

Before You Read

R.M.S. Titanic

Literary Focus

Irony: It's Unexpected

The following account of the *Titanic's* maiden voyage illustrates both **situational irony** (which occurs when what happens is the opposite of what we expect to happen or should happen) and **dramatic irony** (which occurs in literature when the reader knows something important that the characters do not know).

The passengers on the *Titanic*, including the great ship's builders and its financial backers, believed that they were on an unsinkable vessel. Their confidence, or arrogance, is one of the great ironies of twentieth-century history. Even the naming of the ship is ironic.

The Titans were ancient Greek gods possessing enormous size and incredible strength. For eons they reigned supreme in the universe, according to Greek mythology. Perhaps those who named the ship had forgotten that even the Titans did not rule forever.

Objective and Subjective Writing

This account of the sinking of the *Titanic* may remind you of other disaster stories. When reporting on a catastrophe, different writers may begin with the same facts yet present the event in vastly differing ways.

In **objective writing** only the facts are included; the writer's views aren't revealed. Those facts, however, can be

presented in an engaging and compelling manner. In **subjective writing** the writer adds his or her **opinions**, judgments, or feelings. As you read, determine Baldwin's approach. What stance does he strike immediately in his first paragraph?

Reading Skills

Understanding Text Structures

The sinking of the *Titanic* involved a complex series of actions occurring within a few hours. In writing his account of the disaster, Baldwin uses the **headings I–V** as **text structures** to organize and divide that complicated rush of events. Each numbered part covers a different stage in the tragedy. Another chronological text structure is the notation of time—as the minutes tick by in Part II. These reminders build suspense and help you keep stark track of the unfolding disaster.

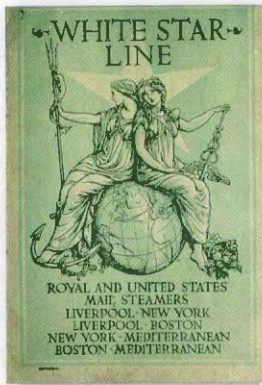


The *Titanic*, underwater 375 miles southeast of Newfoundland, in the summer of 1991.



Grade 8 Review Reading Standard 2.7
Evaluate the structural patterns of text.

Reading Standard 3.8
Interpret and evaluate the impact of ironies in a text.



The *Titanic*'s captain, E. J. Smith.

Make the Connection

Quickwrite

Choose any kind of disaster—a sinking ship, an earthquake, a raging tornado, a flood, an avalanche. Put yourself there. Write briefly about how you think you'd feel and what you'd do. Save your notes.

Background

The following article on the *Titanic* disaster was written by Hanson Baldwin in 1934. Baldwin's account was based on exhaustive factual research at the time, including a review of ship logs and other records as well as numerous interviews.

Since the publication of this landmark article, public fascination with the *Titanic* disaster has continued to grow, and more information has been revealed. For example, a pioneering underwater exploration of the wreck in 1986 was unable to find a three-hundred-foot gash in the ship, which Baldwin described. Instead, divers in a mini-submarine saw buckled seams and separated plates in the ship's hull, which are probably what caused the ship to flood and sink.

Vocabulary Development

superlative (sə·pər'lə·tiv) *adj.*: supreme; better than all others.

ascertain (as'ər·tān') *v.*: find out with certainty; determine.

corroborated (kə·rəb'ə·rāt'id) *v.*: supported; upheld the truth of.

quelled (kweld) *v.*: quieted; subdued.

poised (poizd) *v.* used as *adj.*: balanced; in position.

perfunctory (pər·funk'tə·rē) *adj.*: not exerting much effort; unconcerned.

garbled (gär'bəld) *v.* used as *adj.*: confused; mixed up.

recriminations (ri·krim'ə·nā'shənz) *n.*: accusations against an accuser; countercharges.

pertinent (pərt'n·ənt) *adj.*: having some connection with the subject.

vainly (vān'lē) *adv.*: without success; fruitlessly.



R.M.S.
TITANIC

Hanson W. Baldwin

OUT OF THE DARK SHE CAME,
A VAST, DIM, WHITE,
MONSTROUS SHAPE . . .



The White Star liner *Titanic*, largest ship the world had ever known, sailed from Southampton on her maiden voyage to New York on April 10, 1912. The paint on her strakes¹ was fair and bright; she was fresh from Harland and Wolff's Belfast yards, strong in the strength of her forty-six thousand tons of steel, bent, hammered, shaped, and riveted through the three years of her slow birth.

1. **strakes** *n.*: single lines of metal plating extending the whole length of a ship.

There was little fuss and fanfare at her sailing; her sister ship, the *Olympic*—slightly smaller than the *Titanic*—had been in service for some months and to her had gone the thunder of the cheers.

But the *Titanic* needed no whistling steamers or shouting crowds to call attention to her superlative qualities. Her bulk dwarfed the ships near her as longshoremen singled up her mooring lines and cast off the turns of heavy rope from the dock bollards.² She was not only the largest ship afloat, but was believed to be the safest. Carlisle, her builder, had given her double bottoms and had divided her hull into sixteen watertight compartments, which made her, men thought, unsinkable. She had been built to be and had been described as a gigantic lifeboat. Her designers' dreams of a triple-screw³ giant, a luxurious, floating hotel, which could speed to New York at twenty-three knots, had been carefully translated from blueprints and mold loft lines at the Belfast yards into a living reality.

The *Titanic's* sailing from Southampton, though quiet, was not wholly uneventful. As the liner moved slowly toward the end of her dock that April day, the surge of her passing sucked away from the quay⁴ the steamer *New York*, moored just to seaward of the *Titanic's* berth. There were sharp cracks as the manila mooring lines of the *New York* parted under the strain. The frayed ropes writhed and whistled through the air and snapped down among the waving crowd on the pier; the *New York* swung toward the *Titanic's* bow, was checked and dragged back to the dock barely in time to avert a collision. Seamen muttered, thought it an ominous start.

Past Spithead and the Isle of Wight the *Titanic* steamed. She called at Cherbourg at dusk and then laid her course for Queenstown. At 1:30 P.M.

2. **bollards** (bāl'ərdz) *n.*: strong posts on a pier or wharf for holding a ship's mooring ropes.
3. **triple-screw**: three-propellered.
4. **quay** (kē) *n.*: dock.

on Thursday, April 11, she stood out of Queenstown harbor, screaming gulls soaring in her wake, with 2,201 persons—men, women, and children—aboard.

Occupying the Empire bedrooms and Georgian suites of the first-class accommodations were many well-known men and women—Colonel John Jacob Astor and his young bride; Major Archibald Butt, military aide to President Taft, and his friend Frank D. Millet, the painter; John B. Thayer, vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and Charles M. Hays, president of the Grand Trunk Railway of Canada; W. T. Stead, the English journalist; Jacques Futrelle, French novelist; H. B. Harris, theatrical manager, and Mrs. Harris; Mr. and Mrs. Isidor Straus; and J. Bruce Ismay, chairman and managing director of the White Star Line.

Down in the plain wooden cabins of the steerage class were 706 immigrants to the land of promise, and trimly stowed in the great holds was a cargo valued at \$420,000: oak beams, sponges, wine, calabashes,⁵ and an odd miscellany of the common and the rare.

The *Titanic* took her departure on Fastnet Light⁶ and, heading into the night, laid her course for New York. She was due at quarantine⁷ the following Wednesday morning.

Sunday dawned fair and clear. The *Titanic* steamed smoothly toward the west, faint

5. **calabashes** (kal'ə·bāsh'əz) *n.*: large smoking pipes made from the necks of gourds.
6. **Fastnet Light**: lighthouse at the southwestern tip of Ireland. After the Fastnet Light there is only open sea until the coast of North America.
7. **quarantine** (kwōr'ən·tēn) *n.*: place where a ship is held in port after arrival to determine whether its passengers and cargo are free of communicable diseases. *Quarantine* can also be used for the length of time a ship is held.

Vocabulary

superlative (sə·pər'lə·tiv) *adj.*: supreme; better than all others.

Form No. 1-10-15511. Sent date: 12 APR 1912

The Marconi International Marine Communication Company, Ltd.
 WATERGATE HOUSE, YORK BUILDING, ADELPHI, LONDON, W.C.

No. 111 OFFICE CARONIA CHARGES TO PAY. 12 APR 1912

Prefix 7051 Code 7051 Words 33

Office of Origin CARONIA

Service Instructions: Radio

Marconi Charge msy 7/2

Other Line Charge

Delivery Charge

Total

Office used in msy 7/2 By whom sent msy 7/2

READ THE CONDITIONS PRINTED ON THE BACK OF THE FORM

To: Captain Titanic

<u>Westbound</u>	<u>steamers</u>	<u>report</u>	<u>bergs</u>	<u>growl</u>
<u>and</u>	<u>field ice</u>	<u>in</u>	<u>42 N</u>	<u>from</u>
<u>49 to</u>	<u>51 W</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>th</u>
			<u>compts</u>	<u>B</u>

Message from the *Caronia*, warning of icebergs and tracts of floating ice.

Second Operator Harold Bride.



streamers of brownish smoke trailing from her funnels. The purser held services in the saloon in the morning; on the steerage deck aft⁸ the immigrants were playing games and a Scotsman was puffing “The Campbells Are Coming” on his bagpipes in the midst of the uproar.

At 9:00 A.M. a message from the steamer *Caronia* sputtered into the wireless shack:

Captain, *Titanic*—Westbound steamers report bergs growlers and field ice 42 degrees N. from 49 degrees to 51 degrees W. 12th April.

Compliments—Barr.

It was cold in the afternoon; the sun was brilliant, but the *Titanic*, her screws turning over at seventy-five revolutions per minute, was approaching the Banks.⁹

In the Marconi cabin¹⁰ Second Operator Harold Bride, earphones clamped on his head, was figuring accounts; he did not stop to answer when he heard *MWL*, Continental Morse for

8. **aft adv.:** in the rear of a ship.

9. **Banks:** Grand Banks, shallow waters near the south-east coast of Newfoundland.

10. **Marconi cabin:** room where messages were received and sent by radio.

the nearby Leyland liner, *Californian*, calling the *Titanic*. The *Californian* had some message about three icebergs; he didn't bother then to

take it down. About 1:42 P.M. the rasping spark of those days spoke again across the water. It was the *Baltic*, calling the *Titanic*, warning her of ice on the steamer track. Bride took the message down and sent it up to the bridge.¹¹ The officer-of-the-deck glanced at it; sent it to the bearded master of the *Titanic*, Captain E. C. Smith,¹² a veteran of the White Star service. It was lunchtime then; the captain, walking along the promenade deck,

saw Mr. Ismay, stopped, and handed him the message without comment. Ismay read it, stuffed it in his pocket, told two ladies about the icebergs, and resumed his walk. Later, about 7:15 P.M., the captain requested the return of the message in order to post it in the chart room for the information of officers.

Dinner that night in the Jacobean dining room was gay. It was bitter on deck, but the night was calm and fine; the sky was moonless but studded with stars twinkling coldly in the clear air.

After dinner some of the second-class passengers gathered in the saloon, where the Reverend Mr. Carter conducted a “hymn singsong.” It was almost ten o'clock and the stewards were waiting with biscuits and coffee as the group sang:

O, hear us when we cry to Thee
 For those in peril on the sea.

On the bridge Second Officer Lightoller—short, stocky, efficient—was relieved at ten o'clock by First Officer Murdoch. Lightoller had talked with other officers about the proximity of ice; at least five wireless ice warnings had

11. **bridge n.:** raised structure on a ship. The ship is controlled from the bridge.

12. Smith's initials were actually E. J., not E. C.

reached the ship; lookouts had been cautioned to be alert; captains and officers expected to reach the field at any time after 9:30 P.M. At twenty-two knots, its speed unslackened, the *Titanic* plowed on through the night.

Lightoller left the darkened bridge to his relief and turned in. Captain Smith went to his cabin. The steerage was long since quiet; in the first and second cabins lights were going out; voices were growing still; people were asleep. Murdoch paced back and forth on the bridge, peering out over the dark water, glancing now and then at the compass in front of Quartermaster Hichens at the wheel.

In the crow's-nest, lookout Frederick Fleet and his partner, Leigh, gazed down at the water, still and unruffled in the dim, starlit darkness. Behind and below them the ship, a white shadow with here and there a last winking light; ahead of them a dark and silent and cold ocean.

There was a sudden clang. "Dong-dong. Dong-dong. Dong-dong. Dong!" The metal clapper of the great ship's bell struck out 11:30. Mindful of the warnings, Fleet strained his eyes, searching the darkness for the dreaded ice. But there were only the stars and the sea.

In the wireless room, where Phillips, first operator, had relieved Bride, the buzz of the *Californian's* set again crackled into the earphones:

Californian: "Say, old man, we are stuck here, surrounded by ice."

Titanic: "Shut up, shut up; keep out. I am talking to Cape Race; you are jamming my signals."

Then, a few minutes later—about 11:40 . . .



Out of the dark she came, a vast, dim, white, monstrous shape, directly in the *Titanic's* path. For a moment Fleet doubted his eyes. But she was a deadly reality, this ghastly *thing*. Frantically, Fleet struck three



Lookout
Frederick Fleet.



First Operator
Jack Phillips.

bells—*something dead ahead*. He snatched the telephone and called the bridge:

"Iceberg! Right ahead!"

The first officer heard but did not stop to acknowledge the message.

"Hard-a-starboard!"

Hichens strained at the wheel; the bow swung slowly to port. The monster was almost upon them now.

Murdoch leaped to the engine-room telegraph. Bells clangd. Far below in the engine room those bells struck the first warning. Danger! The

indicators on the dial faces swung round to "Stop!" Then "Full speed astern!" Frantically the engineers turned great valve wheels; answered the bridge bells . . .

There was a slight shock, a brief scraping, a small list to port. Shell ice—slabs and chunks of it—fell on the foredeck. Slowly the *Titanic* stopped.

Captain Smith hurried out of his cabin.

"What has the ship struck?"

Murdoch answered, "An iceberg, sir. I hard-a-starboarded and reversed the engines, and I was going to hard-a-port around it, but she was too close. I could not do any more. I have closed the watertight doors."

Fourth Officer Boxhall, other officers, the carpenter, came to the bridge. The captain sent Boxhall and the carpenter below to ascertain the damage.

A few lights switched on in the first and second cabins; sleepy passengers peered through porthole glass; some casually asked the stewards:

"Why have we stopped?"

"I don't know, sir, but I don't suppose it is anything much."

In the smoking room a quorum¹³ of gamblers and their prey were still sitting round a poker table; the usual crowd of kibitzers¹⁴ looked on. They had felt the slight jar of the collision and had seen an eighty-foot ice mountain glide by the smoking-room windows, but the night was calm and clear, the *Titanic* was "unsinkable"; they hadn't bothered to go on deck.

But far below, in the warren of passages on the starboard side forward, in the forward holds and boiler rooms, men could see that the *Titanic's* hurt was mortal. In No. 6 boiler room,

where the red glow from the furnaces lighted up the naked, sweaty chests of coal-blackened firemen, water was pouring through a great gash about two feet above the floor plates. This was no slow leak; the ship was open to the sea; in ten minutes there were eight feet of water in No. 6. Long before then the stokers had raked the flaming fires out of the furnaces and had scrambled through the watertight doors in No. 5 or had climbed up the long steel ladders to safety. When Boxhall looked at the mailroom in No. 3 hold, twenty-four feet above the keel, the mailbags were already floating about in the slushing water. In No. 5 boiler room a stream of water spurted into an empty bunker. All six compartments forward of No. 4 were open to the sea; in ten seconds the iceberg's jagged claw had ripped a three-hundred-foot slash in the bottom of the great *Titanic*.¹⁵

Reports came to the bridge; Ismay in dressing gown ran out on deck in the cold, still, starlit night, climbed up the bridge ladder.

"What has happened?"

Captain Smith: "We have struck ice."

"Do you think she is seriously damaged?"

Captain Smith: "I'm afraid she is."

Ismay went below and passed Chief Engineer William Bell, fresh from an inspection of the damaged compartments. Bell corroborated

15. An underwater expedition to the *Titanic* wreck in 1986 led by the explorer Dr. Robert Ballard revealed loosened or buckled seams in the ship's hull but no three-hundred-foot gash. Ballard concluded that the collision of the ship with the iceberg caused the buckling of the seams and a separation of the hull's plates, which in turn allowed water to enter the ship and sink it. This theory explains why survivors said they barely felt the fatal collision when it occurred.

Vocabulary

ascertain (as'ər-tān') v.: find out with certainty; determine.

corroborated (kə-rāb'ə-rāt'id) v.: supported; upheld the truth of.

13. **quorum** (kwôr'əm) n.: number of people required for a particular activity—in this case, for a game.

14. **kibitzers** (kib'it-sərz) n.: talkative onlookers who often give unwanted advice.

the captain's statement; hurried back down the glistening steel ladders to his duty. Man after man followed him—Thomas Andrews, one of the ship's designers, Archie Frost, the builder's chief engineer, and his twenty assistants—men who had no posts of duty in the engine room but whose traditions called them there.

On deck, in corridor and stateroom, life flowed again. Men, women, and children awoke and questioned; orders were given to uncover the lifeboats; water rose into the firemen's quarters; half-dressed stokers streamed up on deck. But the passengers—most of them—did not know that the *Titanic* was sinking. The shock of the collision had been so slight that some were not awakened by it; the *Titanic* was so huge that she must be unsinkable; the night was too calm, too beautiful, to think of death at sea.

Captain Smith half ran to the door of the radio shack. Bride, partly dressed, eyes dulled with sleep, was standing behind Phillips, waiting. "Send the call for assistance."

The blue spark danced: "CQD—CQD—CQD—CQ—"16

Miles away Marconi men heard. Cape Race heard it, and the steamships *La Provence* and *Mt. Temple*.

The sea was surging into the *Titanic*'s hold. At 12:20 the water burst into the seamen's quarters through a collapsed fore-and-aft wooden bulkhead. Pumps strained in the engine rooms—men and machinery making a futile fight against the sea. Steadily the water rose.

The boats were swung out—slowly, for the deckhands were late in reaching their stations; there had been no boat drill, and many of the crew did not know to what boats they were assigned. Orders were shouted; the safety valves had lifted, and steam was blowing off in a great rushing roar. In the chart house Fourth Officer

Boxhall bent above a chart, working rapidly with pencil and dividers.

12:25 A.M. Boxhall's position is sent out to a fleet of vessels: "Come at once; we have struck a berg."

To the Cunarder *Carpathia* (Arthur Henry Rostron, Master, New York to Liverpool, fifty-eight miles away): "It's a CQD, old man. Position 41-46N.; 50-14 W."

The blue spark dancing: "Sinking; cannot hear for noise of steam."

12:30 A.M. The word is passed: "Women and children in the boats." Stewards finish waking their passengers below; life preservers are tied on; some men smile at the precaution. "The *Titanic* is unsinkable." The *Mt. Temple* starts for the *Titanic*; the *Carpathia*, with a double watch in her stokeholds, radios, "Coming hard." The CQD changes the course of many ships—but not of one; the operator of the *Californian*, nearby, has just put down his earphones and turned in.


The CQD flashes over land and sea from Cape Race to New York; newspaper city rooms leap to life and presses whirl.

On the *Titanic*, water creeps over the bulkhead between Nos. 5 and 6 firerooms. She is going down by the head; the engineers—fighting a losing battle—are forced back foot by foot by the rising water. Down the promenade deck, Happy Jock Hume, the bandsman, runs with his instrument.

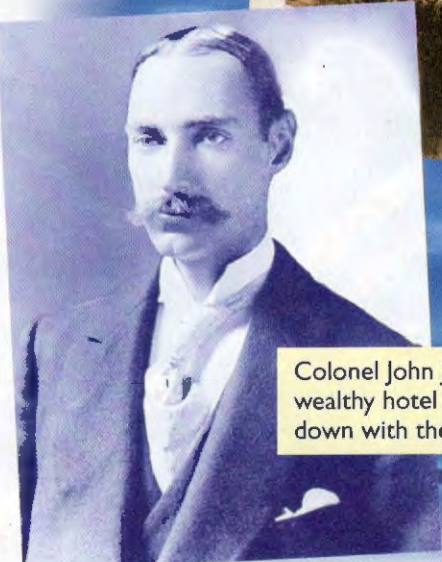
12:45 A.M. Murdoch, in charge on the starboard side, eyes tragic, but calm and cool, orders boat No. 7 lowered. The women hang back; they want no boat ride on an ice-strewn sea; the *Titanic* is unsinkable. The men encourage them, explain that this is just a precautionary measure: "We'll see you again at breakfast." There is little confusion; passengers stream slowly to the boat deck. In the steerage the immigrants chatter excitedly.

A sudden sharp hiss—a streaked flare against the night; Boxhall sends a rocket toward the sky. It explodes, and a parachute of white stars lights

16. CQD: call by radio operators, inviting others to communicate with them.



Molly Brown (nicknamed "unsinkable" by the Associated Press) helped row a lifeboat and nurse survivors.



Colonel John Jacob Astor, wealthy hotel owner, went down with the *Titanic*.

up the icy sea. "God! Rockets!" The band plays ragtime.

No. 8 is lowered, and No. 5. Ismay, still in dressing gown, calls for women and children, handles lines, stumbles in the way of an officer, is told to "get the hell out of here." Third Officer Pitman takes charge of No. 5; as he swings into the boat, Murdoch grasps his hand. "Goodbye and good luck, old man."

No. 6 goes over the side. There are only twenty-eight people in a lifeboat with a capacity of sixty-five.

A light stabs from the bridge; Boxhall is calling

in Morse flashes, again and again, to a strange ship stopped in the ice jam five to ten miles away. Another rocket drops its shower of sparks above the ice-strewn sea and the dying ship.

1:00 A.M. Slowly the water creeps higher; the fore ports of the *Titanic* are dipping into the sea. Rope squeaks through blocks; lifeboats drop jerkily seaward. Through the shouting on the decks comes the sound of the band playing ragtime.

The "Millionaires' Special" leaves the ship—boat No. 1, with a capacity of forty people, carries only Sir Cosmo and Lady Duff Gordon and ten others. Aft, the frightened immigrants mill and jostle and rush for a boat. An officer's fist flies out; three shots are fired in the air, and the panic is quelled. . . . Four Chinese sneak unseen into a boat and hide in the bottom.

1:20 A.M. Water is coming into No. 4 boiler room. Stokers slice and shovel as water laps about their ankles—steam for the dynamos, steam for the dancing spark! As the water rises, great ash hoes rake the flaming coals from the furnaces. Safety valves pop; the stokers retreat aft, and the watertight doors clang shut behind them.

The rockets fling their splendor toward the stars. The boats are more heavily loaded now, for the passengers know the *Titanic* is sinking. Women cling and sob. The great screws aft are rising clear of the sea. Half-filled boats are ordered to come alongside the cargo ports and take on more passengers, but the ports are never opened—and the boats are never filled. Others pull for the steamer's light miles away but never reach it; the lights disappear; the unknown ship steams off.

The water rises and the band plays ragtime.

1:30 A.M. Lightoller is getting the port boats off; Murdoch, the starboard. As one boat is lowered into the sea, a boat officer fires his gun along

Vocabulary

quelled (kweld) v.: quieted; subdued.





the ship's side to stop a rush from the lower decks. A woman tries to take her Great Dane into a boat with her; she is refused and steps out of the boat to die with her dog. Millet's "little smile which played on his lips all through the voyage" plays no more; his lips are grim, but he waves goodbye and brings wraps for the women.

Benjamin Guggenheim, in evening clothes, smiles and says, "We've dressed up in our best and are prepared to go down like gentlemen."

1:40 A.M. Boat 14 is clear, and then 13, 16, 15, and C. The lights still shine, but the *Baltic* hears the blue spark say, "Engine room getting flooded."

The *Olympia* signals, "Am lighting up all possible boilers as fast as can."

Major Butt helps women into the last boats and waves goodbye to them. Mrs. Straus puts her foot on the gunwale of a lifeboat; then she draws back and goes to her husband: "We have been together many years; where you go, I will go." Colonel John Jacob Astor puts his young wife in a lifeboat, steps back, taps cigarette on fingernail: "Goodbye, dearie; I'll join you later."

1:45 A.M. The foredeck is under water; the fo'c'sle¹⁷ head almost awash; the great stern is lifted high toward the bright stars; and still the band plays. Mr. and Mrs. Harris approach a lifeboat arm in arm.

Officer: "Ladies first, please."

Harris bows, smiles, steps back: "Of course, certainly; ladies first."

Boxhall fires the last rocket, then leaves in charge of boat No. 2.

2:00 A.M. She is dying now; her bow goes deeper, her stern higher. But there must be steam. Below in the stokeholds the sweaty firemen keep steam up for the flaring lights and the dancing spark. The glowing coals slide and tumble over the slanted grate bars; the sea pounds behind that yielding bulkhead. But the spark dances on.

The *Asian* hears Phillips try the new signal—SOS.

Boat No. 4 has left now; boat D leaves ten minutes later. Jacques Futrelle clasps his wife: "For God's sake, go! It's your last chance; go!" Madame Futrelle is half forced into the boat. It clears the side.

17. fo'c'sle (fōk'səl) *n.*: forecandle, front upper deck of a ship.

There are about 660 people in the boats and 1,500 still on the sinking *Titanic*.

On top of the officers' quarters, men work frantically to get the two collapsibles stowed there over the side. Water is over the forward part of A deck now; it surges up the companionways toward the boat deck. In the radio shack, Bride has slipped a coat and life jacket about Phillips as the first operator sits hunched over his key, sending—still sending—"41-46 N.; 50-14 W. CQD—CQD—SOS—SOS—"

The captain's tired white face appears at the radio-room door. "Men, you have done your full duty. You can do no more. Now, it's every man for himself." The captain disappears—back to his sinking bridge, where Painter, his personal steward, stands quietly waiting for orders. The spark dances on. Bride turns his back and goes into the inner cabin. As he does so, a stoker, grimed with coal, mad with fear, steals into the shack and reaches for the life jacket on Phillips's back. Bride wheels about and brains him with a wrench.

2:10 A.M. Below decks the steam is still holding, though the pressure is falling—rapidly. In the gymnasium on the boat deck, the athletic instructor watches quietly as two gentlemen ride the bicycles and another swings casually at the punching bag. Mail clerks stagger up the boat-deck stairways, dragging soaked mail sacks. The spark still dances. The band still plays—but not ragtime:

Nearer my God to Thee.
Nearer to Thee . . .

A few men take up the refrain; others kneel on the slanting decks to pray. Many run and scramble aft, where hundreds are clinging above the silent screws on the great uptilted stern. The spark still dances and the lights still flare; the engineers are on the job. The hymn comes to its close. Bandmaster Hartley, Yorkshireman violinist, taps his bow against a bulkhead, calls for "Autumn" as the water curls about his feet, and

the eight musicians brace themselves against the ship's slant. People are leaping from the decks into the nearby water—the icy water. A woman cries, "Oh, save me, save me!" A man answers, "Good lady, save yourself. Only God can save you now." The band plays "Autumn":

God of Mercy and Compassion!
Look with pity on my pain . . .

The water creeps over the bridge where the *Titanic's* master stands; heavily he steps out to meet it.

2:17 A.M. "CQ—" The *Virginian* hears a ragged, blurred CQ, then an abrupt stop. The blue spark dances no more. The lights flicker out; the engineers have lost their battle.

2:18 A.M. Men run about blackened decks; leap into the night; are swept into the sea by the curling wave that licks up the *Titanic's* length. Lightoller does not leave the ship; the ship leaves him; there are hundreds like him, but only a few who live to tell of it. The funnels still swim above the water, but the ship is climbing to the perpendicular; the bridge is under and most of the foremast; the great stern rises like a squat leviathan.¹⁸ Men swim away from the sinking ship; others drop from the stern.

The band plays in the darkness, the water lapping upward:

Hold me up in mighty waters,
Keep my eyes on things above,
Righteousness, divine atonement,
Peace and everlas . . .

The forward funnel snaps and crashes into the sea; its steel tons hammer out of existence swimmers struggling in the freezing water. Streams of sparks, of smoke and steam, burst from the after funnels. The ship upends to 50—to 60 degrees.

18. *leviathan* (lə·vī'ə·thən) *n.*: biblical sea monster, perhaps a whale.

Down in the black abyss of the stokeholds, of the engine rooms, where the dynamos have whirred at long last to a stop, the stokers and the engineers are reeling against the hot metal, the rising water clutching at their knees. The boilers, the engine cylinders, rip from their bed plates; crash through bulkheads; rumble—steel against steel.

The *Titanic* stands on end, poised briefly for the plunge. Slowly she slides to her grave—slowly at first, and then more quickly—quickly—quickly.

2:20 A.M. The greatest ship in the world has sunk. From the calm, dark waters, where the floating lifeboats move, there goes up, in the white wake of her passing, “one long continuous moan.”

III



The boats that the *Titanic* had launched pulled safely away from the slight suction of the sinking ship, pulled away from the screams that came from

the lips of the freezing men and women in the water. The boats were poorly manned and badly equipped, and they had been unevenly loaded. Some carried so few seamen that women bent to the oars. Mrs. Astor tugged at an oar handle; the Countess of Rothes took a tiller. Shivering stokers in sweaty, coal-blackened singlets and light trousers steered in some boats; stewards in white coats rowed in others. Ismay was in the last boat that left the ship from the starboard side; with Mr. Carter of Philadelphia and two seamen he tugged at the oars. In one of the lifeboats an Italian with a broken wrist—disguised in a woman's shawl and hat—huddled on the floorboards, ashamed now that fear had left him. In another rode the only baggage saved from the *Titanic*—the carryall of Samuel L. Goldenberg, one of the rescued passengers.

There were only a few boats that were heavily loaded; most of those that were half empty

made but perfunctory efforts to pick up the moaning swimmers, their officers and crew fearing they would endanger the living if they pulled back into the midst of the dying. Some boats beat off the freezing victims; fear-crazed men and women struck with oars at the heads of swimmers. One woman drove her fist into the face of a half-dead man as he tried feebly to climb over the gunwale. Two other women helped him in and staunched the flow of blood from the ring cuts on his face.

One of the collapsible boats, which had floated off the top of the officers' quarters when the *Titanic* sank, was an icy haven for thirty or forty men. The boat had capsized as the ship sank; men swam to it, clung to it, climbed upon its slippery bottom, stood knee-deep in water in the freezing air. Chunks of ice swirled about their legs; their soaked clothing clutched their bodies in icy folds. Colonel Archibald Gracie was cast up there, Gracie who had leaped from the stern as the *Titanic* sank; young Thayer who had seen his father die; Lightoller who had twice been sucked down with the ship and twice blown to the surface by a belch of air; Bride, the second operator, and Phillips, the first. There were many stokers, half naked; it was a shivering company. They stood there in the icy sea, under the far stars, and sang and prayed—the Lord's Prayer. After a while a lifeboat came and picked them off, but Phillips was dead then or died soon afterward in the boat.

Only a few of the boats had lights; only one—No. 2—had a light that was of any use to the *Carpathia*, twisting through the ice field to the rescue. Other ships were “coming hard” too; one, the *Californian*, was still dead to opportunity.

Vocabulary

poised (pɔɪzd) v. used as *adj.*: balanced; in position.

perfunctory (pər·fʌŋk'tə·rē) *adj.*: not exerting much effort; unconcerned.

The blue sparks still danced, but not the *Titanic's*. *La Provence* to *Celtic*: "Nobody has heard the *Titanic* for about two hours."

It was 2:40 when the *Carpathia* first sighted the green light from No. 2 boat; it was 4:10 when she picked up the first boat and learned that the *Titanic* had foundered.¹⁹ The last of the moaning cries had just died away then.

Captain Rostron took the survivors aboard, boatload by boatload. He was ready for them, but only a small minority of them required much medical attention. Bride's feet were twisted and frozen; others were suffering from exposure; one died, and seven were dead when taken from the boats, and were buried at sea.

It was then that the fleet of racing ships learned they were too late; the *Parisian* heard the weak signals of MPA, the *Carpathia*, report the death of the *Titanic*. It was then—or soon afterward, when her radio operator put on his earphones—that the *Californian*, the ship that had been within sight as the *Titanic* was sinking, first learned of the disaster.

And it was then, in all its white-green majesty, that the *Titanic's* survivors saw the iceberg, tinted with the sunrise, floating idly, pack ice jammed about its base, other bergs heaving slowly nearby on the blue breast of the sea.

IV



But it was not until later that the world knew, for wireless then was not what wireless is today, and garbled messages had nourished a hope that all of the *Titanic's* company were safe. Not until Monday evening, when P.A.S. Franklin, vice president of the International Mercantile Marine Company, received relayed messages in New York that left little hope, did the full extent of the disaster begin to be known. Partial and

19. **foundered** *v.*: filled with water, so that it sank; generally, collapsed; failed.

garbled lists of the survivors; rumors of heroism and cowardice; stories spun out of newspaper imagination, based on a few bare facts and many false reports, misled the world, terrified and frightened it. It was not until Thursday night, when the *Carpathia* steamed into the North River, that the full truth was pieced together.

Flashlights flared on the black river when the *Carpathia* stood up to her dock. Tugs nosed about her, shunted her toward Pier 54. Thirty thousand people jammed the streets; ambulances and stretchers stood on the pier; coroners and physicians waited.

In midstream the Cunarder dropped over the *Titanic's* lifeboats; then she headed toward the dock. Beneath the customs letters on the pier stood relatives of the 711 survivors, relatives of the missing—hoping against hope. The *Carpathia* cast her lines ashore; stevedores²⁰ looped them over bollards. The dense throngs stood quiet as the first survivor stepped down the gangway. The woman half staggered—led by customs guards—beneath her letter. A "low wailing" moan came from the crowd; fell, grew in volume, and dropped again.

Thus ended the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*. The lifeboats brought to New York by the *Carpathia*, a few deck chairs and gratings awash in the ice field off the Grand Bank eight hundred miles from shore, were all that was left of the world's greatest ship.

V



The aftermath of weeping and regret, of recriminations and investigations, dragged

20. **stevedores** (*ste'və·dōrz'*) *n.*: persons who load and unload ships.

Vocabulary

garbled (*gär'bæld*) *v.* used as *adj.*: confused; mixed up.

recriminations (*ri·krim'ə·nā'shənz*) *n.*: accusations against an accuser; countercharges.

on for weeks. Charges and countercharges were hurled about; the White Star Line was bitterly criticized; Ismay was denounced on the floor of the Senate as a coward but was defended by those who had been with him on the sinking *Titanic* and by the Board of Trade investigation in England.

It was not until weeks later, when the hastily convened Senate investigation in the United States and the Board of Trade report in England had been completed, that the whole story was told. The Senate investigating committee, under the chairmanship of Senator Smith, who was attacked in both the American and the British press as a “backwoods politician,” brought out numerous pertinent facts, though its proceedings verged at times on the farcical.²¹ Senator Smith was ridiculed for his lack of knowledge of the sea when he asked witnesses, “Of what is an iceberg composed?” and “Did any of the passengers take refuge in the watertight compartments?” The senator seemed particularly interested in the marital status of Fleet, the lookout, who was saved. Fleet, puzzled, growled aside, “Wot questions they’re arskin’ me!”

The report of Lord Mersey, wreck commissioner in the British Board of Trade’s investigation, was tersely damning.

The *Titanic* had carried boats enough for 1,178 persons, only one third of her capacity. Her sixteen boats and four collapsibles had saved but 711 persons; 400 people had needlessly lost their lives. The boats had been but partly loaded; officers in charge of launching them had been afraid the falls²² would break or

the boats buckle under their rated loads; boat crews had been slow in reaching their stations; launching arrangements were confused because no boat drill had been held; passengers were loaded into the boats haphazardly because no boat assignments had been made.

But that was not all. Lord Mersey found that sufficient warnings of ice on the steamer track had reached the *Titanic*, that her speed of twenty-two knots was “excessive under the circumstances,” that “in view of the high speed at which the vessel was running it is not considered that the lookout was sufficient,” and that her master made “a very grievous mistake”—but should not be blamed for negligence. Captain Rostron of the *Carpathia* was highly praised. “He did the very best that could be done.” The *Californian* was damned. The testimony of her master, officers, and crew showed that she was not, at the most, more than nineteen miles away from the sinking *Titanic* and probably no more than five to ten miles distant. She had seen the *Titanic*’s lights; she had seen the rockets; she had not received the CQD calls because her radio operator was asleep. She had attempted to get in communication with the ship she had sighted by flashing a light, but vainly.

“The night was clear,” reported Lord Mersey, “and the sea was smooth. When she first saw the rockets, the *Californian* could have pushed through the ice to the open water without any serious risk and so have come to the assistance of the *Titanic*. Had she done so she might have saved many if not all of the lives that were lost.

“She made no attempt.” ■

Vocabulary

pertinent (pərt’n-ənt) *adj.*: having some connection with the subject.

vainly (vān’lē) *adv.*: without success; fruitlessly.

21. **farcical** (fār’si-kəl) *adj.*: absurd; ridiculous; like a farce (an exaggerated comedy).

22. **falls** *n.*: chains used for hoisting.

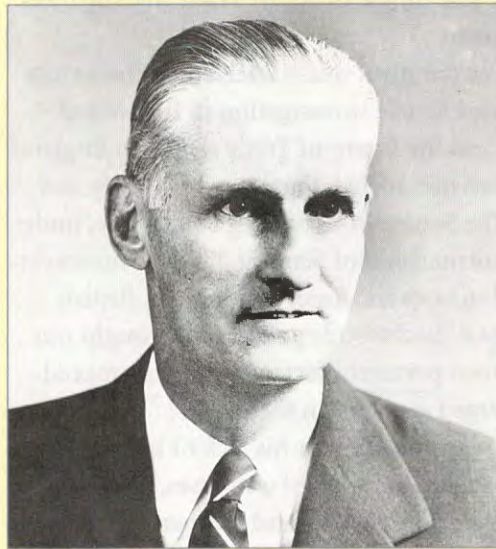
Hanson W. Baldwin

Journalist and Seaman

Hanson W. Baldwin (1903–1991) was one of America’s great journalists. He graduated with an ensign’s commission from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. After only three years of service aboard battleships, Baldwin resigned from the Navy and launched a career as a military correspondent and editor. His longest hitch was with *The New York Times*.

During World War II Baldwin covered battles in North Africa and the D-day invasion of Normandy. His series of articles on the war in the South Pacific won him a Pulitzer Prize in 1943. After the war, he reported on the second atomic bomb test at Bikini Island, on guided-missile and rocket-firing installations, and on the organization of U.S. military forces in the nuclear age.

Relatively early in his writing career (1934), Baldwin wrote an article for *Harper’s Magazine* about the sinking of the *Titanic*, which had occurred twenty-two years earlier. His research was thorough: He pieced together information from ship logs, from interviews with survivors, and from written reports detailing the ship’s



design and launching. The subject of the *Titanic* was by no means new for Baldwin’s readers. The sinking of the “unsinkable” ship had been fictionalized, sensationalized, and sentimentalized many times before 1934. Nevertheless, Baldwin’s article became a textbook example of excellent reporting. His fast-paced account, with its mixture of factual details and irony, makes the disaster and all the human foibles associated with it seem tragically real again.



The lifeboats of the “unsinkable” Titanic carried fewer than one third of the approximately 2,200 people aboard. A U.S. Senate investigating committee in 1912 found that a total of 1,517 lives were lost—a high proportion of them poor passengers who were far below deck, in steerage. Here are two eyewitness accounts of survivors:



J. Bruce Ismay, director of the White Star Line.

A Fireman’s Story

Harry Senior



Mrs. J. Bruce Ismay.

I was in my bunk when I felt a bump. One man said, “Hello. She has been struck.” I went on deck and saw a great pile of ice on the well deck before the fore-castle, but we all thought the ship would last some time, and we went back to our bunks. Then one of the firemen came running down and yelled, “All muster for the lifeboats.” I ran on

deck, and the captain said, “All firemen keep down on the well deck. If a man comes up, I’ll shoot him.”

Then I saw the first lifeboat lowered. Thirteen people were on board, eleven men and two women. Three were millionaires, and one was Ismay [J. Bruce Ismay, managing director of the White Star Line; a survivor].

Then I ran up onto the hurricane deck and helped to throw one of the collapsible boats onto the lower deck. I saw an Italian woman holding two babies. I took one of them and made the woman jump overboard with the baby, while I did the same with the other. When I came to the surface, the baby in my arms was dead. I saw the woman strike out in good style, but a

boiler burst on the *Titanic* and started a big wave. When the woman saw that wave, she gave up. Then, as the child was dead, I let it sink too.

I swam around for about half an hour, and was swimming on my back when the *Titanic* went down. I tried to get aboard a boat, but some chap hit me over the head with an oar. There were too many in her. I got around to the other side of the boat and climbed in.



“The *Titanic* orphans”—Edmond (age two) and Michel (age three) Navratil.

From a Lifeboat

Mrs. D. H. Bishop

We did not begin to understand the situation till we were perhaps a mile or more away from the *Titanic*. Then we could see the rows of lights along the decks begin to slant gradually upward from the bow. Very slowly, the lines of light began to point downward at a greater and greater angle. The sinking was so slow that you could not perceive the lights of the deck changing their position. The slant seemed to be greater about every quarter of an hour. That was the only difference.

In a couple of hours, though, she began to go down more rapidly. Then the fearful sight began. The people in the ship were just beginning to realize how great their danger was. When the forward part of the ship dropped suddenly at a faster rate, so that the upward slope became marked, there was a sudden rush of passengers on all the decks toward the stern. It was like a wave. We could see the great black mass of people in the steerage sweeping to the rear part of the boat and breaking through into the upper decks. At the distance of about a mile, we could distinguish everything through the night, which was perfectly clear. We could make out the increasing excitement on board the boat as the people,



Marion Wright from Somerset, England, married her fiancé when she arrived in New York City.



Ruth Becker and her brother Richard survived in separate lifeboats.

rushing to and fro, caused the deck lights to disappear and reappear as they passed in front of them.

This panic went on, it seemed, for an hour. Then suddenly the ship seemed to shoot up out of the water and stand there perpendicularly. It seemed to us that it stood upright in the water for four full minutes.

Then it began to slide gently downward. Its speed increased as it went down headfirst, so that the stern shot down with a rush.

The lights continued to burn till it sank. We could see the people packed densely in the stern till it was gone. . . .


As the ship sank, we could hear the screaming a mile away. Gradually it became fainter and fainter and died away. Some of the lifeboats that had room for more might have gone to their rescue, but it would have meant that those who were in the water would have swarmed aboard and sunk them.

Literary Response and Analysis


Reading Check

1. According to the Baldwin article, what caused the *Titanic* to sink?
2. Why didn't the closest ship rush to the rescue?
3. Why weren't the lifeboats full?
4. Cite two heroic acts and two cowardly acts that took place aboard the *Titanic*.

Interpretations

5. Baldwin uses numbered **headings** as **text structures** to organize his article. Briefly summarize what is covered in each numbered part. Why are these divisions logical? 
6. Find as many examples as you can of **irony**—both **situational** and **dramatic**—in this story of the *Titanic*. Which instance of irony do you think is the most incredible?
7. Baldwin combines a **chronological** account (a **narrative**, or story) with **factual** information (**exposition**). What do you think is his **purpose** in combining these two types of writing?
8. What techniques does Baldwin use to create drama and **suspense** in this story, whose outcome we already know? Notice, for example, the switch to present-tense verbs in Part II. What other devices help make the article as compelling as a fast-paced adventure novel?
9. Baldwin returns many times to the music played by the ship's band. What **moods** are suggested by the music? What other examples of **repetition** can you find?
10. What truths about human nature can you **infer** from this story and from the survivors' accounts (see the **Connection** on page 345)?

Evaluation

11. After reading about the events on board the *Titanic*, as well as the **Connection** on page 345, how do you think (or hope) you would have acted if you'd been a passenger? a crew member? Look back at your Quickwrite to see whether you've changed your mind about how you'd behave in a catastrophe. 
12. Baldwin spent hundreds of hours reading reports, ships' records, eyewitness accounts, and court proceedings. How **objective** or **subjective** do you think Baldwin's report is? Explain your evaluation.

Writing

Summary of a Disaster

Write a one-page **summary** of "R.M.S. Titanic," including the most significant facts and Baldwin's most important conclusions. Before you begin writing, **outline** the article, showing what Baldwin covers in each of the five numbered sections. Include with your summary a graphic organizer in the form of a **time line** to show the major events in the disaster.

Titanic Update

We now know that Baldwin's article contains errors (such as Captain Smith's initials and the description of a three-hundred-foot gash that later exploration has not been able to find). Using the Internet and recent books and articles on the subject, determine what other information has been revealed about the *Titanic* since the Baldwin article was written. Record your findings in a **brief report**.



Grade 8 Review Reading Standard 2.7

Evaluate the structural patterns of text.

Reading Standard 3.8

Interpret and evaluate the impact of ironies in a text.