Page 3: Molly Brown, nicknamed “Unsinkable,” was one of many famous people on board the Titanic. She survived.
The Grandest Ship

When it was built, many people thought it was the grandest ship to ever sail the seas. Others claimed it was the biggest, and some people even said it was unsinkable.

But on Sunday, April 14, 1912, just before midnight, disaster struck. Within hours the Titanic, the most magnificent ship of its time, had sunk to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean.

Do You Know?
The full name of the Titanic was the R.M.S. Titanic. R.M.S. stands for Royal Mail Ship. The Titanic was carrying 3,500 bags of mail on the night it sank.
The Titanic was built in Northern Ireland to take people and cargo across the Atlantic Ocean. Airplanes were still new contraptions in 1912, so the only way to travel from Europe to the United States was by boat.

Passengers began boarding the Titanic on Wednesday, April 10, in Southampton, England. They were thrilled to be on what was considered the grandest ship in the world. It was the ship’s first trip, also called its maiden voyage, and it would take one week to reach New York.

Wealthy people traveled in style aboard the Titanic. They had fancy rooms for dining and elegant rooms for sleeping. First-class rooms perched at the top of the ship and offered the best views and fresh air. The Titanic even had four elevators and a lavish staircase.

People who did not have a lot of money traveled in less spacious quarters at the bottom of the ship. This area was called steerage, and the rooms were cramped and crowded. Steerage passengers were not allowed to go to the upper levels of the ship.

Do You Know?
A person’s “class” was one’s status in society based on how much money he or she made. “Upper-class” people had a lot of money, whereas “lower-class” people had little. In 1912, different classes were separated.

How much did it cost to travel on the Titanic?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Cost per Person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Class</td>
<td>$4,350.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Class</td>
<td>$65.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Class</td>
<td>$35.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Three days after leaving Southampton, the *Titanic* was well into the North Atlantic. This area was known for icebergs, and the ship's workers were responsible for watching out for these dangerous chunks of floating ice.

That Sunday evening the sea was calm. No white-capped waves crashed against the rugged icebergs, which would have made the ice easier to spot. Also, the night was ominously dark and cloudless. No moon shone over the still, open waters.

Then, at 11:40 PM, the crew and other passengers felt a jarring thud against the side of the ship. The *Titanic* had struck an iceberg. No one panicked, though, because they believed the *Titanic* was unsinkable.

One person on board knew differently.

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**A Chilly Discovery**

Icebergs are actually bigger below the surface of the water than above it! The *Titanic* did not hit the part of the iceberg that you can see. Instead, it hit the larger part of the iceberg below the surface.
Yet all too soon, it became evident to everyone on board that the Titanic was in dire trouble. The supposedly unsinkable ship was sinking, and it did not have enough lifeboats for everyone. Resolutely, the ship’s band stayed on deck and played music to keep everyone calm.

Some people prayed quietly and waited for the worst. Others frantically grabbed objects that might help them float in the water. Still others desperately clung to the ship’s deck as it lifted into the air.

We’re Sinking!

That person was Thomas Andrews, who had helped design the Titanic. He soon realized by the way the ship was behaving that it was in grave danger. As calmly as possible, the unsuspecting passengers were awakened and told to put on their life jackets. Women and children in first class were ushered into lifeboats, which were then lowered to the ocean far below. People waited patiently for their turns, still not understanding the danger that faced them.
In the ship’s radio room, the radio operator sent an urgent message. “Have struck an iceberg. We are badly damaged,” the message read. A second message included the distress signal SOS.

The closest ship that responded, the Carpathia, would reach the Titanic in several hours, but that was not soon enough. Two-and-a-half hours after the Titanic struck an iceberg, it sank and disappeared, lost beneath the icy surface of the North Atlantic Ocean.

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In the early-morning hours of Monday, April 15, the Carpathia arrived to rescue the Titanic’s exhausted and grief-stricken survivors. About 700 people had survived in the few lifeboats, but about 1,500 had perished. Most had not drowned, however. Floating in their life vests, most had died from the extremely cold temperatures of the North Atlantic.

The world was stunned by the loss of the Titanic. How could such a magnificent ship, one that was called “unsinkable,” go down so quickly? Several decades later, many questions would be answered.

Do You Know?
Although it has never been proved beyond doubt, suspicions remain to this day that another ship was nearby. The Californian might have been as close as five miles, but was definitely no more than 19 miles away from the Titanic. Its crew, however, claimed not to have seen Titanic’s distress flares. In addition, the Californian’s radio had been turned off, so it never received Titanic’s SOS.
Scientists confirmed that the ship had broken into two parts. But what about the hole made by the iceberg? Buried in the sand of the ocean floor, it could not be seen. Therefore, scientists had to rely on sonar—waves of sound that bounce off surfaces. The sound waves helped the scientists discover that the iceberg had not cut a huge gash in Titanic’s side, as first suspected.

In 1985, something extraordinary happened. The Titanic was found about four kilometers (2.5 mi) beneath the sea at the bottom of the North Atlantic Ocean. Scientists could finally find their answers about how the ship sank so quickly.

Scientists sent robotic devices to explore and videotape the wreckage. The ship’s ghostly form appeared eerily on the video monitors, its front railing recognizable, even after seventy years below water.

Instead, the iceberg had made several small holes which, when added together, equaled only about the same area as a doorway. In addition, the holes were higher up on the ship than people had thought. These smaller, higher holes caused the ship’s compartments to fill very quickly with water, which ultimately caused the ship to sink.
Titanic's Legacy

Because of the Titanic, many lessons were learned and new rules were applied to make ships safer. Today, a ship must have enough lifeboats for all its passengers, and lifeboat drills must be conducted so everyone knows what to do in case of an emergency. Ships must also keep their radios on 24 hours a day. And the International Ice Patrol, an organization that keeps track of the location of icebergs, was established.

The Titanic was a grand ship, and her story is just as grand. The legacy of the Titanic lives on in the memories of the lives lost, the lessons learned by the tragedy, and the changes that such a tragedy brought to sea travel.

Glossary

contraptions (n.) interesting, unfamiliar devices (p. 5)
dire (adj.) terribly bad (p. 10)
frantically (adj.) acting wildly with emotion (p. 10)
magnificent (adj.) beautiful and impressive (p. 4)
ominously (adv.) in a threatening or foreboding way (p. 8)
steerage (n.) the lowest part of the ship where the poorest passengers rode (p. 6)
ultimately (adv.) finally; in the end (p. 14)

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