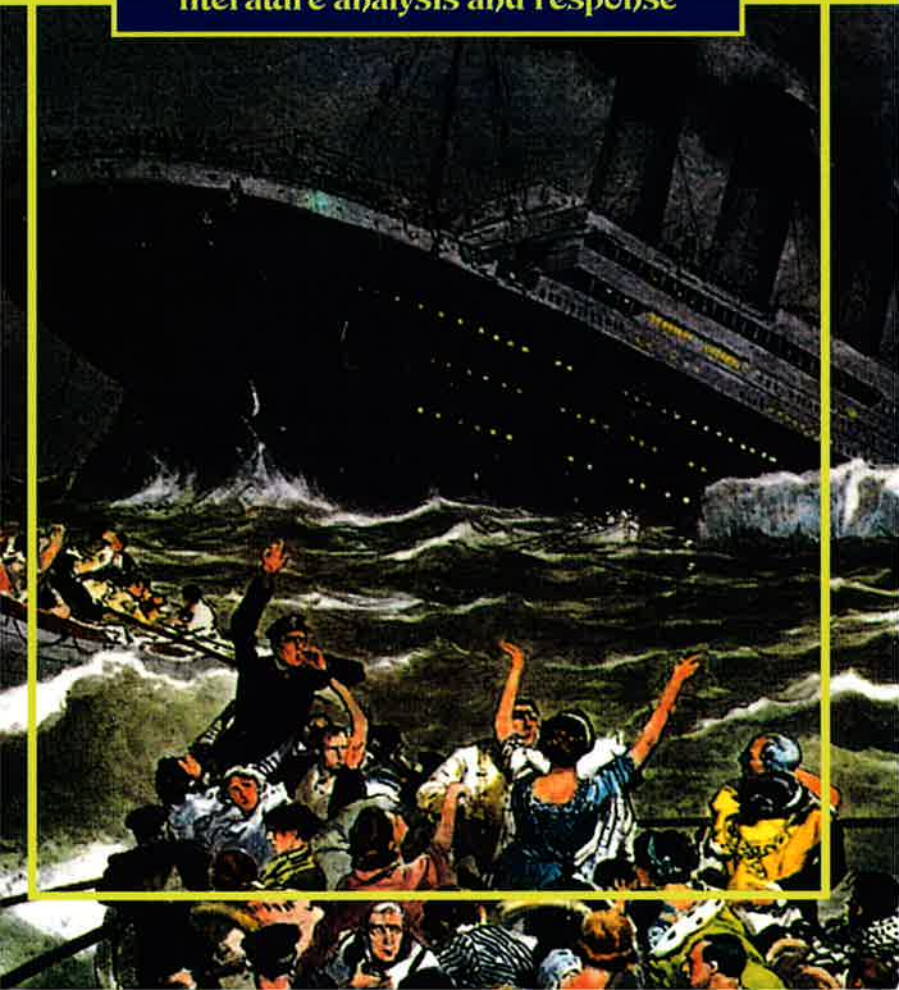


Stanford House Classics - Elementary

THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC

Jane Dolman

literature analysis and response



The Sinking of the Titanic

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The Titanic really existed and it really did sink. All the facts in this story are true and accurate. The characters have been invented but it is very likely that people like James Mortimer, his wife Mary and their son Tom were on board that famous transatlantic liner during her maiden voyage which ended so tragically.

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THE SINKING OF THE TITANIC

Southampton, 10th April 1912.

“Mummy! Daddy! Look, there she is!” shouted Tom excitedly.

“Yes,” said Tom’s father. They were walking along the quay¹ past lots of big ships. “That’s the Titanic. Look, Tom, she’s bigger than all the other ships.”

“How many people are going on this voyage?” asked Tom’s mother.

“More than two thousand three hundred,” answered her husband. He turned to his son. “You’re a very lucky boy, Tom. Lots of boys of your age would like to go on the Titanic’s maiden voyage².”

“I know I’m lucky, Dad. But so are you and Mum.”

“That’s just one of the advantages of being a journalist’s wife or son,” said Mrs Mortimer, smiling.

“How big is the Titanic, Dad?”

“Well,” said his father. “She’s 28 metres in width³ and almost 269 metres long.”

“Gosh! That’s even longer than a football pitch⁴! And how much does it weigh?”

“Its gross⁵ tonnage is 46,328 tons,” answered his father.

“You’ve certainly done your homework, darling,” said his wife.

“Just part of my job. Seriously though, it is an incredible feat⁶. It’s the biggest ship in existence. Come on, let’s go on board.”

They joined all the other passengers who were walking up the gangway⁷ to the decks⁸. Tom looked around him. He had never seen so many people. Everyone was shouting and waving. There was a band playing, flags were flying. It was a beautiful, sunny

1. Explain who or what the following are.

a) Tom.

b) Mr Mortimer.

c) Mrs Mortimer.

d) Mr Mortimer’s profession.

e) The Titanic.

f) The year.

2. Match the numbers to the definitions.

269

number of voyages

28

length of ship (metres)

46,328

number of passengers

0

width of ship (metres)

2,300

weight of ship (tons)

Now write the figures in full, making sentences.

e.g. *There are two thousand three hundred passengers.*

1. **quay:** where the ships are anchored in the port.

2. **maiden voyage:** first voyage made by a ship.

3. **width:** how wide it is.

4. **pitch:** field.

5. **gross:** total.

6. **feat:** difficult thing to do.

7. **gangway:** what you walk up to go on board a ship.

8. **decks:** open areas on ships.

day and the atmosphere was like a great big party.

“Look, Tom,” said Mrs Mortimer. “There’s the captain, Captain Edward Smith.”

“I like his uniform. When I grow up I want to be in command of a big ship, too.”

James Mortimer nudged¹ his wife. “Look, Mary,” he said. “There’s the President of the White Star and those are the directors of the most important American and Canadian railway companies.”

“And who’s that young girl arm in arm with the old man?”

“Ah! That must be Colonel Astor with his new, young wife. She’s only twenty!”

“She’s on to a good thing²,” laughed Mary.

They squeezed³ their way through the crowd of people on deck.

“Let’s go down and see our cabin and leave our things. Then we can come back on deck to watch her set sail⁴,” said Tom’s father.

“Are we in the first class, Dad?” asked Tom.

“No, son,” said his father. “But even the second class is pretty luxurious. Later I’ll take you on a trip round the ship.”

Their cabin was indeed very grand. It was very large with two port-holes⁵ that Tom could look out of, a double bed and a single bunk, a large table, a sofa and armchairs, a wardrobe and a desk - everything they needed for the voyage.

“Come and see the bathroom,” shouted Mary. “It’s got everything!”

Tom ran around happily. He had never been on such an adventure before. “It doesn’t even feel like I’m on a ship,” he said. “Except when I look out of the window, of course.”

3. Answer the questions.

a) Who is Tom?

.....

b) Who is Mary?

.....

c) What kind of passengers are there?

.....

d) What is the difference between first and second class?

.....

e) What does Tom see when he looks out of the port-holes?

.....

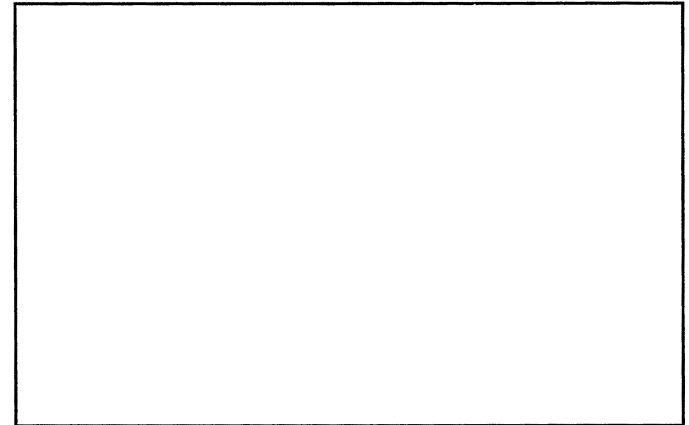
f) What does Tom want to do when he grows up?

.....

g) What do you want to do when you grow up?

.....

4. Draw a picture of the Mortimers’ cabin, putting in all the furniture.



1. nudged: touched her to get her attention.

2. on to a good thing: in a good situation.

3. squeezed: pushed.

4. set sail: depart.

5. port-holes: windows of a ship.

They went back on deck just as the sirens¹ were hooting. Tom watched the sailors pulling up the huge anchors². There were two other enormous Transatlantic liners moored³ beside the Titanic, the New York and the Oceanic. When the Titanic began to move, it caused a great wave which seemed to pull the Oceanic towards her.

“Look out!” shouted someone. “They’re going to collide!”

The Titanic managed to swerve⁴ just in time. All the passengers on deck almost fell over.

“Hold tight, Tom,” said his Dad, clinging on to him as he almost lost his balance.

“Phew!” said James. “That was a close⁵ one!”

“Lucky we’re not superstitious,” said Mary.

“What do you mean, Mum?”

“Nothing, darling,” she said, smiling. “I’m just being silly.”

Her husband looked at her. “Now, Mary,” he said, “Don’t get any of your strange ideas.”

“It’s too late, anyway,” she answered. “We’re off⁶.”

Tom looked back. The Port of Southampton was getting smaller and smaller.

“Wow! She goes so fast and smoothly that I didn’t even realize we were moving.”

“That’s why they call her a floating⁷ hotel. On this liner⁸ you can actually forget you’re on a ship.”

Their conversation was interrupted by a crackling from the loudspeakers ...

“Good day, ladies and gentlemen. This is your captain, Edward J. Smith speaking. It is a great honour for me to welcome you aboard the Titanic on this her maiden voyage. I wish you all a most comfortable and pleasant trip and it is with pleasure that my officers and myself offer our services to all those who have any

5. Decide whether the following are TRUE or FALSE.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| a) Before a ship sets sail, the sailors must pull up the anchor. | T | F |
| b) The three liners hit each other. | T | F |
| c) Everybody fell into the sea. | T | F |
| d) Tom's mother thought it was a good sign. | T | F |
| e) The Titanic was called a floating hotel because she did not seem to move. | T | F |
| f) The Titanic had made many voyages. | T | F |

Now correct the false ones.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Put the correct prepositions in the sentences.

- The passengers stayed deck.
- The anchors were pulled
- To be board means to be a ship.
- Tom almost fell
- Tom could see the port when he looked the port hole.
- When James looked his wife she smiled.

-
- siren: loud whistle to say the ship was off.
 - anchors: things that hold the ship to the bottom of the sea.
 - moored: anchored, tied up.
 - swerve: move to one side to avoid something.
 - close: near (they almost hit).
 - off: (here) leaving.
 - floating: moving on top of the water.
 - liner: large ship transporting passengers.