

Titanic: Voices From the Disaster



Summary

Experience the *Titanic's* final voyage through the words of its survivors. First-person accounts convey the confusion, panic, fear, and courage displayed during the ship's final hours, when split-second decisions meant the difference between life and death.

Author Deborah Hopkinson is passionate about history. She says the *Titanic* was a very difficult topic to research because there are so many individual stories to tell.

Genre/Text Type Informational Text/Chapter Book

Themes/Ideas historical events; natural disasters; courage in the face of adversity; self-sacrifice; survival

Unit Focus How do people respond when disaster strikes?

Author's Craft combines facts with first-person accounts; includes people who represent a range of ages and backgrounds; vivid, detailed descriptions; graphic features provide additional information

Key Understandings

- Deborah Hopkinson describes people from a wide range of backgrounds to convey a variety of experiences.
- Hopkinson combines facts and first-person accounts with vivid descriptions to help readers visualize events and connect to people's experiences during the disaster.
- Hopkinson provides additional information through captioned photographs, historical documents, and illustrations.

Read • Cite Textual Evidence • Discuss

Set Expectations/Use Readers' Notebooks Tell students to notice and cite textual evidence of how the author combines facts, first-person accounts, and vivid details to help readers understand what people experienced during this disaster. Have students cite evidence of how captioned photographs and historical documents help support understanding of key information.

Remind students, as they read, to write in their notebooks what they want to talk about with their group, including any questions they have. To enliven the discussion and help students focus their reading, you may wish to post on the board questions such as the following:

- How does Hopkinson use first-person accounts to convey a range of human experiences?
- How do the book's vivid details connect us to what people endured during the tragedy?
- How do the graphic features help us to better understand what happened?

Textual Evidence of	Possible Citation: Analysis & Support	Page
First-person accounts	"I clung desperately to my husband. . . . A man seized me by the arm then another . . . dragged me away by main strength."	pp. 112–113
	"We could hear the popping and cracking, and the deck raised up and got so steep that the people could not stand on their feet . . . So they fell down and slid on the deck into the water . . ."	p. 137
	". . . I lifted myself to look past her shoulder and saw the tail end of our ship aimed straight up toward the stars in the sky. . . ."	p. 150
Vivid descriptions	As [the funnel] fell, the air filled with soot, and streams of sparks shot into the black, star-studded sky.	p. 138
	The noise was horrific. Everything inside the boat was crashing around—machinery, ovens, beds, mirrors, china, pianos . . .	p. 143
Support provided by graphic features	The illustration shows the Titanic sinking as passengers in lifeboats watch in horror.	pp. 140–141
	Photograph supported by caption: . . . Jack Thayer and others endured a tense night standing on the bottom of this boat.	p. 159

Write and Reflect Have students use their Readers' Notebooks to ensure their questions have been addressed and to record new thinking gained from the discussion.