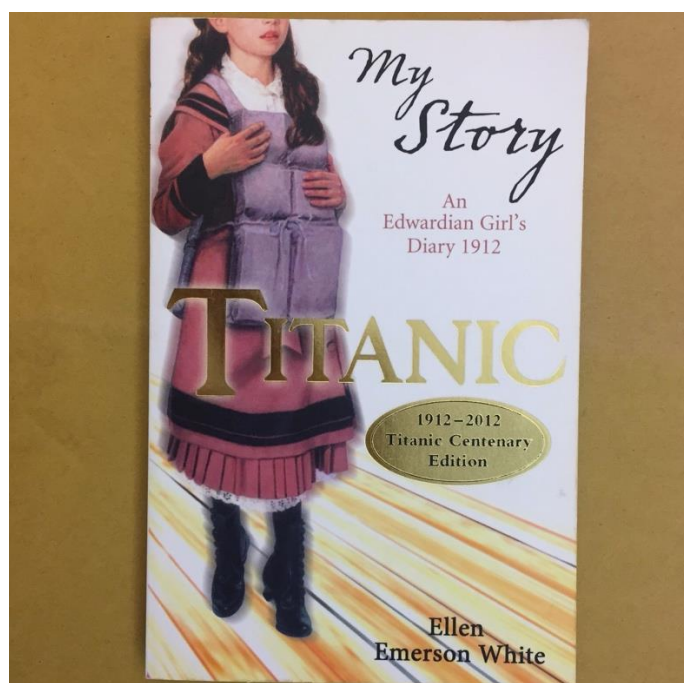


Guided Reading

This week we're going to read an extract from:



The Titanic has come up during year 5 in a computing lesson when we looked at creating PowerPoints so you should have a little bit of knowledge about what happened.

RMS **Titanic** was a British passenger liner operated by the White Star Line that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in the early morning hours of 15 April 1912, after striking an iceberg during her maiden (first) voyage from Southampton to New York City.

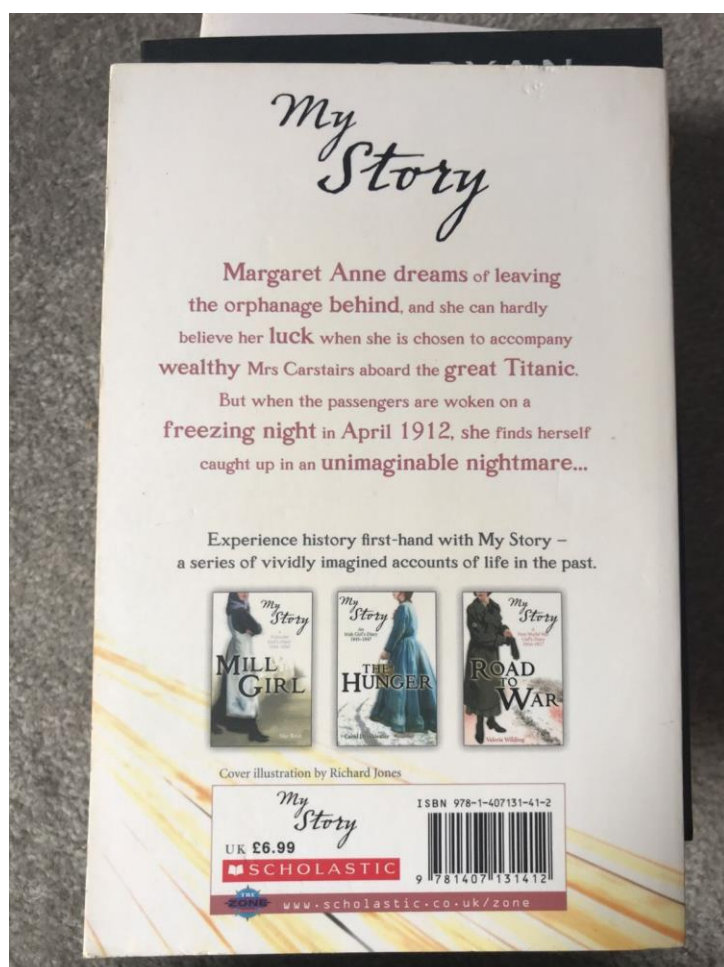
After striking the iceberg, it took 2 hours and 40 minutes to sink.

You might want to watch this video which shows how it sank:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSGesKFzEOs>

Monday's Task

Read the diary entry and make a note of any words you don't understand as you read.



Still later

I was crying, but I returned to the lifeboat area. I had promised, so that was what I did. There were still plenty of passengers around, most of them men, but the boats all seemed to be gone. I swallowed, knowing that I had missed my opportunity and would now have to take my chances along with the people who remained. I should *never* have allowed Robert to leave, as we could have tried to swim to safety together. But – I had promised.

For now, I sank into an empty deck chair to absorb the inevitability of my fate. The bow seemed to be almost underwater, so it would not be long now. The orchestra was still nobly playing away, and I took great comfort from listening to the music. I thought momentarily of writing in this diary, but instead, I took out *Hamlet* and began to thumb through the pages.

“Margie-Jane!” a deep voice said. “What are you still doing here? I was certain you and Mrs Carstairs had long since left.”

It was Mr Prescott, who had dined with us, along with his wife, so many times during the voyage. I scarcely knew him, but it was wonderful to see a familiar face.

"She left earlier," I said. "Where is Mrs Prescott?"

His expression tightened, and I deeply regretted having posed the question at all.

"I sent her on ahead," he answered. "Now, come, quickly, to the Promenade with me. We may just have time."

We hastened down there and I saw a number of women and children climbing across a bridge of deck chairs to get into a lifeboat. There *was* one left. I felt elated – and inconsolably guilty at the thought of getting aboard.

"You and the men—" I started.

Mr Prescott cut me off. "We have no time for idle chatter. Please, just come along." Then he raised his voice. "Let us through, please, gentlemen! I have a young girl here!"

Men moved aside, without the slightest thought for themselves. There are not sufficient words in the English language to honour their valour and gallantry, but I will never forget it – any of it – as long as I may live.

Colonel Astor was there, helping his young wife across the treacherous bridge of chairs. I heard him ask if he could stay with her, due to her condition, but the officer refused him. The Colonel accepted this gracefully, and asked the number of the boat, so he would be able to find her in the morning. Then he moved away, his dog Kitty trailing behind.

A woman was trying to board with her children, but the officers stopped her son and told him to go back and stand with the men. A man who must have been his father

protested that the lad was only thirteen. The officer in charge scowled, but let him pass.

Another woman was clutching her young son. Then he was wearing a woman's hat – I am not sure who put it on his head, but it may have been Colonel Astor. After that, she and her children were allowed aboard with no comment from the officers. I wished so very much that Robert would find his way here; at only sixteen, they might relent and let him board as well.

Except that I knew they would not, and *he* would not.

"Quickly now," Mr Prescott said to me. "We mustn't hold things up."

I did not know what to do, but found myself impulsively hugging him.

"You are a perfect gentleman, sir," I said, "and a credit to us all."

He smiled, and let his hand rest gently on my head for a second. "Come on now, child, it's time. Mind the chairs."

Then, just like that, I was half-climbing, and half-falling, into the lifeboat. I recovered my balance, and made my way to a seat in the bow. As I sat down, the cry to "Lower away!" went up, and my end of the boat dropped towards the water. Next, the bow dropped, and we continued in that erratic fashion.

The last thing I saw was Kitty – noble in her own right – staying close by her master's side.

The *Titanic* was so low in the water that we had a very

short trip down. We made balky progress, and one of the two sailors aboard reached for a knife to cut us free. But then we hit the water, and were able to cast off. The portholes were still brightly lit, but I could see water rising unchecked through C Deck and making its inexorable way upward.

"My God," a woman near me whispered. "She really is going down."

All around us, heavy objects were crashing into the ocean. At first, I feared that the remaining passengers on the ship had gone mad, but then I understood that the deck chairs and other wooden articles could be used for flotation devices.

We had only two men aboard, so another sailor came sliding down the davit ropes to join us. Several more followed in his wake, landing heavily in the boat. A number of women were knocked down and badly bruised as a result.

Anyone who was near an oar grabbed hold and started rowing. I was too far forward to be of any help, and besides, I was unable to take my eyes off that beautiful stricken ship in what appeared to be her death throes.

"Row with all your might!" a man was yelling. "Before we get sucked under!"

First they rowed one way, and then we reversed direction. I had no sense that anyone was in charge. Two men who had taken a chance and jumped off the ship now swam towards us, their arms flailing wildly. They were hauled aboard, shivering from just that brief period in the freezing water.

Even then, to my amazement, I could hear the brave sound of violins being played aboard the ship. As the bow began to disappear completely, there was an enormous din of shattering glass and crashing metal from inside the ship. People were leaping into the water from all directions, while others scrambled toward the stern in a frantic, hopeless attempt to save themselves.

No one in our boat spoke, or perhaps even *breathed*. The horror of these last moments was too awful to watch, but it was impossible to look away. Several women gasped as the *Titanic's* front funnel suddenly ripped free and smashed violently into the water, and then her stern rose higher in the air.

I am not sure if the engine rooms had exploded, or if the ship broke in half – but amidst all of the crashing noises, the bow had gone under and, slowly, the stern was lifted straight up into the sky. I could hear distant screams as people were thrown off, or else struggled to hang on. The ship's lights were abruptly extinguished, and then came back on for one final second before we were all plunged into utter darkness.

The clamour of smashing, crashing, tearing metal seemed endless. The stern stayed straight up in the air like that, a stark shadow against the stars, for what seemed like an hour, but may only have been a minute. Then, with an almost stately grace, it gradually slipped beneath the surface of the ocean.

The *Titanic* was gone.