



3e ENTRANCE TEST

The Titanic

On the morning of 10 April 1912, a ship sailed from Southampton with 2235 passengers and crew bound for New York. The Titanic was huge, the size of a cathedral, and as luxurious as the finest hotel. It was a modern wonder of the world, a symbol of the future – and everyone thought it was unsinkable.

There is going to be no coherent account of what happened in the last hour of the *Titanic*, because nothing coherent happened. The Titanic was a sixth of a mile long and had eleven decks. What happened in one place did not happen in another. What happened on the starboard side did not happen on the port. On the port side, women and children only were allowed into the boats which were even sent away half-empty when there were not women enough at that moment to fill them, although there were men. On the starboard side, men were allowed to enter the boats when there were not at any given moment enough women to fill them. There was even a difference of opinion as to what constituted a woman. Second Officer Lightoller took any woman, except stewardesses. Fifth Officer Lowe accepted any women, 'whether first class, second class, third class, or sixty-seventh class...regardless of class or nationality or pedigree. Stewardesses just the same'. Lowe, however, said he fended off a lot of Italian men. Latin people, all along the ship's rails, 'more or less like wild beasts, ready to spring'. But the severe Lightoller saw none of this, and said that men whom he refused to allow into his boats 'could not have stood quieter if they had been in church'. Major Arthur Peuchen, who held his commission in the Canadian militia and got away into a boat because he was a yachtsman and could help to handle it, saw a hundred stokers with their bags crowd a whole deck in front of the boats until an officer he did not recognise, a very powerful man, drove them right off the deck like a lot of sheep. Others said not a soul emerged from the engine room. Certainly no single engineer survived. Lowe said they were never seen.

Everyone agrees that the band played until the last. There were eight of them, and none survived. They had played throughout dinner and then gone to their berths. About twenty to one, when the ship was foundering, the cellist ran down the deserted starboard deck, his cello trailing behind him with the spike dragging along the floor. Soon after that the band began to play ragtime. They were still playing ragtime when the last boat was launched.

Colonel Astor, having placed his young bride in one of the boats, lit a cigarette and looked over the rails. Benjamin Guggenheim changed into evening dress, saying that if he had to die he

would die like a gentleman. Thomas Andrews leaned against a mantelpiece in the smoking room. A steward asked him, 'Aren't you going to try for it, sir?' He did not reply. John Collins, aged seventeen, an assistant cook making his first sea voyage, saw the stewards with their white jackets steering some passengers along, making a joke of it. One steward was helping a woman with two children. The steward was carrying one child and the woman the other. Collins took the child the woman was carrying. 'Then,' he said, 'the sailors and the firemen that were forward seen the ship's bow in the water and seen that she was intending to sink her bow, and they shouted out for all they were worth we were to go aft and we were just turning round and making for the stern when the wave washed us off the deck, washed us clear of it, and the child was washed out of my arms: and the wreckage, and the people that was around me, they kept me down for at least two or three minutes under the water'. The sea was calm as a board, but when the bow went under the water it created a wave that washed the decks clear, and there were hundreds on it.

There are the detailed figures for survivors given in the report of the British Board of Trade inquiry:

	Number on board	Number saved	Percentage saved
<u>First-class passengers</u>			
Men	173	58	34
Women	144	139	97
Children	5	5	100
<u>Second-class passengers</u>			
Men	160	13	8
Women	93	78	84
Children	24	24	100
<u>Third-class passengers</u>			
Men	454	55	12
Women	179	98	55
Children	76	25	30
Total passengers	1308	493	38
Crew	898	210	23
Total	2206	703	32

Taking each class of passenger as a whole, of the first class 63 per cent were saved, of the second class 42 per cent, and of the third class 23 per cent.

I. Comprehension and Analysis

(to be answered on a separate sheet of copy paper)

1. Please answer:
 - a) What does this sentence mean: “There is going to be no coherent account of what happened in the last hour of the *Titanic*, because nothing coherent happened”?
 - b) How does the rest of the account illustrate this?
2. What examples of courage and generosity are given in the text?
3. Are there examples of the opposite behaviour?
4. Analyse the table at the end of the text.
5. Comment on:
 - The survival rates of passengers travelling in different classes
 - What difference it made to be a man, woman or child
 - How the chances of the crew compared with those of passengers

II. Essay

Choose **one** of the following topics and write an essay of at least one and a half pages:

1. Write a diary entry of a Third Class passenger who survived the sinking of the *Titanic*.
2. Write an account of a person, real or imaginary, whom you consider to be heroic.
3. “It was the most frightening experience I have ever known”. Write a story about this, true or fictional, in any way you choose.