

Teaching with Primary Sources Assessment

Grade Level: High School (9-10)

Standard(s) or Objectives: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language of a court opinion differs from that of a newspaper).
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Library of Congress or Morris Special Collections Resources:

**Woman Forced Husband
To Climb Into Lifeboat**
Mrs. Elmer Taylor, who, with her husband, was saved in one of the first boats lowered, told a graphic story of the tragedy.
"Mr. Taylor and I were standing on the promenade deck," she said, "when we felt what at first appeared to be a slight cranking sensation, as if the ship were plunging through a field of ice floes. Naturally we were a little startled, but soon afterward one of the ship's officers appeared and told us not to be alarmed, as no serious damage had been done. A score or more of other passengers grouped about us and another officer came up and advised us to go below and get our life belts.
"Some of the ladies were frightened, but none was not very sign of a panic. In fact, some of us felt that the women could possibly help.
"Finally, word came to lower the lifeboats. And then it was that we all felt sure of our safety, although the officers continued to assure us that all was well and the boats were simply being lowered as a precaution. They held us that no matter what happened it would be impossible for the ship to sink in less than forty-eight hours."

The Evening World, Friday April 19, 1912

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030193/1912-04-19/ed-1/seq-3/>

Topic Background:

In the wee hours of the morning on April 15, 1912, the RMS Titanic – the largest passenger steamship in the world at the time – sank into the depths of the Atlantic Ocean after hitting an iceberg only a few hours earlier. More than 1,500 people died.

Excerpt from: <https://blogs.loc.gov/loc/2012/04/an-unsinkable-legacy-remembering-the-titanic/>

Source(s) Used:

The source used in this assessment comes from *The Evening World's* publication on April 19, 1912, featuring *Titanic* survivor stories, including one from Mrs. Elmer Taylor, who was reported to have been saved, with her husband, in one of the first boats lowered. She describes the officers of the ocean liner continually assuring passengers that they were in no danger, and tells how they raised no objection to her insistence that her husband stay with her. She relates seeing the iceberg looming over the ship, and hearing the cries of the doomed passengers.

Answer Key:

Question 1 – C

Question 2 – B

The Titanic Disaster
Published in *The Evening World*, April 19, 1912
Survivor Account from Mrs. Elmer Taylor

“Mr. Taylor and I were standing on the promenade deck,” she said, “when we felt what at first appeared to be a slight crashing sensation, as if the ship were ploughing through a field of ice floes. Naturally we were a little startled, but soon afterward one of the ship’s officers appeared and told us...no serious damage had been done. A score or more of other passengers grouped about us and another officer came up and advised us to go below and get our life belts...”

“Finally, word came to lower the lifeboats...although the officers continued to assure us that the boats were simply being lowered as a precaution...I refused to go into the lifeboat without my husband, and one of the officers said there would be no objection to his going too. There were several other men on the boat, and even so it was not crowded...”

“On we drifted, and when about a mile distant from the Titanic there came the most sickening cries of distress from those left behind us. The night was very clear and the stars were all out, so that we could see the passengers on the big ship apparently scrambling on the decks. Many of them seemed to be jumping from the side of the ship into the water. It was not long after this that the Titanic began to sink...The band played on, but now and then above the strains of the music came the heart-rending cries of the doomed passengers...”

Questions:

1. Upon impact with the iceberg, Mrs. Taylor describes feeling “a slight crashing sensation, as if the ship were ploughing through a field of ice floes.”

In this passage, an ice “floe” most likely refers to...(CCSS. 9-10.4)

- a. A cold ocean current
- b. A light, freezing rain
- c. A flat sheet of floating ice
- d. An enormous glacier

2. From the first two paragraphs of the passage, it can be inferred that: (CCSS. RI.9-10.1)

- a. Mrs. Taylor feels a great deal of survivor’s guilt.
- b. Mrs. Taylor feels the need to defend her husband’s survival.
- c. Mrs. Taylor has a passive, weak personality.
- d. Mrs. Taylor is extremely gullible.