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## The Size, Shape and Design of the Titanic

I have always been intrigued by the Titanic, but my interest boomed with the recent development in how the side of the ship was damaged. I was amazed that instead of causing a gaping wound, as was previously believed, the iceberg that Titanic hit merely caused a series of small rips in the side of the ship. Sonar was used to determine that the side of the ship had six small slits that were no bigger than a single hand (<http://www.titanic.cc/sonar.htm>). This research amazed me because of the amount of water that passed through the small slits in the hull. I was always interested in ships, but the mystery that surrounded the Titanic sinking caused me to choose it for my senior project. At our first meeting (May 29, 1997), Mrs. Ferguson mentioned that I should try to incorporate my creative writing abilities into the project. Together, we came up with writing fictional diary entries for real passengers. My intent was to bring the people of the doomed liner to life through their thoughts throughout the trip. I chose which passengers diaries I would write and then heavily researched each of these individuals. The craze from the movie Titanic made getting information difficult but I was able to gather the facts I needed from the Internet as well as books and documents from the library. After researching the people, I adapted their personas and attempted to write a close facsimile to what I believe their diaries would have resembled.

RMS Titanic was the last grand dream of the Gilded Age. It was designed to be the greatest achievement of an era of prosperity, confidence, and propriety. The old presumptions about class, morals, and gender-roles were about to be shattered. If the concept of Titanic was the climax of the age, then perhaps its sinking was the curtain that marked the end of the old drama and the start of a new one.

The intensely competitive transatlantic steamship business had seen recent major advances in ship design, size and speed. White Star Line, one of the leaders, was determined to focus on size and elegance rather than pure speed. In 1907, White Star Line's managing director, J. Bruce Ismay, and Lord James Pirrie, a partner in Harland & Wolff, conceived of a vision of three magnificent steam ships which would set a new standard for comfort, elegance, and safety. The first two were to be named Olympic and Titanic, the latter name chosen by Ismay to convey a sense of overwhelming size and strength.

It took one year to design the two ships. Construction of Olympic started in December, 1908, followed by Titanic in March, 1909. The Belfast shipyards of Harland & Wolff had to be re-designed to accommodate the immense projects while White Star's pier in New York had to be lengthened to enable the ships to dock. During the two years it took to complete Titanic's hull, the press was loaded with publicity about the ship's magnificence, making Titanic virtually a

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legend before her launch. The "launch" of the completed steel in May, 1911, was a heavily publicized spectacle. Tickets were sold to benefit a local children's hospital.

Titanic was then taken for "fitting out" which involved the construction of the ship's many facilities and systems, her elaborate woodwork and fine decor. As the date of her maiden voyage approached, the completed Olympic suffered a collision and required extensive repairs, increasing the workload at Harland & Wolff, which was already struggling to complete Titanic on schedule. Titanic's maiden voyage was delayed from March 20 to April 10.

Titanic was 883 feet long (1/6 of a mile), 92 feet wide, and weighed 46,328 tons. She was 104 feet tall from keel to bridge, almost 35 feet of which were below the waterline. There were three real smoke-stacks; a fourth, 'dummy' stack was added largely to increase the impression of her gargantuan size and power and to vent smoke from her numerous kitchens and galleys. She was the largest movable object ever made by man. She was designed to be a marvel of modern safety technology. She had a double-hull of one-inch thick steel plates and a heavily publicized system of sixteen water-tight compartments, sealed by massive doors which could be instantly triggered by a single electric switch on the bridge or even automatically triggered by electric water-sensors. The press branded her "unsinkable" (Spignesi, Stephen).

Her accommodations were the most modern and luxurious on any ocean and included electric light and heat in every room, electric elevators, a swimming pool, a squash court, a Turkish Bath, a gymnasium with a mechanical horse and mechanical camel to keep riders fit, and staterooms and first class facilities to rival the best hotels on the Continent (Spignesi, Stephen). First class passengers would glide down a six-story, glass-domed grand staircase to enjoy haute cuisine in the sumptuous first class dining saloon that filled the width of the ship on D Deck. For those who desired a more intimate atmosphere, Titanic also offered a stately la carte restaurant, the chic Palm Court and Verandah restaurant, and the festive Cafe Parisian. She offered two musical ensembles of the best musicians on the Atlantic, many of them lured from rival liners. There were two libraries, first- and second-class. Even the third class cabins were more luxurious than the first class cabins on some lesser steamships and boasted amenities that some of Titanic's immigrant passengers had not enjoyed in their own homes (Spignesi, Stephen).

The original design called for 32 lifeboats. However, White Star management felt that the boat-deck would look cluttered, and reduced the number to 20, for a total life-boat capacity of 1178. This actually exceeded the regulations of the time, even though Titanic was capable of carrying over 3500 people (passengers and crew).

The maiden voyage lured the "very best people: British nobility, American industrialists, the very cream of New York and Philadelphia society. It also attracted many poor immigrants, hoping to

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start a new life in America or Canada.

The journey began at Southampton on Wednesday, April 10, 1912, at noon. By sundown, Titanic had stopped in Cherbourg, France to pick up additional passengers. That evening she sailed for Queenstown, Ireland, and at 1:30 PM on Thursday, April 11, she headed out into the Atlantic.

The weather was pleasant and clear, and the water temperature was about 55 degrees Fahrenheit. The winter of 1912 had been unusually mild, and unprecedented amounts of ice had broken loose from the arctic regions. Titanic was equipped with Marconi's new wireless telegraph system and her two Marconi operators kept the wireless room running 24 hours a day. On Sunday, April 14, the fifth day at sea, Titanic received five different ice-warnings, but the captain was not overly concerned. The ship steamed ahead at 22 knots, and the line's Managing Director J. Bruce Ismay relished the idea of arriving in New York a day ahead of schedule.

On the night of April 14, wireless operator Phillips was very busy sending chatty passengers messages to Cape Race, Newfoundland. He received a sixth ice-warning that night but did not realize how close Titanic was to the position of the warning, and he put that message under a paperweight at his elbow. It never reached Captain Smith or the officer on the bridge.

The sea was unusually calm and flat, "like glass" said many survivors. The lack of waves made it even more difficult to spot icebergs, since there was no telltale white water breaking at the edges of the bergs.

At 11:40, a lookout in the crow's nest spotted an iceberg dead ahead. He notified the bridge and First Officer Murdoch ordered the ship turned hard to port. He signaled the engine room to reverse direction, full astern. The ship turned slightly, but it was too large, moving too fast, and the iceberg was too close. Thirty-seven seconds later, the greatest maritime disaster in history began. During that night of heroism, terror and tragedy, 705 lives were saved, 1502 lives were lost, and many legends were born (Spignesi, Stephen).

Late on April 14, 1912, in the icy Atlantic, RMS Titanic hit an iceberg and sank, resulting in the loss of more than one thousand five hundred lives. RMS Titanic had been deemed unsinkable by the newspapers, and many said that God himself could not sink the Titanic. As though she were doomed from the beginning, she was appropriately named Titanic. The titans dared to challenge the gods, and for their arrogance, they were cast down into hell. Much like the titans, Harland and Wolff, the builders, dared to challenge Mother Nature. After the tragic loss of more than one thousand lives, all ships traveling the seas were forced to carry enough lifeboats for all passengers and crew on board. However, it was too late for the majority on the Titanic.

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The steerage, also known as the third class, were the largest percentage of passengers and were in the lower decks, furthest from the lifeboats. They were the bulk of those lost, but every life aboard the RMS Titanic was permanently altered in the moment the majestic ocean liner skidded past an iceberg. Most passengers did not live to tell what they experienced in the days at sea preceding the collision, the atmosphere of panic that surrounded the ship when it was realized that the Titanic would founder, or the feeling of one thousand bodies hitting icy water at two a.m. Circumstances allowed Joseph Groves Boxhall, Margaret 'Molly' Tobin Brown, Lawrence Beesley, and Anna McGowan to survive the sinking and the exposure to the cold (Hyslop et al.).

Joseph Groves Boxhall was born in Hull, Yorkshire in 1884 and had been at sea for thirteen years prior to joining the Titanic, five of which had been with the White Star Line (<http://www.execpc.com/~reva/tioff.htm#Boxhall>). Boxhall was the fourth officer on the Titanic, and one of his duties on board was to chart the ship's position (Kuntz 129). He was on duty at the time of the collision with the iceberg, and Captain Smith ordered him to inspect the ship for damage. Boxhall went as low as possible in the passenger sections and found no damage. However, when he found the carpenter, he was notified that the ship was taking on water and that the mail room was flooding. After inspecting the rest of the ship with Captain Smith, Mr. Andrews, the architect from Harland & Wolff, and Officer Wilde, Boxhall recalculated the position of the ship. The position he calculated was based on sights and estimated speed. The Titanic's position was 41 degrees 46 north, 50 degrees 14 west. Boxhall then waited impatiently for Quartermaster Rowe to come with rockets so they could begin shooting them off the bridge as a signal (Lynch). He and Rowe began pulling out socket signals and the mortars from where they were fired. Just before 1 AM he sent the last distress signal 600 ft. into the air. He commented that upon reaching the top of its trajectory, it exploded and a dozen white stars drifted downward (Garrison 162). It was Boxhall who spotted the mysterious ship in the distance, 'also known as the California. He saw a boat about five to ten miles away and tried to contact it with Morse code but got no response. During the US Senate inquiries into the Titanic tragedy, Boxhall testified that he did not see much reluctance to get in the lifeboats or anxiety on the ship. He was put in charge of Lifeboat Two which was one of the last lifeboats to leave the doomed ship. While still aboard the Titanic, Boxhall talked to Bruce Ismay, who asked him why he was not getting people into the boats and leaving. Boxhall responded that the boat's crew was ready and could go into the water but that they had to wait for the captain's orders. Lifeboat Two was pretty full and because of their late departure, they were only about half a mile away from Titanic when it sank. Boxhall testified that there was a little suction but that he did not see the Titanic go under. After the sinking, he pulled around to where the ship's stern was because he thought he could take three more people but was unable to find anyone in the water. During the hours between the sinking and the arrival of the Carpathia it was Boxhall's duty to continue showing a green pyrothechic light so that the lifeboats could stay together and so that the rescue ship would be able to find them (Kuntz). Once the Carpathia arrived, Lifeboat

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Two was the first to be picked up. Once aboard the *Carpithia*, Boxhall was taken to the bridge and, when asked if the ship had gone down, told Rostron, the captain of the *Carpithia*,

Yes....She went down about 2:30 He quickly began detailing what happened until Rostron interrupted, Were many people left on aboard when she sank? Hundreds and hundreds! Perhaps a thousand! Perhaps more! Boxhall burst out emotionally. My God, sir, They've gone down with her. They couldn't live in this icy cold water? (Lynch 150).

After arriving in New York, Boxhall joined the Royal Navy and retired from the sea in 1940. In 1958 he acted as a technical advisor on *A Night to Remember*, a movie adaptation of Walter Lord's book about the sinking of the Titanic. Boxhall died in 1967 whereupon his ashes were spread in the area Titanic sank (Lynch 222).

Margaret Tobin was born July 18, 1867, in Hannibal, Missouri. She was the daughter of a poor Irish immigrant, John Tobin, who immigrated to America in 1823, finally settling in Hannibal, Missouri. She met her future husband, JJ, in 1886, and, after a brief courtship, they were married on September 1, 1886. Molly was nineteen, twelve years his junior. They lived in Leadville in a small, two-room log cabin, and the following year Molly gave birth to her first child Lawrence Palmer Brown. Two years after that birth Molly gave birth to her second and last child, Catherine Ellen. A few years later, JJ Brown started mining to search for more silver deposits. After a year of mining JJ made a great deal of money. In 1894 they moved to Denver and bought a \$30,000 mansion in Denver's wealthy Capitol Hill neighborhood. Brown was 27-years-old, and she found herself unsatisfied just being Mrs. JJ Brown, mother of two. She wanted to be a society woman of stature. Molly wore the most expensive clothes in Denver. Most were designed for her in Paris. Molly and JJ had their own box at the opera, and when the Browns arrived at the theater, the entire audience looked up toward their box. They were also noted for the lavish parties they gave at their home and their lengthy trips to Europe. JJ grew tired of all this social climbing, but Molly continued to climb the social ladder without him. This began their estrangement which continued until JJ's death.

In 1912, Brown was on one of her many European tours when she received word that her grandson was ill. She made immediate plans to return to America after receiving the bad news. She booked passage on the first ship to America, which happened to be the Titanic (<http://www.mollybrown.com/>). She boarded in Cherbourg, France and considered herself lucky and was put in a stateroom on B deck for \$130. By Thursday evening Brown was well aquatinted with Colonel Archibald Gracie, who would later throw her into a lifeboat unwittingly. On the night of the collision, Brown had stayed up to finish reading a book as she was an avid reader. When the Titanic struck the iceberg, she was thrown to the ground and went to see what happened (Garrison 137, 141). Once she realized that lifeboats were being loaded, she used her knowledge of other languages to try to get passengers who did not speak English to

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the boats. At one point she persuaded a Belgian woman to get into a lifeboat instead of going below for her valuables. As she was walking away to see what was going on elsewhere, she was picked up and dropped four feet into Lifeboat Six. However, there were not enough seamen in the boat so Major Arthur Peuchen joined them. At 1:30 AM Lifeboat Six began to row away from the doomed Titanic with ten empty seats (Lynch 110).

There were four men in boat six: Major Arthur Peuchen, third class passenger Philip Zenni, Lookout Frederick Fleet, who spotted the iceberg, and Quartermaster Robert Hitchens, who was in charge of the boat. Peuchen was really too old to be of any use; Hitchens was too cowardly to be helpful; Zenni was half frozen and brokenly spoke English, and Fleet was a lookout, not an oarsman. However, over the frightful danger of the situation the spirit of this woman [Brown] soared? (Caplan 111). Under the leadership of Brown, the women of the boat wrapped Zenni in a shawl and put him at an oar to warm him, took oars themselves, and began to row away from the doomed 'ship of dreams.' Hitchens was scared and had begun to tell them all how the suction from the ship sinking was going to pull them back down into the sea. He said that if they were lucky enough to survive that they would perish because they had no food, water, maps, or a compass. Brown frankly told him, 'Keep it to yourself, if you feel that way. For the sake of these women and children, be a man. We have a smooth sea and a fighting chance. Be a man' (Caplan 112). Needless to say, Hitchens did not cause anymore problems (Caplan 110-112). Brown and another of the women saw the Carpathia and forced Hitchens to row to it. Once on the Carpathia, Brown formed a committee to look after the destitute and to thank the crew and members of the Carpathia for their heroic behavior (Caplan 133). Upon leaving the Carpathia in New York, Mrs. Brown was surrounded by reporters and was asked to what she attributed her survival. "Typical Brown luck," she replied, "We're unsinkable." In Denver, her estranged husband, JJ Brown, was heard to comment that she was too mean to sink.

The Titanic turned Molly into a crusader for the survivors, and she asked the Denver Women's Club to petition Congress for maritime reform. The unwritten law of the sea, which declared women and children first, was tragically immoral said Molly, pointing to the hundreds of destitute widows and children left behind by the Titanic's sinking. She pointed out that while their husbands went down to practically painless deaths they were left to suffer living deaths. In 1914 Molly tried unsuccessfully to run for the US Senate. She became a member of the National Women's Party and spoke to President Coolidge seeking his approval of the Equal Rights Amendment and was known as a fervent suffragette. On September 5, 1922, at his daughter's home in Hempstead, New York, JJ Brown died after suffering a series of heart attacks. JJ and Molly had not lived as husband and wife for many years. Unfortunately, JJ died without a will and it took five years of fighting between Molly and her two children to finally settle the estate. Due to their lavish spending JJ left an estate of only \$238,000. Molly received \$20,000 in cash and securities, and the interest on a \$100,000 trust fund set up in her name. Her children received the rest. From that time until her death, Molly had no contact with her children. By

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1930, Molly's health had begun to deteriorate. She became a lonely woman living in her past glories. On October 26, 1932, Molly suffered a number of strokes and died, alone, in her less than palatial hotel room. She died almost penniless. After a small funeral, Molly was buried, next to JJ in Long Island, New York at the Holy Rood Cemetery. She was 65 at the time of her death (<http://www.mollybrown.com/>).

Lawrence Beesley was a thirty-four year old science teacher at Dulwich College in London. He was on vacation and boarded the Titanic in Southampton. He stated that there was not much excitement on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, but that did not mean the days were filled with boredom (Garrison 45, 54). He said that:

"Each night the sun sank right in our eyes along the sea, making an undulating glittering pathway, a golden track charted on the surface of the ocean which our ship followed unswervingly until the sun dipped below the edge of the horizon, and the pathway ran ahead of us faster than we could steam and slipped over the edge of the skyline - as if the sun had been a golden ball and had wound up its thread of gold too quickly for us to follow. On Sunday evening about one hundred people gathered in the second class dining salon for hymns and singing led by Reverend Carter. Ironically enough, many of the hymns dealt with the danger of the sea (Lynch 77). Beesley then went to his room to read and felt two jars at about 11:15 PM. He emerged but found that nothing looked serious so he went back to his room to continue reading. A little later he heard people outside his room and went out again to see what was happening. He noticed a downward list from the stern to the bow and went to put on warmer clothes. He heard a call for all men to step back and ladies to go to B deck so they could begin to load boats. He was on the port side and a rumor ran among the men that the starboard side was letting men into boats. Many of the men left and went to the starboard side but Beesley stayed where he was. Below him a sailor called for any more ladies and when he got no response he told Beesley to jump in the boat. He hopped over the rail and into Lifeboat Thirteen. While they were being lowered, there was a mix-up and Lifeboat Fourteen almost came down on top of them. Luckily, one of the stokers was able to cut the ropes and at about 1 AM Lifeboat Thirteen floated away as Lifeboat Fourteen landed where it had been ten seconds earlier. From the open sea they looked on as the Titanic sank deeper into the ocean and was finally engulfed by the icy water (Caplan 175-183).

It was not until the next morning at 8:30 AM that the last survivors had been brought onto the Carpathia. Once aboard the Carpathia, those rescued were given blankets and hot food (Garrison 179). There was not much extra room aboard so the first few nights Beesley had to sleep on towels and was eventually moved to an actual bed. Meanwhile, rumors were running rapid about ice warnings. Beesley asked one of the officers if Titanic had received ice warnings. When the officer told him it was true, Beesley said he felt an 'overwhelming sense of helplessness to learn that the collision had been avoidable' (Lynch 163). After his rescue,

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Beesley wrote a successful book about his experience, *The Loss of the Titanic*. He died on February 14, 1967, at the age of 89 ([http://www.rmplc.co.uk.eduweb/sites/phind/html/beesly\\_1.html](http://www.rmplc.co.uk.eduweb/sites/phind/html/beesly_1.html)).

White Star Line officials repeatedly stated that no distinction was made between first, second, and third class passengers when it came to loading the lifeboats. However, the class-conscious, Anglo-Saxon racism that persisted in society at the time had its own effect. The social concepts of wealth with privilege still existed in all layers of society. The Titanic represented a small part of what was taking place in society. If one were graced with wealth, along with that came the "right of privilege." The poor and lower classes were shut out from the advantages that the rest of society enjoyed (<http://www.execpc.com/~reva/html3c5.htm>).

For this reason, there is not much information on Anna McGowan. She was a fifteen year old native of County Mayo, Ireland. McGowan was traveling to Chicago with her aunt, Katherine McGowan, to meet Katherine's sister. They boarded in Queenstown as third class passengers. While aboard the ship, McGowan became friends with Anna Kate Kelly, who had been visiting County Mayo and was also going to Chicago. McGowan and Kelley survived but Katherine was lost. When they reached New York, McGowan and Kelly spent several days at St. Vincent's Hospital. The two survivors then left in nightgowns, old shoes, and second hand coats for Chicago. Once in Chicago, the city helped raise money to help them get on their feet (<http://www.rmplc.co.uk.eduweb/sites/phind/>).

There was a great deal of ineptitude on behalf of the crew when it came to dealing with the Third Class and how they were going to ascend to the upper decks. Those passengers who did not speak English were left to fend for themselves as the ship started to sink. Another major problem for the third class was the lack of, or the non-existence of, communication from the Bridge. Titanic did not have a public address system or phones throughout the ship. The crew in third class were expected to handle whatever came up on their own. No lifeboat drill had been given to them.

Needless to say, confusion reigned. Some gates were open and others were not. Even if steerage did get to the next deck they were not assured of getting through to the next passage. Some passengers were sent back by White Star employees to the last area they had just left. Some crew members allowed only the women and children through while at other areas no one was admitted. Some staunch, by-the-book White Star crew members were waiting for directions from the Bridge before allowing third class passengers admittance to the upper decks. It never came.

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The orders, if they came at all, were sent down to the lower decks after most of the lifeboats with less than capacity had left. By that time the fate of these people was sealed. They were basically left to fend for themselves. Some managed to save themselves, but most just milled around helplessly in their quarters-ignored, neglected, forgotten.

In his book, Colonel Archibald Gracie recalled his surprise and outrage when he saw scores of women and children surging up from below, just before the end. Until that moment Gracie was sure the women and children were all off-they were so hard to find when the last boats were loading. Neither the chance to be chivalrous nor the fruits of chivalry seemed to go with a third class passage.

Near the end, some third class passengers were seen kneeling and praying while clutching their children in horror while in another area of third class a lone woman sat at the piano in the Steerage Dining Room, holding her two small children to her breast, singing an Irish lullaby as the water began to swirl around them.

The White Star Line came up with numerous reasons as to why these statistics went against third class passengers. One official claimed they just did not want to leave the ship, and another stated that they stayed in their rooms and refused to come out. At the British inquiry, crew member after crew member stated that there was no discrimination against third class passengers. However, no third class passengers were asked to testify.

If the White Star Line was indifferent to the steerage, so was everybody else. No one seemed to care about third class-neither the Press, the official Inquiries nor even the third class passengers themselves. The U.S. Congress only had three witnesses who were third class passengers. Two of these people testified that they were kept from going to the boat deck until most, if not all, of the lifeboats had left. However, no action was taken regarding these claims. They fell on deaf ears. Again, the facts do not suggest any deliberate conspiracy against third class passengers it was just that no one was interested in what they had to say. Their comments, opinions and concerns had no value. Even the third class passengers themselves, accustomed to being treated as inferiors, were not bothered. They expected class distinction as a part of life. Thus on the Titanic it seemed normal to many of them to wait until the first class passengers had gotten into their lifeboats. Many were satisfied just to be able to come up to the boat deck. It was not until they realized that there were no boats for most of them that anger and panic occurred (<http://www.execpc.com/~reva/html3c5.htm>).

The world did change that night of April 15th. Never would it seem as safe, never would the rich have it so good. Human-kind would never be so sure of themselves or assume that God could be outwitted. The sea still ruled; nature could still take control, and the world would be reminded once again that we are all one. Titanic was a warning. A warning to not push the limits of natural

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law to the breaking point. For when natural law is pushed too far, disaster happens, and 1,500 people, all innocent and defenseless, ended their lives involuntarily floating in the North Atlantic, lifeless, frozen, and dead. Even innocence could not save Titanic's passengers and crew. However, their deaths did not go unnoticed. Society still remembers them over eighty-five years later. It is the blood of the innocent that wake a man to action. May we never have to awaken to the plight of our world in such a horrifying way again.

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