



# A Night to Remember

By Walter Lord

Teacher's Guide

By Mary Ellen Snodgrass



LIVING  
LITERATURE  
SERIES

A Perma-Bound Production

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## Synopsis

### Introduction to the Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition

Nathaniel Philbrick gives the background story of the publication of Walter Lord's book, underscoring that *A Night to Remember* did more to create and sustain the *Titanic* myth than anything other than the sinking itself, creating the ongoing public interest that led to such milestones as the discovery of the sunken ship and the making of the 1997 film *Titanic*: "But before there was the Wreck, discovered by Robert Ballard in 1985, and the Movie, winner of eleven Academy Awards in 1998, there was the Book." Philbrick puts the book in its historical context, recounting its blockbuster success and its unique use of dozens of first-hand accounts from survivors; and he discusses Lord's unique literary technique, famously described by *New York Herald Tribune* reviewer Stanley Walker as "a kind of literary pointillism" that creates an overwhelming emotional and factual impression on the reader. Philbrick concludes that the book—which, in the words of Lord himself, is not about a ship's sinking, but about "the last night of a small town"—has become "the ultimate survivor's tale."

### Forward

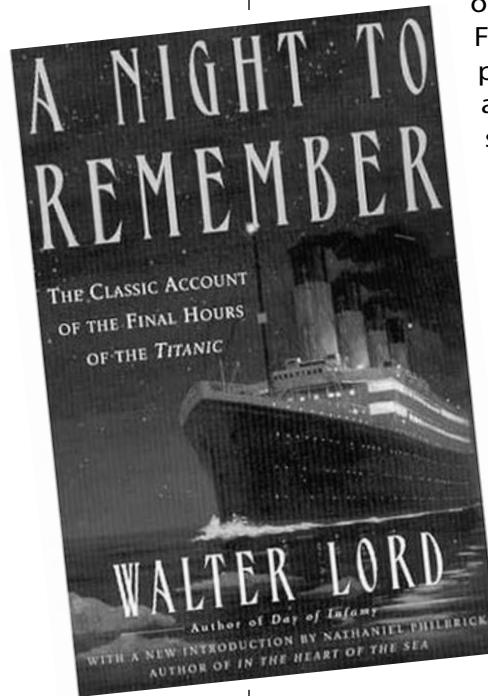
As preface to his chronicle on the sinking of the *Titanic*, Walter Lord briefly mentions *Futility*, an 1898 novel by Morgan Robertson describing the sinking of the fictional ocean liner *Titan* in the Atlantic on an April night. Lord touches on the eerie resemblance between the fictional *Titan* and the actual *Titanic*, both described as "unsinkable," as he prepares to embark on his tale.

### Chapter 1: "Another Belfast Trip"

Late on April 14, 1912, the lookout on duty, Frederick Fleet, sits up in the *Titanic's* crow's nest, peering into the bitterly cold night. It is clear, and the Atlantic is uncharacteristically calm and smooth. The most glamorous ship afloat, the *Titanic* counts as its passengers some of society's wealthiest, most influential inhabitants—people so pampered they've even brought their purebred dogs along. But this world of glamour and wealth is miles away for Frederick Fleet. A little before 11:40 p.m., Fleet sees a dark mass up ahead—an iceberg. He quickly sounds the warning, but the pilot acts a shade too late: though the ship turns sharply, it has dragged along the side of the berg.

The few awake at this hour—mostly night crewmen, people getting ready for bed, and high-flyers winding up the cold night with a hand of cards and a stiff drink—have varying reactions. Some passengers who are bunking down on the iceberg side of the ship see the mass glide past; one man, who has left the porthole in his First Class cabin open, sees chunks of ice drop

inside. The steward believes a propeller has dropped, and he and his fellow crewmen happily anticipate "another Belfast trip," with plenty of free time while the ship undergoes repairs at the home port. Only those crew members who are on duty begin to realize what has happened, and that it is already too late. The first officer has already stopped the engines and closed the emergency doors when Captain Edward J. Smith rushes on deck. The sea rushes into Boiler Rooms No. 5 and 6 as alarms begin to sound and the men working below begin to realize what has happened. And ten miles away, Third Officer Groves of the *Californian* stands on deck and notices that the *Titanic's* lights seem to have gone out suddenly.



Used to the East Asian trade, where captains frequently blink the deck lights toward midnight to encourage the passengers to go to bed, it doesn't occur to him what has really happened—the big liner's lights have only seemed to go out because she has suddenly veered sharply to port.

### Chapter 2: "There's Talk of an Iceberg, Ma'am"

All over the ship, people begin to gradually realize that something's amiss. Predictably, reactions vary, depending on personality, proximity, and level of knowledge. The crewmen closest to the iceberg breach recognize the danger; to a lesser extent, so do the passengers in Third Class (also known as *steerage*), who are beginning to see water on the floors of their sleeping compartments. Elsewhere, though—especially in First Class—people are largely undisturbed; they continue to sleep, or to party, convinced that this is a mere technical difficulty that will soon be dealt with. Meanwhile, the *Titanic's* telegraph operators begin signaling for help, but on the *Californian*, Third Officer Groves—dead tired, and not yet very proficient in the new wireless technology—shuts down the radio for the night, and so hears nothing. It is now 12:15 a.m.

### Chapter 3: "God Himself Could Not Sink This Ship"

Although there is no general alarm sounded, word is now making it over the ship that all are to don lifebelts and go on deck. The crewmen know the truth of what's happened, but are urged to get on deck quickly and not alarm the passengers. Stewards wake First Class passengers individually, while those who make it out of Third Class so on a hit-or-miss basis, woken by friends who know what is going on. Again, reactions vary; some immediately sense the danger and urgently round up their families for escape, while others believe it's much ado about nothing. Major Arthur Peuchen—one of the few men from First Class to survive despite the "women and children first" procedure—leaves behind a tin box with \$300,000 worth of bonds and preferred stock in favor of a good-luck pin and three oranges; elsewhere, however, wealthy women insist the stewards open the ship's safe to retrieve their jewels. In the radio room, the telegraph operators rouse ships that are too distant to give aid, all the while trying to catch the attention of the *Californian*, clearly visible to them at only ten miles distant; but the *Californian* remains unresponsive. One glimmer of hope is the *Carpathia*, only fifty-eight miles away, whose crew radioes at

about 12:30 a.m. that she is "coming hard"—sailing as fast as she can to help. Still, the best hope is the *Californian*. At 12:45 a.m., on Captain Smith's orders, the *Titanic's* crew begins sending up rockets at regular intervals to catch the *Californian's* attention. An apprentice on the *Californian's* deck thinks he sees the *Titanic* trying to signal with its Morse lamp, but eventually concludes that the lamp is merely flickering. The *Californian's* Second Officer idly wonders why the giant liner is setting off rockets in the middle of the night.

### Chapter 4: "You Go and I'll Stay Awhile"

It is now apparent that the ship is sinking. By virtue of a gentlemanly conspiracy among the First- and Second-Class passengers, women and children are steered, as calmly as possible, to the lifeboats, while the men stay behind. As Captain Smith shouts "women and children first" over the megaphone, the same scene is replayed over and over: husbands and elder sons, using everything from gentle deception ("We'll be alright") to out-and-out trickery, usher the wives, mothers, and children into the lifeboats while they stay on board. A very few women, such as the elderly Mrs. Isador Straus, choose to stay with their husbands; the Strauses sit together on deck chairs, watching the departures. Single gentlemen usher unaccompanied ladies to the lifeboats as well, demonstrating the chivalry of the era—at least among the upper classes. In Steerage, things are more dicey. Sailors have actually been assigned to keep the gates closed between Third Class and Second Class, and many perish as a result. Many others manage to find alternative routes, as the Third Class steward begins taking small groups of women and children up through the ship's labyrinthine passages. However, despite the crush of people and the dearth of lifeboats, some of the lifeboats are released without being completely filled. One lifeboat, with a capacity of forty, is sent out to sea with a mere twelve upper-class passengers aboard. From ten miles off, the *Californian* crew counts the rockets fired and gradually begins to realize that the liner seems to be resting in the water at an odd angle, and her lights look strange.

### Chapter 5: "I Believe She's Gone, Hardy"

Between 1:25 a.m. and 1:45 a.m., the *Titanic's* radio operators continue to send out distress signals, but the responding ships don't seem to understand what's going on. *Carpathia* is the only ship with a

reasonable possibility of rendering aid. Finally, the radio operators give up, realizing the effort is futile. The boat is listing heavily to port, and water is coming over the decks. At 1:40 a.m., Chief Officer Wilde orders crew and passengers alike over on the ship's starboard side to "straighten her up," and the boarding of the lifeboats continues. By this point most of the women and children who aren't trapped in Steerage have made it to the lifeboats, and a few panicked, desperate men and boys are trying to rush the boats; the other men force them back on the Titanic's deck, using a combination of force and appeals to their manhood. J. Bruce Ismay, the president of the White Star Line, has earlier received a tongue-lashing from Fifth Officer Lowe, goading him into showing manly courage, and is now trying to help. In his capacity as the company owner, Ismay has frequently switched roles from crewmember to passenger over the years. Now, he is being a crew member, helping load women and children on the lifeboats, joining the captain on the bridge, consulting the chief engineer; but at the last moment, as Boat C is lowered into the water, Ismay reconsiders, changes roles again—and jumps into the lifeboat, refusing to go down with the ship.

Ismay, however, is not the norm. Most of the men (and the few couples) who stay behind do so with grace and aplomb, sending messages of comfort and hope away with the escapees. They wait calmly, some waving; Benjamin Guggenheim and his valet, having given up their lifebelts and sweaters, are now in evening clothes, prepared to go down like gentlemen. Finally, the last boat is leaving. A single woman, Miss Evans, allows a married mother to enter the lifeboat just as it is dropped; Miss Evans remains on board, and is later listed among the lost.

**Chapter 6: "That's the Way of it at This Kind of Time"**

A strange calm descends on the hundreds remaining onboard after the main lifeboats are gone. Some are still seeking ways to survive, while others seem curiously detached: a couple of stewards idly speculate about how long the boat can stay afloat, while fifteen First Class bellboys cheerfully grab a smoke. In the wireless shack, Phillips keeps trying to raise assistance, although the power is low; Bride, the other wireless operator, stands by, watching as others rummage for spare lifebelts. Finally, at 2:05 a.m., the captain enters the wireless

shack and releases them—they have done their duty, he tells them, and now it's every man for himself. "That's the way it is at this kind of time," they hear him murmur. The captain returns to the Boat Deck and releases the rest of the crew, then walks back to the bridge. Some stay on board, while others jump. At 1:30 a.m., the gates are opened up to First Class, and those trapped in Steerage can finally come up; though it is too late for most, some do manage to escape. Olaus Abelseth, one of the steerage passengers who survives the catastrophe, finally makes it to the Boat Deck, where some men are trying to free the collapsibles—the only remaining life craft—from tangled ropes. He turns away from the painful scene of Isador Straus trying to persuade his wife to leave the ship, while she insists she will die with him. There is time to ponder: for one passenger, a fortune-teller's admonition to avoid the water; for another, a prophecy of an upcoming great maritime disaster; for Phillips, the last ice message from the *Californian* at 11 p.m. before it signed off—he'd told the *Californian* to "shut up," because he was busy. Mr. Straus ponders his will, which he had written in the belief that he would predecease his wife. His final instructions to her were to "be a little selfish," to have fun and not always put others first. Now, he realizes that this unselfishness has doomed her to die with him.

As the ship gradually begins tilting on its nose, lives hang in the balance. A few survive by jumping far out into the water at the last minute; some of the crew members work on freeing the collapsible boats, figuring they can be floated off, even if they can't be launched properly. Many of these men end up surviving. As the ship continues to tilt, many dramas play out: the ship's chef is washed overboard, and the baby he has been holding is washed out of his arms; a priest leads a prayer. At 2:15 a.m., the orchestra leader taps his stand, and the musicians begins playing the Episcopal hymn "Autumn." Many of the survivors have conflicting, confused memories of the last minutes of those who don't make it—but all remember their comrades dying heroically. Although one unconfirmed rumor has Captain Smith shooting himself in the head, the most likely sightings have him jumping off the bridge at the last minute, perhaps holding a child in his arms. The ship's orchestra continues playing heroically until, finally, with a great crashing heave, the gigantic ship slowly tips, nose first,

into the icy water, and those remaining slide off. A few save themselves by jumping off into the water at the last minute, just before the suction from the sinking ship claims them.

For a little while, those in the lifeboats can see the ship standing nearly perpendicular to the water—one woman remembers it as looking like a giant pointing finger. Finally, at 2:20 a.m., the boat slides rapidly down, disappearing into the frigid ocean with a “gulp,” while dazed survivors watch from lifeboats and the crew of the *Californian* observes through binoculars. Finally, an apprentice on the *Californian* wakes Captain Lord (who is no relation to the author) to tell him the ship has disappeared. He receives the message and rolls over, going back to sleep.

### Chapter 7: “There Is Your Beautiful Nightdress Gone”

As the sea closes over the *Titanic*, Lady Cosmo Duff Gordon remarks to her secretary, Miss Francatelli, “There is your beautiful nightdress gone.” Of course, the losses that night amount to much more than a nightdress, or the ship and its cargo, or even the more than 1,500 ended lives. The main, necessary loss is the end of the belief in an “unsinkable ship,” and in the recklessness that belief engendered.

The *Titanic*’s sinking, for many, marks the end of an era of complacency, and of the old way of doing things. From then on, trans-Atlantic ships take ice warnings seriously, either slowing down or steering clear; in addition, the American and British governments form the International Ice Patrol to monitor and move icebergs, and the winter shipping lanes are moved farther south. There are many other changes as well. A twenty-four-hour radio watch is required for every passenger ship (“Never again could the world fall apart while a Cyril Evans lay sleeping off-duty only ten miles away”); lifeboat accommodations are mandated for every single passenger onboard; and the class distinctions in shipboard passage that resulted in such a disproportionate number of deaths in Steerage are abolished. (On the *Titanic*, Lord wrote, “Neither the chance to be chivalrous nor the fruits of chivalry seemed to go with a Third Class passage.”) According to Lord, the confidence; the worshipful attitude to those of privilege; and many of the prejudices, but also many of the positive values of Edwardian life, are lost with the sinking of

the *Titanic* as well.

Immediately after the sinking that night, the close and complex relationships between the privileged and those who serve them, though they have been much in evidence earlier, seem to fray as well; once in the lifeboats, all survivors are equal, and although there had previously been much heroism, now an every-man-for-himself attitude prevails, sometimes expressing itself in hostility for those swimmers who try to make it on the last of the collapsible life rafts. Other swimmers, however, selflessly stay off the rafts, swimming away after offering good wishes, never to be seen again. In the wake of the disaster, while Collapsibles A and B struggle to stay afloat and leave the scene, hundreds of desperate voices are heard calling in the night—so many that it’s hard to pick them out individually; Jack Thayer later remembers that it sounded to him like locusts on a summer night in his native Pennsylvania.

### Chapter 8: “It Reminds Me of a Bloomin’ Picnic”

Fifth Office Lowe, self-appointed commander of a flotilla headed by Boat No. 14, insists on going back and picking up survivors, but only manages to reach a few, one of whom later dies. Others are not so selfless or intrepid. Although each lifeboat contains people who want to save the dying, they are overridden by those who fear their boats will be swamped and all will die if they make rescue efforts. Only thirteen people are picked up by the eighteen lifeboats, many of which are not even filled to capacity. In any event, the debate doesn’t last long; hypothermia quickly claims those left in the 28-degree water. Finally, the remaining swimmers stop calling for help. Then the night is peaceful—until the bickering begins among the survivors. On many of the boats, there is much squabbling and jockeying for position, although there is heroism and self-sacrifice there as well; overall, the boats’ inhabitants are mainly concerned with staying warm enough to live through the night. Some don’t make it through the freezing conditions, but the majority do. Both lifelong friendships and lifelong enmities are formed. Finally, at a little after 3:30 a.m., the *Carpathia* appears in the distance.

### Chapter 9: “We’re Going North Like Hell”

In the early morning hours, the *Carpathia*’s passengers begin waking up to ominous sounds: activity on deck, the crew breaking out the chocks from

the lifeboats, mattresses and blankets being carried up top. The cabins are cold, and there's no hot water—the ship is using up every bit of steam. Passengers are alarmed by the activity and puzzled by the cold, since their destination is the Mediterranean coast. Eventually, they learn what has happened: under the direction of Captain Rostron, the *Carpathia* has changed course and the crew is making ready for the rescue, gathering provisions that include 3,000 spare blankets. When first contacted, the old steamship is 58 miles away from the *Titanic* and has been cruising at 14 knots; at that rate, it will take four hours to reach the distressed ship. Rostron orders the Chief Engineer and crew to pull out the stops, and they push the *Carpathia* faster than anyone knew she could go, until she is steaming ahead heroically at 17 knots.

Finally, they arrive at the scene as dawn is breaking, and are shocked at the extent of the disaster—they had thought the *Titanic* might still be afloat. The *Titanic's* lifeboats are scattered in a four-mile radius, interspersed with many small icebergs and a few larger ones. About five miles in the distance is a huge ice field. The *Carpathia's* passengers are disoriented as they take in this unexpected sight. Ten miles distant, the *Californian's* crew finally figures out what has happened. Shortly before six, Captain Lord, now awake, heads the *Californian* toward the *Titanic's* last known position.

**Chapter 10: “Go Away—We Have Just Seen Our Husbands Drown”**

As the survivors come on board, some in finery, some in rags, there are varying reactions, but over all a strange quiet; everyone is still stunned by the disaster they have experienced or witnessed. There are joyful reunions, bereft sobs, calm heroism, and hysterics. The *Titanic's* passengers are urged to eat, drink, and warm up. A broken Bruce Ismay refuses solid food and spends the trip home sedated and sequestered in the *Carpathia's* doctor's cabin, beginning a self-imposed exile that will continue for the remaining twenty-five years of his life. The ship's captain summons a minister on board for an impromptu memorial service. By 8:50 a.m. all the survivors have been retrieved, and the *Carpathia* heads back to New York.

Meanwhile, in New York, word is slowly trickling in. There had been a brief transmission from the Associated Press in the early morning hours that

the *Titanic* had hit a berg and issued a CQD, but there has been little new information for hours by the time New Yorkers begin waking up. Only the *New York Times* goes out on a limb based on the lack of follow-up transmissions from the *Titanic*, and headlines that the ship is presumed to have sunk. Families of *Titanic* passengers, joined by reporters, inundate the White Star Line's New York offices; the company's vice president, Phillip A.S. Franklin, at first makes light of the dire reports that have begun to trickle in informally from telegraph operators, unable to believe that the *Titanic* could have sunk. In this age of multiple newspaper editions, speculation runs rampant, with many headlines later proving to be false—including one heart-breaking one claiming all the passengers have been saved. The *Carpathia* is reserving her wireless for official communication, and there is frustration that no news is to be had there. Finally, in the evening, the worst is confirmed: the *Titanic* has sunk in the northern Atlantic, with a terrible loss of life. Meanwhile, back on the *Carpathia*, young Jack Thayer crawls into bed again as he had ten hours before. He realizes that the brandy given to him on the *Carpathia* is his first-ever drink of hard liquor; he must be growing up. Then, the brandy having done its work, he falls into an exhausted sleep.

**Facts About the Titanic, Acknowledgements, and Passenger List**

This section includes some fascinating information about the *Titanic*, including a discussion of the discrepancies between survivor numbers in various accounts, and a brief exploration of remaining mysteries. The “Acknowledgements” section performs the traditional role of thanking the people who have provided the author with information and helped him in work, and it includes some insight into how the survivors have coped. Finally, the “Passenger List,” which is divided according to accommodations (First, Second, or Third Class), supplements the information about individuals mentioned in the story, showing, for instance, which family members were saved and which were lost, and underscoring the discrepancies between survival rates among different classes of passengers.

**Timeline of the Sinking of the RMS *Titanic*,  
April 1912**

**11 p.m.,  
April 14** On a freezing Sunday night, the Californian radioes a warning about ice. In all, the *Titanic* will have received at least six ice warnings before the disaster.

**11:40 p.m.** Lookout Frederick Fleet spies an ice berg in the path ahead of the *Titanic*. Aboard the *Californian*, Third Officer Charles Victor Groves notices that the *Titanic*, ten miles away off Cape Race, Newfoundland, veers sharply to the left and seems to put out her lights.

**11:50 p.m.** Steam begins escaping in two of the sixteen forward compartments. Captain Smith receives damage reports of a 300-foot gash in a reputedly unsinkable ship. At first, none of the ship's authorities believe that the collision has inflicted serious damage.

**12:05 a.m.,  
April 15** In the first minutes of Monday morning, Captain Smith orders lifeboats readied.

**12:15 a.m.** The *Titanic's* wireless operator radioes CQD, an old form of SOS, but the *Californian* has stopped receiving at 11:30. Word of the collision passes informally aboard the *Titanic*. Reaction is mixed, but generally low-key. Some people sleep, some play cards, some mill around in the cold night air to observe the early morning goings-on.

**12:18 a.m.** The German steamer *Frankfort* replies to the SOS.

**12:19 a.m.** The *Mt. Temple*, *Virginian*, and *Burma* also acknowledge the *Titanic's* distress signal.

**12:25 a.m.** The *Titanic* contacts the *Carpathia*: "Come at once. We have struck a berg. It's CQD, old man. Position 41.46 N 50.14 W." The *Carpathia*, 58 miles away, promises to hurry to the rescue.

**12:30 a.m.** People are beginning to don lifebelts. Sixteen numbered lifeboats and four collapsible rafts labeled A-D are placed on davits.

There are spaces for only 1,178 people. Astor claims to feel safer on the liner than in a lifeboat, but President Ismay urges passengers to hurry in their evacuation of the sinking ship.

**12:45 a.m.** The *Titanic* begins firing a series of rockets. Then miles away, a crew man on the *Californian* sees the flares, but takes no action.

**12:55 a.m.** Lifeboats containing two crewmen each begin dropping into the calm, frigid sea. Most boats carry far fewer evacuees than capacity.

**1:15 a.m.** Third-class passengers are allowed to enter first-class. Women and children are urged to seek places in lifeboats. Men are refused places.

**1:30 a.m.** Most of the lifeboats are rowing away.

**1:40 a.m.** Chief Officer Wilde shifts passengers and crew to starboard to correct a serious list to port.

**1:45 a.m.** The *Titanic* wireless operator begs the *Carpathia* to hurry.

**2:05 a.m.** The final collapsible boat is lowered. Captain Smith releases the crew to fend for themselves. The band, its members clad in lifebelts, continue to play ragtime.

**2:18 a.m.** The *Titanic's* lights go out.

**2:20 a.m.** With a tremendous crash of crockery and furniture, the *Titanic* sinks nose-first. The death toll is 1,502, including many third-class women and children. News of the disaster reaches New York by telegraph.

**2:30 a.m.** Passengers shift among lifeboats, risking a tumble into 28-degree water. The crew lashes lifeboats together into a flotilla.

**4 a.m.** The *Carpathia* arrives on the scene.

**4:10 a.m.** The first passengers are rescued.

**6:30 a.m.** President Ismay boards the *Carpathia* and, refusing nourishment and medical care, withdraws to a cabin.

**8:30 a.m.** The last lifeboat was rescued.

**8:50 a.m.** All hope is given up of further recovery of personnel.

## Author Sketch

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Walter Lord (October 8, 1917-May 19, 2002), was the son of attorney John Walterhouse Lord and Henriette M. Hoffman Lord; his grandfather, Richard Curzon Hoffman, was president of the Baltimore Steam Packet Company ("Old Bay Line") steamship firm in the 1890s. Lord knew personal tragedy in childhood. His father died in 1920; his sister Henrietta died nine years later. Young Walter Lord participated in track, drama, school journalism, and debate, attended Gilman School, and completed a history degree from Princeton University (earning the C.R. Joline Prize in American history). He studied law for two years at Yale, then halted his graduate work to crack codes at the Office of Strategic Services in Washington for the duration of World War II. By war's end, Lord was dispatched to London, remaining there until summer 1945.



In 1946, Lord completed a law degree that he never planned to use. Moving toward journalism, he edited for the Research Institute of America and compiled books about tax law. During this period, he published *The History of the Five Hundred Eighth Parachute Infantry*, which was reprinted in 1990. From 1951 to 1952, he edited *Business Reports*, then moved on to New York to write for the J. Walter Thompson Advertising Agency. His first historical publication, *The Fremantle Diary* (1954), was an edited and annotated version of the diary of a British officer, sympathetic to the Southern cause, who traveled with the Confederate Army as an observer during part of the Civil War.

Moving directly into a study of the sinking of the *Titanic*, Lord published his famous "non-fiction novel," *A Night to Remember*, the next year. In 1956, the book's success and a guest assignment from *Life* magazine led to Lord's resignation from advertising and a full-time career in freelance writing. The next year Lord produced *Day of Infamy*, a series of interviews with survivors of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor during World War II. In 1960, he followed with *The Good Years*, a re-creation of the optimistic period from 1900 to 1915. The year 1961 saw the publication of *A Time to Stand*, a his-

torical treatment of the Battle of the Alamo.

Lord's career took a different twist when he accepted editorship of Harper & Row's *Breakthrough* series for young adult readers. In 1965, he completed *The Past That Would Not Die*, an overview of the racial clash that followed James Meredith's enrollment at the University of Mississippi in 1962. Lord's next book, *Incredible Victory* (1967), recaptured the Battle of the Midway, the pivotal American victory in the Pacific during World War II. After a brief hiatus, he returned to journalistic inquiry with *The Dawn's Early Light* (1972), a study of the War of 1812. Toward the end of his life, Lord served as a consultant to director James Cameron during the making of the movie *Titanic*, and Cameron dedicated a follow-up documentary, *Ghosts of the Abyss* (2003), to Lord's memory. Lord's last book, *The Night Lives On* (1986) is a collection of essays about the *Titanic's* sinking, further exploring some of the key issues involved in the disaster in light of new information.

A lifelong bachelor, Lord died in Manhattan in 2002 after a long struggle with Parkinson's disease; he was 84. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian David McCullough said of Lord, "He was one of the most generous and kind-hearted men I've ever known, and when I had stars in my eyes and wanted to become a writer, he was a great help. I'll always be indebted to him." Lord is buried in the family plot at historic Green Mount Cemetery in Baltimore; his grave is marked by a marble bench listing the books he wrote.

## Critic's Corner

Tapping into the success of Edward R. Murrow's "You Are There" approach, Walter Lord, whose historical works earned him six Book-of-the-Month-Club selections, netted his strongest popular acclaim for *A Night to Remember*. A British docudrama of the same title was made in 1958 based on the book; the film, which starred David McCallum, Honor Blackman, and Kenneth More, won a Golden Globe Award and was named one of the five best foreign films of 1958 by the National Board of Review. Lord consulted on the blockbuster 1997 movie *Titanic* as well.

Lord is credited with incisive journalistic technique,

sometimes compared with John Hersey's style in Hiroshima. A few critics have decried his popularization of headline events, particularly the use of suspense, and a perceived fragmentation of history into numerous bits of data. Overall, however, Lord's place in American nonfiction remains unchallenged for his ability to meld human drama with cataclysmic events.

## Selected Other Works by Walter Lord

*The Fremantle Diary*, 1954  
*Day of Infamy*, 1957  
*The Good Years*, 1960  
*A Time to Stand*, 1961  
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### Internet

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"Books by Walter Lord,"  
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"David McCullough,"  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_McCullough](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_McCullough)>

"Futility, or the Wreck of the Titan,"  
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"Ghosts of the Abyss,"  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghosts\\_of\\_the\\_Abyss](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghosts_of_the_Abyss)>

"Impact of Titanic on International Maritime Law," Allison Lane, <<http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/titanic-impact-on-maritime-law.html>>

"The Legend of Rigel: Hero Dog of the Titanic," <<http://www.authorhouse.com/BookStore/ItemDetail.aspx?bookid=34557>>

"The Newfoundland Aboard the Titanic," <<http://brightstarnewfs.com/rigel.html>>

"The Passengers of the Titanic," <[http://www.titanicmovie.com/present/mi\\_prodnote\\_8.html](http://www.titanicmovie.com/present/mi_prodnote_8.html)>

"The Titanic Futility," study information on Futility: Or the Wreck of the Titan, <<http://www.historyonthenet.com/Titanic/futility.htm>>

"Walter Lord biography,"  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter\\_Lord](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Lord)>

"Why did the Titanic sink?," <<http://www.historyonthenet.com/Titanic/blame.htm>>

## Related Reading

"The Night America Panicked," Orson Welles  
*Dove*, Robin Lee Graham  
*Hawaii*, James Michener  
*Kon-Tiki*, Thor Heyerdahl  
*Lord Jim*, Joseph Conrad  
*Moby Dick*, *Typee*, and *Billy Budd*, Herman Melville  
*Mutiny on the Bounty*, James N. Hall and Charles B. Nordhoff



*Roots*, Alex Haley  
*The Cay*, Theodore Taylor  
*The Diary of Anne Frank*, Anne Frank  
*The Discovery of the Titanic*, Robert Ballard  
*The Last Days of Pompeii*, Edward Bulwer-Lytton

## General Objectives

1. To assess the impact of cataclysm
2. To note the relationship between setting and atmosphere
3. To evaluate the human need for comfort, safety, and reassurance
4. To discuss the themes of loss, self-reliance, and endurance
5. To comment on the development of authority figures
6. To analyze concepts of femininity and masculinity
7. To characterize the interplay of reportage and personal glimpses
8. To evaluate the worth of listing
9. To discuss survival techniques

## Specific Objectives

1. To contrast the behaviors of Captain Smith and President Ismay
2. To contrast parallel scenes, such as the launching of lifeboats and collapsible rafts
3. To characterize responses from the press and boards of inquiry
4. To assess the author's focus on class differences, snobbery, and deference
5. To describe John Jacob Astor's significance during and after the event
6. To characterize life at sea for crew, passengers, captain, and servants
7. To predict future interest in raising the *Titanic*.
8. To explain the purpose of dramatic scenes, such as the attempt of one man to hide under a shawl and the donation of a fur stole as a foot warmer.
9. To evaluate changes in sea travel as a result of the disaster

## Themes and Motifs

### Themes

- "The end of a general feeling of confidence"
- "The last stand of wealth and society in the center

- of public affection"
- Disillusion in the ability of human technology to overcome nature
- Old-fashioned standards of chivalry
- The overwhelming effect of social class on passengers' lives and survival
- The conflict between social expectations and the struggle to survive
- The conflict between self-interest and responsibility to others, both for individual survivors and for those who stood to benefit from the *Titanic's* success

### Motifs

- Classism
- Gentlemanliness
- Heroism
- Man versus nature
- Failure of leadership
- Being inadequately prepared for disaster
- Facing death with dignity

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Walter Lord's style, present the following terms and applications to *A Night to Remember*:

**Suspense:** the feeling of tension or anticipation an author creates in a work as the reader tries to figure out what will happen next. Although *A Night to Remember* is based on history and the general outcome is already known at the beginning of the book, Lord creates suspense by focusing on individual characters' actions and reactions moment by moment. We see the individual decisions and circumstances that, taken together, created the disaster, and we are drawn into the story through those who are experiencing it, and for whom the outcome is still uncertain.

**Conflict:** a struggle or fight central to the story. Conflict makes a story interesting because readers want to learn the outcome. There are two kinds of conflict. In an external conflict, characters struggle against a force outside themselves. In an internal conflict, characters battle a force within themselves. Stories often contain both external and internal conflicts. There are a number of external conflicts in *A Night to Remember*. These include the obvious conflict between the destructive forces of nature and the human will to survive; the conflict between an old order based on social class, and a new, more egalitarian social order; even the con-

flict between business considerations and safety (which led the ship's owners and backers to insist on luxurious appointments to draw wealthy travelers, while skimping on features such as a complete double hull and lifeboats for every passenger). Internal conflict is ample as well, especially the emotional conflict faced by the men, who are called upon to stay on the ship so that women and children can be saved—an internal conflict between social conditioning and the will to survive. A prime example of this kind of conflict is the losing struggle by Bruce Ismay, the owner of the White Star Line, to behave like a “gentleman”: to his own shame and the shock of others, he leaps into a lifeboat at the last minute, and is saved with the women and children.

**Imagery:** words that appeal to one or more of our five senses—sight, hearing, taste, touch, or smell. Imagery can be found in all sorts of writing, but Lord makes special use of it in *A Night to Remember* as he retells the desperate struggle for survival in the icy sea, or the terrifying spectacle of the “unsinkable” ship upended “like a black finger pointing at the sky” (p. 84).

## Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the book. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. The silence in the Marconi shack was broken only by the rasping spark of the wireless, as Phillips rapped out his call for help and took down the answers that bounced back. (Chapter 3, p. 43)  
*(Guglielmo Marconi's invention of wireless communication in 1894 resulted in worldwide use of telegraphic communication, a boon to sea-going vessels which could radio position and needs to other ships, harbors, lighthouses, or shore stations. Ironically, Marconi's early experiments took place in 1901 in St. John's, Newfoundland, a short distance from where the Titanic went down. For his work, the inventor won the 1909 Nobel Prize for physics and saw his device pressed into service during World War I.)*
2. One way or another, many of the steerage passengers avoided the cul de sac on E Deck and got topside. (Chapter 4, p. 56)

*(The least expensive section of the ship was called steerage because it was located near the rudder. Steerage passengers, suffering the vibration and wash of the tail section, were more likely to become ill from motion sickness and engine fumes. On the Titanic, as with many other lines, the poorest people—usually immigrants, many from central Europe or Scandinavia—occupied the steerage compartments. For several reasons—including lack of English-language skills on the part of the immigrants, and blatant and thoughtless classism among the other passengers and crew—the Steerage passengers were largely ignored during the evacuation. Some managed to force their way to the top deck among the privileged classes, but the failure to unlock the gate between steerage and Second Class trapped many people and resulted in a disproportionate loss of life. Although they came too late for those on the Titanic, reforms prompted by the tragedy did result in great changes in the way shipping companies treated passengers, as well as safety measures that benefitted all.)*

3. In the maelstrom of ropes, deck chairs, planking, and wildly swirling water, nobody knew what happened to most of the people. From the boats they could be seen clinging like little swarms of bees to deck houses, winches and ventilators as the stern rose higher. Close in, it was hard to see what was happening, even though—incredibly—the lights still burned, casting a sort of murky glow. (Chapter 6, p. 81)  
*(A significant aspect of Lord's reportage is his objectivity. Here he abandons straight journalism and resorts to a more poetic style to illustrate the fact that, even though the ship remained illuminated during the worst of the tilt, the violent forward thrust of objects and people made it difficult to determine what victims were involved in the lurch forward. Years later, conflicting stories and myths arose from this hellish spectacle of a giant ship canted forward and immersed nose-first in the Atlantic.)*
4. The Azores were best for the Carpathia's schedule, but he didn't have the linen and provisions to last that far. (Chapter 10, p. 137)  
*(Arthur H. Rostron, the captain of the rescue ship, considered ferrying survivors southeast to the Azores, a group of Portuguese islands off*

*the African/Iberian shores which have long been a favorite of European vacationers. However, lack of food, water, and other necessities made it imperative that he change course and head west to New York, even though the Cunard company, which owned the Carpathia, had to bear the expense of the detour.)*

5. Gradually the full story emerged, but many of the engaging tales born these first few days have lingered ever since—the lady who refused to leave her Great Dane ... the band playing, “Nearer My God to Thee” ... Captain Smith and First Officer Murdoch committing suicide ... Mrs. Brown running No. 6 with a revolver. (Chapter 10, p. 134)  
*(Lord’s objective method of assembling and sorting through masses of historical detail, corroborating evidence, and interviews results in a debunking of some engaging legends. An offshoot of his logical conclusions is a delineation of legend itself and the human need to romanticize and colorize mundane facts with bizarre, humorous, or sentimental detail.)*
6. If the *Titanic* had heeded any of the six ice messages on Sunday ... if ice conditions had been normal ... if the night had been rough or moonlit ... if she had seen the berg 15 seconds sooner—or 15 seconds later ... if she had hit the ice any other way ... if her watertight bulkheads had been one deck higher ... if she had carried enough boats ... if the Californian had only come. Had any one of these “ifs” turned out right, every life might have been saved. But they all went against her—a classic Greek tragedy. (Chapter 10, p. 145)  
*(Lord demonstrates the peculiarities of fate by engaging in surmise, chalking up the minutes assemblage of details which determined the ship would sink and that many of the passengers would die. The emphasis on extenuating circumstances heightens for the reader a connection between the ideal and the real, a scenario in which human error played a major part in multiple drownings and the loss of a huge luxury ship on its first voyage.)*
7. Bruce Ismay sat trembling in the surgeon’s cabin, shot full of opiates. (Chapter 10, p. 146)  
*(The owner of the White Star Line does not come off well in the story’s retelling. Earlier, in Chapter*

*5, he is contrasted unfavorably with other, more heroic male passengers for his last-minute decision to rush into Collapsible C and thereby escape death. Here, he is portrayed as an emotional weakling, needing to be pampered and sedated to deal with tragic events that others faced with stoicism and courage—this conclusion having been drawn, of course, in an era when varying responses to emotional trauma were poorly understood, and any hint of mental illness was considered “weak.” Though exonerated of personal wrongdoing in subsequent inquiries, Ismay faced public scorn for saving himself, and decisions made under his watch—e.g., reducing the number of lifeboats, spending for luxury instead of engineering, his probable insistence on sailing too fast—have contributed to the negative portrayal given here.)*

8. Behind, the sun caught the bright red-and-white stripes of the pole from the *Titanic*’s barber shop, as it bobbed in the empty sea. (Chapter 10, p. 146)  
*(An essential aspect of Lord’s style is his emphasis on incongruities. Many items in the mélange of scenes, people, objects, and events have major significance, particularly the two collapsible boats which are too unwieldy for adequate use as rescue craft, and the bars which keep third-class passengers out of sight of the rich. Other details, such as this cheery striped pole, mock the exuberance and confidence of the gilded era that spawned the *Titanic*, and the people who took passage at Southampton with high expectations of a luxurious, devil-may-care crossing amid a throng of sybaritic party-goers much like themselves.)*
9. She had a double bottom and was divided into 16 water-tight compartments. These were formed by 15 water-tight bulkheads running clear across the ship. (“Facts About the *Titanic*,” p. 138)  
*(In a data-filled afterword, Lord explains the logic behind the term “unsinkable.” Because water-proof walls separated the bottom layer into sixteen chambers, engineers predicated their belief in perpetual buoyancy on the unlikelihood that more than two chambers would ever be breached. The limited imagination of the planners proved tragic. They failed to take into consideration a simple fact of nature—that spring*

*thaws sometimes unleashed immense expanses of ice submerged at such an angle that they could significantly damage an ocean liner.)*

10. This book is really about the last night of a small town. (Acknowledgements, p. 143) *(By creating a sense of community, Lord draws together the people who face catastrophe by helping each other, sharing expertise, comforting separated families, separating with dignity and nobility, and making the best of imminent death. The metaphor of the small town shapes the book into an examination of a microcosm in which people of all stations and experiences were forced to think of each other as human beings in desperate circumstances. As he notes, the people were so touched, so changed by their harrowing night in the Atlantic, that they altered their behavior and became more giving, less selfish than they might have been if they had crossed from Southampton to New York without a hitch.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages from the book.

### Questions 1-5—Literal Level

1. Described events occurring about the time of the collision.  
*(The crew and staff of the Titanic, which was divided into First-, Second-, and Third-Class sections, oversaw ample amusement for its well-to-do guests. On the cold night of April 14, 1912, five nights out from Southampton, the ship's "miniature city" was winding down comfortably. Passengers were mostly already asleep or preparing to retire. A "few shipboard die-hards" were still enjoying cigars in the First Class smoking room on A Deck; others read, ordered an evening toddy, or played bridge. The hardiest pursued deck promenades in the chill night air.*

*While passengers played, the crew worked. The master baker was immersed in turning out rolls. Stokers tended boilers, loading coal and eyeing gauges. Barkeeps poured drinks; the restaurant manager ended the day's service and set places*

*for the next meal; the librarian sorted out the day's book checkout cards. As Lord notes in the opening of Chapter 1, one of the "eyes of the ship," Lookout Frederick Fleet, "high in the crow's-nest of the New White Star Liner," searched a level sea on the moonless, starry night, and at 11:40 p.m. spotted an icy obstruction directly in the ship's path. Too late, he ordered evasive maneuvers, but the Titanic, which zigzagged from the left and was so huge it could not change course swiftly, was already doomed.*

*Ten miles away, the 47-passenger Californian, headed carefully through the same ice-strewn waters, had been halted for an hour and ten minutes because of drifting ice. The Californian's third officer observed the starboard lights of the White Star liner, and was unsurprised when the liner appeared to go dark, assuming that its captain had blinked the lights to encourage passengers to turn in for the night.)*

2. Describe the abandon-ship procedure.  
*(As the ship began to cant forward to one side, the crew of the Titanic, aware that the vessel could not float if more than two compartments flooded but following orders not to frighten the passengers, raised no general alarm, but relied on word of mouth to relay the abandon-ship order. As a result, passengers were at first unconcerned. Stewards began gently awakening sleepers in First and Second Class, ordering them on deck, and requiring the use of lifebelts. By 12:15 a.m., passengers were beginning to drop their frolicsome air as they secured valuables, dressed for the cold, and considered the danger that families faced. During this period, the Titanic continued to take on a prodigious amount of water, which washed deck chairs into the sea and forced engineers and mechanics topside.*

*Punctilious crewmen hurried dawdlers toward the lifeboats. Left to themselves, Third Class passengers from a variety of nations, quartered dormitory style with men in the bow and women in the stern, began convening to discuss their options. As water poured in below, the deck crew placed the sixteen wooden lifeboats onto davit or cranes. At this point, the majority,*

comforted by the belief that their ship was virtually “unsinkable,” still failed to acknowledge imminent danger. For instance, multi-millionaire John Jacob Astor ridiculed the whole operation with his insistence that the Titanic was safer than a small lifeboat.

Bruce Ismay, the White Star Line president, was becoming more frantic with the general lack of seriousness. Testy, then frantic, he screamed, “Lower away!” four times, “waving one arm in huge circles while hanging on to the davit with the other.” The crew, aware of his importance to the company, ventured to move him out of the way so they could complete their jobs. In the Marconi shack, the telegraph operator began sending and receiving messages in order to locate all rescue vessels in the area. Finally, after the crew had released the lifeboats, Captain Smith released the remaining crewmen to fend for themselves, although he continued to assist others until the end.)

3. Discuss passengers’ behavior before rescue.

*(The sixteen lifeboats reached the water with less than capacity. Most had at least two crewmen aboard to help with the rowing, signaling, and piloting. The response to a dark-of-night abandon ship brought out a mix of behaviors. Some people continued to joke about the situation. Others parted tenderly, tearfully, from their mates. Staunch wives had to be forced apart from their husbands. A few men tried to take places in the lifeboats, despite the captain’s order that women and children be given preference; most of these men were rebuffed, sometimes with the use of force. The majority of those who stayed onboard, however, were remembered with respect and gratitude for their self-sacrifice and courage in the face of certain death.*

*As the lifeboats moved out, inexperienced people blistered their hands by rowing so that undertow would not endanger the fragile life craft. Boats were tied together to create flotillas for greater safety and togetherness. People shared warm clothes, encouragement, and what comforts they could bring along in the hurried evacuation. Some wept, some prayed, some listened to the band playing ragtime before sinking into the sea, some called to near-*

*by boats. The most precarious situation was the attempted flotation of two collapsible lifeboats, one of which remained capsized, the other leaking air. The survivors on these rafts tried to keep afloat while preventing swimmers from climbing aboard and capsizing them; after a short time in the deadly freezing water, however, swimmers ceased to be a threat. Overall, selfishness and selflessness were both in evidence as survivors waited for dawn and the arrival of the Carpathia.)*

4. Explain the methods by which the incident was investigated.

*(News of the Titanic’s sinking trickled in throughout the day on April 15, and early reports were fraught with inaccuracies. Finally, at 6:15 p.m., the White Star Line’s New York office received confirmation—mysteriously delayed for several hours—that confirmed the Titanic had sunk at 2:40 a.m., with only 675 survivors. In the ensuing hours, the shipping company admitted as much to press and family members mobbing the office.*

*The U.S. Senate conducted an investigation, although questioners failed to note the high death toll among Third Class passengers. The British Court of Enquiry also solicited testimony, but returned a similar whitewash of blatant elitism. However, the most serious inquiry was the unofficial reflection of eyewitnesses, who gave interviews; shared memorabilia; and wrote letters, articles, and books. Overall, no method of inquiry at the time addressed the severe loss of life among the poorest passengers, who were walled off from the elite by gates.)*

5. List and define significant and difficult terms from the text.

*(Much of the jargon Lord employs—i.e., wind-jammer, galley, purser, keel, and Morse lamp—is necessary to explain the technicalities involved in piloting a liner and abandoning ship. For example, as Frederick Fleet reports the iceberg from the crow’s-nest, the ship is moving at 22 ½ knots, a nautical measure roughly equivalent to 25.9 mph. He uses two communications methods to report the danger—he bangs the bell and phones the bridge, where his superiors control the ship’s course.*

*The iceberg is so large that it “[towers] wet and glistening far above the forecastle deck,” the forward portion of the ship. An order “full-speed astern” reverses direction, but stopping a four-block-long projectile on its path through a calm sea requires more preparation time than Fleet could provide. Because of the grinding impact of the iceberg, Quartermaster Hitchens closes the watertight compartments below, sealing out an influx of seawater.*

*Numerous other terms indicate evasive measures. Note in particular these comments and their meanings:*

*“I hard-a-starboarded and reversed the engines, and I was going to hard-a-port around it, but she was too close,” indicating that the steersman attempted to turn quickly right, then left, in order to skirt the danger. Instead of steering past, he succeeded in turning the right side of the ship directly into the obstruction.*

*“It was dry in the other boiler rooms further aft” means that the compartments farthest from the front were not breached.*

*“Position 41.46 N 50.14 W” denotes the ship’s exact location in terms of longitude and latitude so that rescuers could be on the lookout not only for the Titanic but also for small lifeboats and swimmers, who could be swamped or missed by searchers.*

*“At 9:35 the Carpathia was moored, the gangplank lowered, and the first survivors tumbled off” describes the tedious process of parking a ship alongside a wharf and providing exits for passengers.*

*“As No. 2 prepared to cast off at 1:45, Stewart Johnson, his pockets bulging with oranges, yelled up to the Boat Deck for a razor to cut the falls,” refers to the lopping of connecting ropes which kept the lifeboat steady during boarding, but which had to be severed before the davit could lower the boat into the sea.)*

**Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level**

6. Discuss Walter Lord’s method of gathering information.

*(Like the U.S. Senate and the British Court of Enquiry, Walter Lord sought information from the most likely sources. In his*

*“Acknowledgements” section, he emphasized first-hand information through letters, inter-*

*views, publications from the White Star Line, and books, particularly Lawrence Beesley’s *The Loss of the SS Titanic* (1912), Archibald Gracie’s *The Truth About the Titanic* (1913), Captain Arthur H. Rostron’s *Home from the Sea* (1931), Commander Lightoller’s *Titanic and Other Ships* (1935), and Shan Bullock’s “Titanic” Hero: Thomas Andrews, Shipbuilder (1913). To these documentaries he added details from newspaper stories; magazine articles from Shipbuilder, Scientific American, Sphere, Illustrated London News, and Harper’s, and published interviews, reserving his greatest praise for the New York Times. He concluded: “Most fascinating, perhaps, were the papers in Belfast, where the Titanic was built, and those of Southampton, where so many of the crew lived. These were seafaring towns, and the coverage had to be good.”)*

7. Suggest places in which information is suspect. *(Walter Lord’s account of the Titanic’s sinking necessarily contains a fair amount of conjectural material, unsurprising especially considering its broad scope. From the numerous anecdotes about a flask of peppermint, a fur stole wrapped around a survivor’s feet, a prized music box, sips of brandy, and people feverishly sewing smocks for the children from blankets transported in the lifeboats, the most suspect recreations are the conversations recalled in vivid detail. The likelihood that people could remember and report so candidly suggests selective memory and more than bit of romance. For example, the boarding of Boat C: Woolner is said to have remarked, “This is getting rather a tight corner. ... (L)et’s go through the door at the end.” As the water washed over the canting deck, he yelled, “Let’s make a jump for it! ... (T)here’s plenty of room in her bow!” Another unconfirmed tale is that of Rigel, the black Newfoundland dog who “jumped from the deck of the sinking Titanic and escorted a lifeboat to the Carpathia, his joyous barks signaling Captain Rostron that he was coming.” Although the story is derided by some skeptics, many who are familiar with Newfoundlands—dogs specifically bred for water rescue in the frigid North Atlantic—say it is entirely possible.)*

8. What picture of human nature does Lord draw? *(Walter Lord is remarkably forgiving of human*

*foibles as he describes chaotic scrambling for lifeboats, stoic separation of husbands from wives and children, and the rush of steerage passengers whom crewmen overlooked in their haste to see to the comforts and safety of blue-bloods. Not forgetting the crew, Lord questioned Southampton families and discovered, "grief was staggering—20 families on one street bereaved. Montreal called off a military review. King George and President Taft exchanged condolences—and the Kaiser got into the act."*

*Lord's depiction of White Star's president, Bruce Ismay, as traumatized victim and ultimate scapegoat both highlights behavior that would have been perceived as cowardly, and recognizes that Ismay was not primarily to blame for the disaster. Lord also takes an objective approach toward Captain Smith, both detailing his professional behavior and heroic actions during the sinking, and citing evidence of possible lapses in judgment leading up to the Titanic disaster. Lord recounts, then debunks, some of the more sensational tales, including those of suicide-by-pistol on the ship's bridge on the one hand, and superhuman feats of heroism on the other, ultimately showing Smith as having been generally heroic. Lord ultimately describes people as individuals—some fearful, some brave and calm; some desperate, some level-headed and resourceful; some selfish, some heroic and self-sacrificing; some cynical, some full of strength and faith. Overall, his approach is sympathetic and humane.)*

**Questions 9 and 10—Critical Level**

9. Discuss Lord's attitude toward elitism.

*(A major theme of the book is the tremendous variance in class accommodations and the crew's attention to the American aristocracy, whom stewards pampered by tying them into their lifebelts and escorting them to the evacuation point. In the background, the sea rose up to engulf a Scheherazade's treasure of luxury—grand pianos, crystal, china, silverware, Turkish baths, mosaics, tiled walls, gilded beams, carved teak, jewels, money, furs, expensive garments, and gourmet food and dining appointments. Lord notes that such kowtowing to the elite, which resulted in death for a majority of the Third Class passengers, ended in 1912. As he concluded, "It was easier in the old days ... for*

*the Titanic was also the last stand of wealth and society in the center of public affection."*

*Hastened by the income tax and World War I, the favoritism shown the plutocracy of ocean-going vessels ceased. Unsubstantiated tales denigrating Italians failed to find sympathy. Liners no longer relegated the poorest passengers to death traps in steerage, and maritime law was changed to upgrade safety standards, requiring such changes as abandon-ship drills and sufficient lifeboats and lifebelts for all those aboard—not to mention 24-hour manning of radios.)*

10. Explain why reconstructing a catastrophe is a difficult literary task, and how Lord resolves it. *(Walter Lord's book presents a successful resolution of the journalist's nightmare—creating an accurate eyewitness account of a cataclysmic event. This is generally a difficult task, since the hallmarks of such a disaster include confusion, shock, and faulty memory. Compounding the problem, the event is more than 40 years in the past at the time of writing. Using original sources and personal interviews as much as possible, Lord makes no attempt to sort out the numerous points of view. Rather, he follows a chronological retelling, returning at times to add an overlooked perception, such as the one offered by those arriving topside from steerage and viewing the evacuation procedure for the first time.*

*To facilitate restructuring of events, Lord depends on the most beneficial of narrative methods: he allows witnesses from different strata to discuss each stage of the sinking. For example, he shows the collision from the perspective of passengers, crew, and officers, as well as from the Californian's staff. Lord also appends schematic drawings, acknowledgements, and a passenger list divided by class, all of which give the reader the impression that he has covered the material with as much attention to detail as possible.)*

**Questions 11-14—Creative Level**

11. Compose a fictional scene in which a family separates as the mother and children are directed to lifeboats and adult male family members remain behind. Structure their dia-

logue. Suggest what mementos the two groups might exchange.

12. List and characterize members of the *Titanic's* crew. Determine whether the staff was prepared to encounter disaster.
13. Analyze Lord's deft choice of details, such as the watchman's view of the collision, Ismay's mental disintegration, pampered lapdogs, expensive clothing and jewels, the sound of breaking and sliding debris as the nose end went under, and the dramatic moment when the ship upended and plunged into the Atlantic.
14. Using examples from Walter Lord's book, define point of view. Explain why each eyewitness gave an individual account of the tragedy.

## Across the Curriculum

### Math

1. Use graphs to demonstrate these facts: the loss of life in first, second, and third class; discrepancies in reported totals; and size and displacement of the *Titanic* as compared to other notable liners, particularly the *Carpathia*, *Queen Mary*, and *Queen Elizabeth II*.
2. Determine how many miles the *Titanic* traveled before sinking, and how many miles were left of its voyage to New York.
3. Research information on the location of the wreckage and its relation to the radioed position shortly before sinking. Account for shifts of position.

### Social Studies

1. Write a research paper on the effects of the income tax, World War I, and the sinking of the *Titanic* on the U.S. upper class.
2. Locate information on international agreements concerning distress signals and the obligation to help disabled vessels. Discuss how these accords altered during war or between hostile nations.
3. Create a map on which you pinpoint pertinent scenes. Note the location of Southampton, Cherbourg, Queenstown, Cape Race, and New York.

### Economics

1. Determine the worth of the *Titanic* itself. List valuables, which treasure hunters believe

remain undisturbed in its safes. Discuss other aspects of a recovery mission that would make the venture profitable. Research about the studies done since it has been found.

2. Make a comparison chart of prices for First-, Second-, and Third-Class passage aboard current liners traveling the Southampton-New York route. Contrast the cost of boat travel with airfares in first, business, and coach classes.

### Psychology

1. Discuss the spontaneous urge to rescue women and children. Explain how twentieth-century gallantry contrasted with attitudes of earlier eras, particularly medieval times.
2. Explain why musicians, waiters, barbers, and doctors would choose a professional life aboard a liner rather than more conventional workplaces.

### Cinema

1. Make a list of dramatic scenes from the novel which would require imaginative use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and stunts—particularly the sinking of the *Titanic*, the rescue operation, and arrival alongside the Statue of Liberty.
2. Contrast Captain Smith to the sea captains in such films as *Moby Dick*, *Hawaii*, *The Poseidon Adventure*, *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, *Kon-Tiki*, *Lord Jim*, *The Hunt for Red October*, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, and *Roots*.

### Health

1. Make a written report on the effects of cold on the body. How rapidly would hypothermia set in for those left in the water after the sinking?
2. List and define first aid skills essential to a seagoing life, such as CPR, stitching a wound, and treating exposure and frostbite.
3. Suggest activities to help people in cramped places such as lifeboats to maintain circulation, warmth, and mobility. For example, organize a group sing or hand games.

### Language

1. Make an exhaustive alphabetized glossary of sailing terms from the book, such as list, port, starboard, davit, hatch, funnel, falls, steerage, bulkhead, bridge, and sea lane.
2. Using examples from the book, define disaster.



3. Make a list of sense images under the heading of sound, touch, sight, smell, and taste. For example, "As No. 2 prepared to cast off at 1:45, Stewart Johnson, his pockets bulging with oranges, yelled up to the Boat Deck for a razor to cut the falls," and "Somebody produced a deck of cards, and as they sat playing and laughing, suddenly there came that grinding jar."

#### **Art**

1. Create a memorial to Captain Smith, insignia for the White Star Line, advertisements for cruises from Southampton to New York, welcoming signs to New York, a map of the North Atlantic Ocean, shipboard or harbor rules, notes for an abandon-ship drill, or a newspaper account of inquiries into the sinking of the *Titanic*.
2. Keeping in mind that not all passengers would speak English, draw, with a group, detailed picture instructions of how to abandon ship.

#### **Science**

1. Explain the formation and drift of icebergs.
2. Explain the effects of extended time in cold sea water. Suggest ways that survivors should be treated.
3. Demonstrate the effect of icy water on the ship's steam boilers. Explain the sounds that passengers heard as the *Titanic* took on water.
4. Discuss methods which might refloat the *Titanic*, such as the use of pumps or flotation devices.

### **Student Involvement Activities**

1. Write an essay comparing Lord's depiction of a disaster with similar episodes in Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*; Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim*; James N. Hall and Charles B. Nordhoff's *Mutiny on the Bounty*; *The Diary of Anne Frank*; Orson Welles's "The Night America Panicked"; Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii*; and Elie Wiesel's *Night*.
2. Lead a discussion of the responses of people to imminent death. Note attitudes toward prayer, family, class distinctions, honor, nationality, valuables, duty, and selfishness.
3. Make a study of the evolution of passenger travel by ship. Propose how innovation will alter future ship travel.
4. Write an extended definition of objectivity. Give

- specific examples from any of Lord's works.
5. Create a chart of evocative, rhetorical techniques as found in Lord's writing. Concentrate on dialect, alliteration, tactile imagery, repetition, periodic and balanced sentences, caesura, onomatopoeia, simile, hyperbole, understatement, cacophony, euphony, and metaphor.
6. Make a list of books that you would take along on an extended sea voyage. Divide your list into fiction, nonfiction, and reference. Include a diary or journal and explain how you would record your experiences.
7. Suggest methods by which families and survivors can recover from trauma. Explain why writing is a useful method of healing.

### **Alternate Assessment**

1. List in chronological order the twenty most significant events in the *Titanic's* history.
2. Make a list of scenes from the novel that express contrasting attitudes toward romance, individuality, loyalty, guilt, idealism, self-esteem, ignorance, duty, fate, masculinity, truth, fear, and decency. Next to each, indicate how the example illuminates a bit of history.
3. Compose an overview of Captain Smith's professionalism.

## Vocabulary Test

Select words from the following list to complete the blanks in the passage below. You will have words left over when you finish.

articulate	culprits	overriding
bedlam	elusive	repartee
benefits	filtering	retainers
chivalry	floe	retrospect
commentator	fragile	scores
complacency	ineffectually	surmounted
conceded	maelstrom	technology
convivial	nobler	tranquil
coxswain	noblesse oblige	unperturbed

But along with the prejudices, some (1) \_\_\_\_\_ instincts also were lost. Men would go on being brave, but never again would they be brave in quite the same way. These men on the *Titanic* had a touch—there was something about Ben Guggenheim changing to evening dress ... about Howard Case flicking his cigarette as he waved to Mrs. Graham ... or even about Colonel Gracie panting along the decks, gallantly if (2) \_\_\_\_\_ searching for Mrs. Candee. Today nobody could carry off these little gestures of (3) \_\_\_\_\_, but they did that night.

An air of (4) \_\_\_\_\_ has vanished too. During the agonizing days of uncertainty in New York, the Astors, the Guggenheims and others like them were not content to sit by their phones or to send friends and (5) \_\_\_\_\_ to the White Star Line offices. They went themselves. Not because it was the best way to get information, but because they felt they ought to be there in person.

Today families are as loyal as ever, but the phone would probably do. Few would insist on going themselves and braving the (6) \_\_\_\_\_ of the steamship office. Yet the others didn't hesitate a minute. True, Vincent Astor did get better information than the rest—and some even spoke to General Manager Franklin himself—but the point is that these people didn't merely keep in touch—they were there.

(7) \_\_\_\_\_ everything else, the *Titanic* also marked the end of a general feeling of confidence. Until then men felt they had found the answer to a steady, orderly, civilized life. For 100 years the Western world had been at peace. For 100 years (8) \_\_\_\_\_ had steadily improved. For 100 years the (9) \_\_\_\_\_ of peace and industry seemed to be (10) \_\_\_\_\_ satisfactorily through society. In (11) \_\_\_\_\_, there may seem less ground for confidence, but at the time most (12) \_\_\_\_\_ people felt life was all right.

The *Titanic* woke them up. Never again would they be quite so sure of themselves. In technology especially, the disaster was a terrible blow. Here was the "unsinkable ship"—perhaps man's greatest engineering achievement—going down the first time it sailed.

But it went beyond that. If this supreme achievement was so terribly (13) \_\_\_\_\_, what about everything else? If wealth meant so little on this cold April night, did it mean so much the rest of the year? (14) \_\_\_\_\_ of ministers preached that the *Titanic* was a heaven-sent lesson to awaken people from their (15) \_\_\_\_\_, to punish them for top-heavy faith in material progress. If it was a lesson, it worked—people have never been sure of anything since.

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## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

Supply the following information concerning the *Titanic*:

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. name of her sister ship
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. captain
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. departure date
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. time of sinking
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. height
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. length
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. propulsion
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. horsepower
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. launching point
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. launch date
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. company
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. departure point on maiden voyage
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. first port of call
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. second port of call
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. destination

### Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Beside each quotation, place the name of the speaker (a) and the person being addressed (b).

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1a. "Iceberg right ahead."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1b.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2a. "Send the call for assistance."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2b.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3a. "We are safer here than in that little boat."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3b.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4a. "If you can get me in some room where I can be quiet,  
I wish you would."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4b.
  
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5a. "There's no time to lose!"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5b.

### Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The British board of inquiry made an accurate count of victims.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The suction caused by the ship's immersion pulled victims back to the disaster scene.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The sixteen lifeboats were tied to the upper deck on the starboard side.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The *Titanic's* commanding officer was a new employee of the company.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Racial slurs were lodged against Italians for rushing the lifeboats.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The *Californian* did everything possible to reach the *Titanic* before it sank.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. The *Carpathia* was equal in size to the *Titanic*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. News of the disaster reached New York in minutes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Telegraph reports of survivors were at first greatly exaggerated.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Rescue was facilitated by a calm sea.

**Part IV: Essay Questions (30 points)**

Choose any two to answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the activities of the passengers shortly before lifeboats were lowered.
2. Explain why the *Titanic* sank.
3. Analyze the effect of the sinking of the *Titanic* on sea travel.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Underline an answer to complete each statement below.

1. The *Titanic* bore a striking likeness to its sister ship the (***Carpathia, Olympic, Frankfort, Californian***).
2. (***John Jacob Astor, President Bruce Ismay, Captain Rostron, Captain Smith***) gave the order to abandon ship.
3. Ismay asked Dr. McGhee to (***serve brandy, set a course for the Azores, leave him alone, open the gates for Third Class passengers***).
4. From Southampton, the *Titanic* sailed directly to (***Cherbourg, Cardiff, Queenstown, Cape Race***).
5. The *Titanic's* crew had received adequate (***warning of icebergs, instructions about maintaining flotation, sealed compartments below C Deck, collapsible rafts stocked with flares***).
6. From ten miles away, Third Officer Charles Victor saw the *Titanic* (***lurch to stern, drop sixteen lifeboats, flash a CQD, veer to port***).
7. By 2:20 a.m. April 15, (***the Titanic was gone, all lifeboats were roped together, the Californian had picked up all survivors, Captain Smith had decided to shoot himself***).
8. New Yorkers (***paid little attention to the returning survivors, turned out by the thousands to witness the return of the Carpathia, ridiculed John Jacob Astor for taking a place that might have been used by women and children, heard no news of the disaster***).
9. It was the *Titanic's* good fortune to (***meet with calm seas, sail in British waters, pass the Olympic, founder near the Azores***).
10. For decades after the sinking, *Titanic* survivors (***refused to discuss their financial and personal losses, assisted researchers in assembling anecdotes, sued the White Star Line for negligence, urged that divers examine the wreckage***).

### Part II: Identification (20 points)

Identify the significance of the following terms.

1. Latitude 41° 46' N, Longitude 50° 14' W
2. davit
3. Marconi
4. White Star Line
5. CQD
6. ragtime
7. Ismay
8. steerage
9. Cunard
10. Captain Rostron

## A Night to Remember Walter Lord

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### Part III: Matching (20 points)

Match the following terms with the definitions in the lettered list.

- |                        |                                                              |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. quartermaster | A. crew's quarters                                           |
| _____ 2. forecastle    | B. prayer beads                                              |
| _____ 3. crow's nest   | C. ship's officer in charge of signals                       |
| _____ 4. bulkhead      | D. tilt                                                      |
| _____ 5. gunwale       | E. crew member who distributes weight evenly aboard the ship |
| _____ 6. rosaries      | F. observation point                                         |
| _____ 7. trimmer       | G. ship's side                                               |
| _____ 8. list          | H. smokestack                                                |
| _____ 9. tiller        | I. rudder                                                    |
| _____ 10. funnel       | J. ship's inner walls                                        |

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose any TWO to answer in complete sentences.

1. Account for legends and myths about the *Titanic*.
2. Discuss the significance of Morgan Robertson's *Futility*.
3. Analyze the mythological significance of the names *Titanic* and *Atlantic*.

## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY TEST

1. nobler
2. ineffectually
3. chivalry
4. noblesse oblige
5. retainers
6. bedlam
7. overriding
8. technology
9. benefits
10. filtering
11. retrospect
12. articulate
13. fragile
14. scores
15. complacency

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Short Answer (30 points)

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. <i>Olympic</i>     | 9. Belfast          |
| 2. Smith              | 10. May 31, 1911    |
| 3. April 10, 1912     | 11. White Star Line |
| 4. 2:20 a.m., 4/15/12 | 12. Southampton     |
| 5. Eleven stories     | 13. Cherbourg       |
| 6. four city blocks   | 14. Queenstown      |
| 7. triple screw       | 15. New York        |
| 8. 50,000             |                     |

#### Part II: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- 1a. Lookout Frederick Fleet
- 1b. officer on the bridge
  
- 2a. Captain Smith
- 2b. First Operator John George Phillips
  
- 3a. John Jacob Astor
- 3b. Second Officer Lightoller
  
- 4a. Bruce Ismay
- 4b. Dr. McGhee
  
- 5a. Bruce Ismay
- 5b. Third Officer Pitman

#### Part III: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F  |
| 2. T | 7. F  |
| 3. F | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. T  |
| 5. T | 10. T |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

1. *Olympic*
2. Captain Smith
3. leave him alone
4. Cherbourg
5. warning of icebergs
6. veer to port
7. the *Titanic* was gone
8. turned out by the thousands to witness the return of the *Carpathia*
9. meet with calm seas
10. assisted researchers in assembling anecdotes

#### Part II: Identification (20 points)

1. the *Titanic's* location at the time of the collision
2. the crane from which a lifeboat is launched
3. the inventor of wireless communication
4. the company that owned the *Titanic*
5. an old form of SOS
6. music played by the band as the *Titanic* sank
7. White Star Line president
8. location of third-class compartments
9. company that owned the *Carpathia*
10. supervisor of the rescue of the *Titanic's* survivors

#### Part III: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. B  |
| 2. A | 7. E  |
| 3. F | 8. D  |
| 4. J | 9. I  |
| 5. G | 10. H |

#### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

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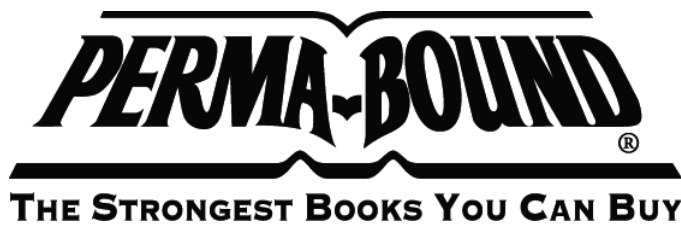
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