



# The Titanic Debacle

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# The Titanic Debacle

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# INDEX

TITLE	PAGE NO.
1. Abstract	3
2. Introduction	4
3. Discussions	5
4. Aftermath	9
5. Investigations into The Disaster	10
6. Conclusions	13
7. References	15

## Abstract

RMS Titanic was a British passenger liner that sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in the early morning of 15 April 1912, after colliding with an iceberg during her maiden voyage from Southampton, UK, to New York City, US. The sinking resulted in the deaths of more than 1,500 passengers and crew, making it one of the deadliest commercial peacetime maritime disasters in modern history. The RMS Titanic, the largest ship afloat at the time it entered service, was the second of three Olympic class ocean liners operated by the White Star Line, and was built by the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast, with Thomas Andrews as her naval architect. Andrews was among those who died in the sinking. On her maiden voyage, she carried 2,224 passengers and crew.

## The Titanic Debacle

On April 10, 1912, the Titanic, largest ship afloat, left Southampton, England on her maiden voyage to New York City. The White Star Line had spared no expense in assuring her luxury. A legend even before she sailed, her passengers were a mixture of the world's wealthiest basking in the elegance of first class accommodations and immigrants packed into steerage.

She was touted as the safest ship ever built, so safe that she carried only 20 lifeboats - enough to provide accommodation for only half her 2,200 passengers and crew. This discrepancy rested on the belief that since the ship's construction made her "unsinkable," her lifeboats were necessary only to rescue survivors of other sinking ships. Additionally, lifeboats took up valuable deck space.

Four days into her journey, at 11:40 P.M. on the night of April 14, she struck an iceberg. Her fireman compared the sound of the impact to "the tearing of calico, nothing more." However, the collision was fatal and the icy water soon poured through the ship.

It became obvious that many would not find safety in a lifeboat. Each passenger was issued a life jacket but life expectancy would be short when exposed to water four degrees below freezing. As the forward portion of the ship sank deeper, passengers scrambled to the stern. John Thayer witnessed the sinking from a lifeboat. "We could see groups of the almost fifteen hundred people still aboard, clinging in clusters or bunches, like swarming bees; only to fall in masses, pairs or singly, as the great after part of the ship, two hundred and fifty feet of it, rose into the sky, till it reached a sixty-five or seventy-degree angle." The great ship slowly slid beneath the waters two hours and forty minutes after the collision

The next morning, the liner Carpathia rescued 705 survivors. One thousand five hundred twenty-two passengers and crew were lost. Subsequent inquiries attributed the high loss of life to an insufficient number of lifeboats and inadequate training in their use.

## Discussion

First of all, the timeline of the disaster –

TIME	EVENT
11:40 p.m.	The Titanic sideswipes the iceberg, damaging nearly 300 feet of the hull.
Midnight	Watertight compartments are filling; water begins to spill over the tops of the transverse bulkheads.
1:20 a.m.	The bow pitches; water floods through anchor-chain holes.
2:00	The bow continues to submerge; propellers lift out of the water.
2:10	The Titanic tilts 45 degrees or more; the upper structure steel disintegrates.
2:12	The stern raises up out of the water; the bow, filling with water, grows heavier.
2:18	Weighing 16,000 tons, the bow rips loose; the stern rises to almost vertical.
2:20	The stern slips beneath the surface.
2:29	Coasting at about 13 mph, the bow strikes the ocean floor.
2:56	Falling at about 4 mph, the stern strikes the ocean floor.

The RMS Titanic, the largest ship afloat at the time it entered service, was the second of three Olympic class ocean liners operated by the White Star Line. The ship sank in the North Atlantic Ocean in the early morning of 15 April 1912, after colliding with an iceberg during her maiden voyage from Southampton, UK, to New York City, US.

### How the Titanic Sank

- Water spills over from one "watertight" compartment into another. The Titanic's bow (front) begins to dip into the sea.
- As the bow plunges, the stern (rear) rises out of the water, and the forward funnel topples into the sea.
- The weight of the stern causes the ship to break into two main sections. The bow is still attached to the stern by the keel as it goes under, pulling the keel upright, like pulling a wagon behind it. But the keel breaks and the bow plunges to the ocean bottom.
- The stern rights itself briefly but soon loses buoyancy as water enters its compartments. It lifts again into the air and quickly sinks.

**APRIL 15** Midnight Captain Smith tells the ship's wireless operators to send a distress call.

**12:25 a.m.** Smith orders passengers into lifeboats—women and children first.

**12:30 a.m.** Passengers remain hesitant to board the lifeboats. Most passengers and crew members do not yet realize the seriousness of the situation.

**12:45 a.m.** Lifeboat No. 7 is the first boat lowered into the water. The Titanic fires the first of eight distress rockets into the air. The sight of rockets finally convinces passengers of the danger.

**2:20 a.m.** The last of the Titanic disappears beneath the water.

**KIDS DISCOVER**

Now the people that were involved –

1. J. Bruce Ismay (White Star Line's managing director)
2. Thomas Andrews (shipbuilder)
3. Edward Smith (Captain of The Titanic)
4. Security people in-charge of lifeboat accommodation

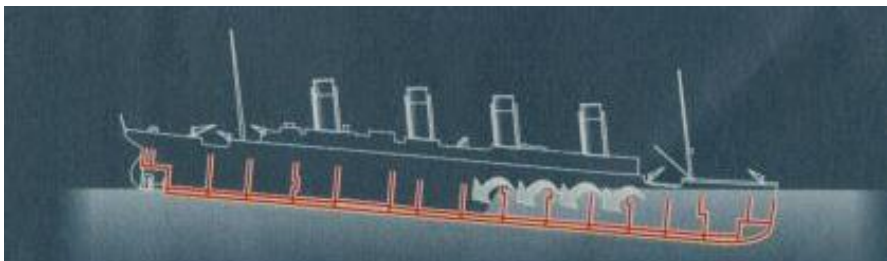
These were the most important as far as the disaster is concerned.

The main reasons of the sinking of the ship –

1. Striking the iceberg at high speed
2. Insufficient lifeboats
3. “Women and children first” protocol
4. Boats not completely filled according to their capacity
5. Segregating people by class when accommodating in the lifeboats

The wreckage seems to be just a small incident when we see that it hit the iceberg, but the in-depth analysis shows that there were certain events which caused this big mistake.

The ship was built by Edward Smith, managing director and head of the drafting department of the shipbuilding company Harland and Wolff in Belfast, Ireland. The White Star Line, was trying to make its largest which was “unsinkable”. The ship had many water tight compartments which would prevent water from getting inside. But this was not the problem, the ship tilted onto her front end due to the weight of the water in the compartments.



## COMMENTS

This shows us a barrier of Limited Frame of Reference from the White Star Line, because nothing is perfect in this world. Instead of preaching this we should try to think of the possible failures of the model.



Also aboard the ship were the White Star Line's managing director J. Bruce Ismay. The Titanic was high on power, 24 double-ended and five single-ended boilers feeding two reciprocating steam engines for the wing propellers, and a low-pressure turbine for the center propeller; output: 46,000 HP Cruising: 21 kn (39 km/h; 24 mph). Max: 24 kn (44 km/h; 28 mph). Ismay asked the captain of the ship, Edward Smith, to speed up and get the ship 1 day before the scheduled time to the destination. He thought it would surprise the people and the name of White Star Line and J. Bruce Ismay will get ever famous. Due to this major step, they ignored 7 warnings of icebergs on their way, finally when the saw the iceberg it was too late. The captain could not save the ship as it was very high on speed. At the end when the ship was sinking, he sneaked out on a lifeboat.

The Titanic had a capacity of Passengers: 2,435, crew: 892. Total: 3,327. But it had only 20 lifeboats having a capacity of 60 each. The total giving around 1200, about half of the total passengers aboard. This was just to save the deck space. Otherwise the deck would look cluttered. This was a major ignorance in the safety of the ship as it was known even before the voyage began.

## COMMENTS

This is an example of self-interested thinking and group bias. We should not keep our name ahead of safety as it may cost lives of many innocent people. He also showed self-serving bias in the end.

This shows the overconfidence, unwarranted assumption and inability to set priorities. Safety should have a higher priority than the looks. This was also a consequence of the "unsinkable" remark given to the ship. It was unwarrantly assumed that the ship won't sink.

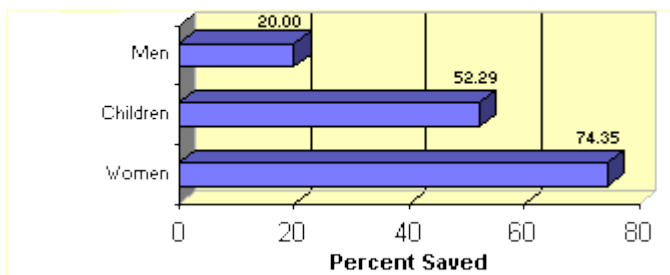


The passengers in the ship were segregated in classes, viz. first, second and third class. They were treated differently in every sense. Moreover, the women and children were given preference over the male when they were rescued in the lifeboats. This led to separation of families and many committed suicide. Even after the rescue operation many male figures were lost leaving behind many widows and orphans. In the lifeboats with the first class passengers, only 12-20 people were seated which had a capacity of 60. The lower class passengers were not locked, so that they cannot come out for help. But this made the situation worse as when they came out, they overflowed the boats which resulted in the rupture of the boats and harness.

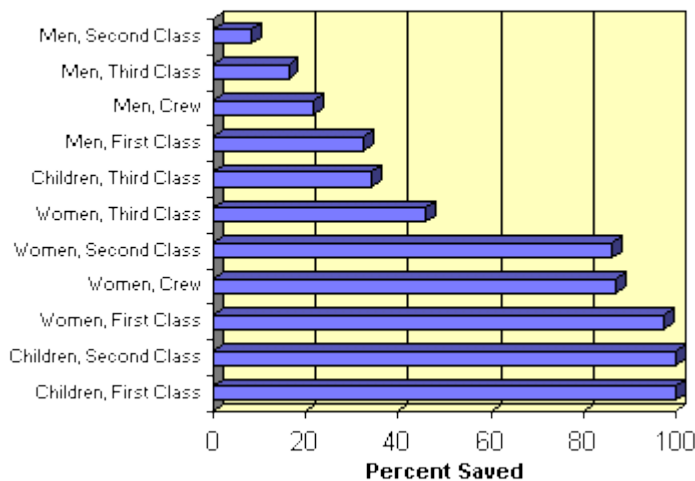
## COMMENTS

This is an example of stereotypical thinking, considering the lives of only a group of people more important than the others is an incorrect direction of the thinking procedure.

**Titanic Disaster -- percent of passengers saved, showing effect of "sex discrimination"**



**Titanic Disaster -- percent of passengers saved, by category**



## Aftermath

Carpathia took three days to reach New York after leaving the scene of the disaster. She was able to pass news to the outside world by wireless about what had happened. The initial reports were confused, leading the American press to report erroneously on 15 April that Titanic was being towed to port by the SS Virginian.

Later that day, confirmation came through that Titanic had been lost and that most of her passengers and crew had died. The news attracted crowds of people to the White Star Line's offices in London, New York, Montreal, Southampton, Liverpool and Belfast.

The ship's arrival in New York led to a frenzy of press interest, with newspapers competing to be the first to report the survivors' stories. Some reporters bribed their way aboard the pilot boat New York, which guided Carpathia into harbor, and one even managed to get onto Carpathia before she docked. Crowds gathered outside newspaper offices to see the latest reports being posted in the windows or on billboards. It took another four days for a complete list of casualties to be compiled and released, adding to the agony of relatives waiting for news of those who had been aboard Titanic.



## Investigations into The Disaster

Even before the survivors arrived in New York, investigations were being planned to discover what had happened, and what could be done to prevent a recurrence.

1. United States Senate inquiry into the sinking of the RMS Titanic
2. British Wreck Commissioner's inquiry into the sinking of the RMS Titanic

The former more robustly critical of traditions and practices, and scathing of the failures involved, and the latter broadly more technical and expert-oriented.

The US Senate's inquiry into the disaster was initiated on 19 April, a day after Carpathia arrived in New York. The chairman, Senator William Alden Smith, wanted to gather accounts from passengers and crew while the events were still fresh in their minds. Smith also needed to subpoena all surviving British passengers and crew while they were still on American soil, which prevented them from returning to the UK before the American inquiry was completed on 25 May. The British press condemned Smith as an opportunist, insensitively forcing an inquiry as a means of gaining political prestige and seizing "his moment to stand on the world stage". Smith, however, already had a reputation as a campaigner for safety on US railroads, and wanted to investigate any possible malpractices by railroad tycoon J. P. Morgan, Titanic's ultimate owner.

The British Board of Trade's inquiry into the disaster was headed by Lord Mersey, and took place between 2 May and 3 July. Being run by the Board of Trade who had previously approved the ship, it was seen by some as having little interest in its own or White Star's conduct being found negligent.

Each inquiry took testimony from both passengers and crew of Titanic, crew members of Leyland Line's Californian, Captain Arthur Rostron of Carpathia and other experts. The British inquiry also took far greater expert testimony, making it the

### COMMENTS

This shows the stereotyped thinking from the British press.

longest and most detailed court of inquiry in British history up to that time. The two inquiries reached broadly similar conclusions; the regulations on the number of lifeboats that ships had to carry were out of date and inadequate, Captain Smith had failed to take proper heed of ice warnings, the lifeboats had not been properly filled or crewed, and the collision was the direct result of steaming into a dangerous area at too high a speed.

Neither inquiry's findings listed negligence by IMM or the White Star Line as a factor. The US inquiry concluded that since those involved had followed standard practice the disaster was an act of God. The British inquiry concluded that Smith had followed long-standing practice that had not previously been shown to be unsafe, noting that British ships alone had carried 3.5 million passengers over the previous decade with the loss of just 10 lives, and concluded that Smith had done "only that which other skilled men would have done in the same position". The British inquiry also warned that "what was a mistake in the case of the Titanic would without doubt be negligence in any similar case in the future".

#### Role of SS Californian -

One of the most controversial issues examined by the inquiries was the role played by SS Californian, which had been only a few miles from Titanic but had not picked up her distress calls or responded to her signal rockets. Californian had warned Titanic by radio of the pack ice that was the reason Californian had stopped for the night, but was rebuked by Titanic's senior wireless operator, Jack Phillips.

Testimony before the British inquiry revealed that at 10:10 p.m., Californian observed the lights of a ship to the south; it was later agreed between Captain Stanley Lord and Third Officer C.V. Groves (who had relieved Lord of duty at 11:10 p.m.) that this was a passenger liner. At 11:50 p.m., the officer had watched that ship's lights flash out, as if she had shut down or turned sharply, and that the port light was now visible. Morse light signals to the

## COMMENTS

The reports were quite accurate and to the point as the White Star Line had no negligence and ignorance while the making of the ship. But the report was in a sense a Black and White approach. The ignorance by Ismay cannot be ignored.

This case of SS Californian shows sheer ignorance and carelessness on behalf of the crew. Reliance on authority is the barrier exercised here.

ship, upon Lord's order, were made between 11:30 p.m. and 1:00 a.m., but were not acknowledged. If Titanic were as far from the Californian as Lord claimed, then he knew, or should have known, that Morse signals would not be visible. A reasonable and prudent course of action would have been to awaken the wireless operator and to instruct him to attempt to contact Titanic by that method. Had Lord done so, it is possible that he could have reached Titanic in time to save additional lives.

Captain Lord had gone to the chartroom at 11:00 p.m. to spend the night; however, Second Officer Herbert Stone, now on duty, notified Lord at 1:10 a.m. that the ship had fired five rockets. Lord wanted to know if they were company signals, that is, colored flares used for identification. Stone said that he did not know and that the rockets were all white. Captain Lord instructed the crew to continue to signal the other vessel with the Morse lamp, and went back to sleep. Three more rockets were observed at 1:50 a.m. and Stone noted that the ship looked strange in the water, as if she were listing. At 2:15 a.m., Lord was notified that the ship could no longer be seen. Lord asked again if the lights had had any colors in them, and he was informed that they were all white.

Californian eventually responded. At around 5:30 a.m., Chief Officer George Stewart awakened wireless operator Cyril Furnstone Evans, informed him that rockets had been seen during the night, and asked that he try to communicate with any ship. He got news of Titanic's loss, Captain Lord was notified, and the ship set out to render assistance. She arrived well after Carpathia had already picked up all the survivors.

The inquiries found that the ship seen by Californian was in fact Titanic and that it would have been possible for Californian to come to her rescue; therefore, Captain Lord had acted improperly in failing to do so.

## Conclusions

1. The Titanic tragedy was a warning to all other ships.
2. From that point on all ships had enough lifeboats for every single person on the ship and sometimes more.
3. There have been some other big ship crashes after that but usually not as many people died and the ship did not make the same mistakes as the Titanic did.
4. There was certainly no such thing as an “unsinkable ship”.
5. The Titanic will most likely continue to lure people for generations to come, since every generation is able to take something different from its historic tragedy.
6. In every sphere of life critical thinking plays an important role to decide what is better for the greater good.

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