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# Canada and the Titanic

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## What was the R.M.S. Titanic?

Decades before commercial air travel became common, steamships were the only way people could travel around the world, crossing oceans and delivering goods for trade. The R.M.S. *Titanic* was advertised as the most luxurious liner of its time ("liner" was a word that came from the steamship "lines": the vast businesses that built and maintained many steamships). The ship also carried many passengers of more humble background than its First-class ticket holders.

The *Titanic* was built by the White Star Line shipping company, the main rival of the Cunard Line, which had been begun by Samuel Cunard, a Canadian from Halifax, Nova Scotia. The White Star Line was owned by J.P. Morgan, a world-famous businessman who was extremely wealthy. White Star wanted to build an amazing ship that would not be outdone by any other in terms of luxury, speed, and safety. The *Titanic* launched in 1912, just two years before World War I began, during an age of lavish spending by the very rich who led lifestyles beyond our imagining even today. The nineteenth century had been a period of great advancement and the general feeling was that anything was possible.

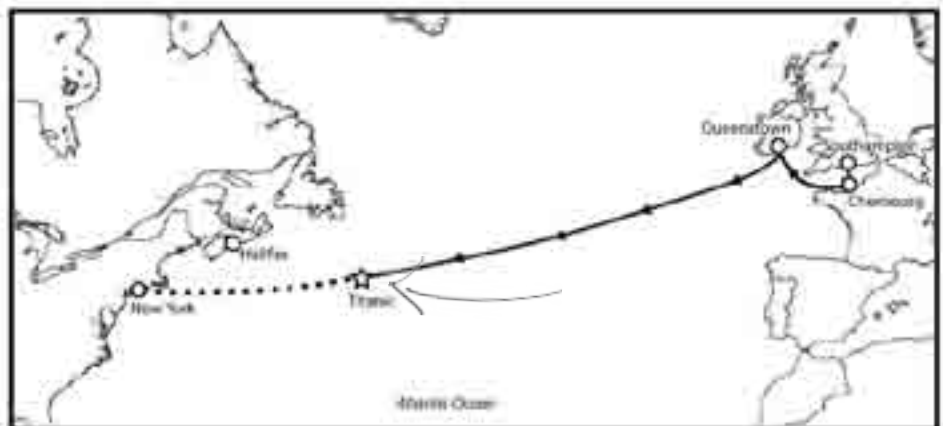
The ship was built in Belfast, Ireland (now part of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom) at their famous dockyards, Harland and Wolff; the company had built many of the best ships. Everything that went into the liner was considered state-of-the-art at the time. Almost ten thousand men worked on the ship, and the *Titanic* was ready to be launched, less than two years after the project began. On April 2, 1912 the ship left Belfast and travelled overnight through the Irish Sea, arriving in Southampton, on England's southern coast, on April 3rd.

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## Across the Atlantic: The Titanic's Route



*Very few photos of the Titanic taken on the water survive, because the ship sank on its first voyage across the Atlantic.*



The map above shows the route of the *Titanic's* first and only voyage, across the Atlantic from Europe to North America. The ship left Southampton on England's southern coast, stopped briefly in France and then north where it took on passengers at Queenstown, Ireland, before setting out for its destination, New York City. The arrow indicates, pointing at the star, where the ship went down, south of Newfoundland (still a British possession in 1912).

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Above, Edward J. Smith, the captain of R.M.S. Titanic, on board the ship before it sailed. Captain Smith died on April 15th, 1912, going down with his ship.



A Parisien-style café and below, a pool, both for the use of First-class passengers.



## The Titanic's First and Only Voyage

The *Titanic* arrived at Southampton, on England's south coast, on April 3rd. Excitement was in the air as workers spent almost a week getting the liner ready for its first voyage. Newspapers covered the preparations and as the departure day approached, passengers began to arrive, some on private trains for First-class ticketholders. Tons of supplies were loaded, necessary to accommodate the many passengers as well as the large crew. A huge number of workers were needed to do repairs, clean, cook, serve, and to keep the ship running efficiently and safely.

The *Titanic* was launched on April 10th, 1912. There were about 1,317 passengers on the ship, and close to a thousand crew members. The First-class ticketholders had their own dining room (the largest of any ship to that point in history), gym facilities, a café, and the first swimming pool ever built on a liner.

The first few days of the voyage went smoothly, although the weather was quite cold, as April in the North Atlantic often is. If people ventured onto the decks, they wore warm clothing. At night the ship was well-heated as the temperature dropped even more.

The officers and senior crew were aware of dangerous icebergs in that part of the Atlantic. The recent weather had been mild in the Arctic, allowing icebergs to drift south. The *Titanic* had been warned about icebergs in its path, but the last, and crucial warning, was ignored. A wireless operator on a nearby ship, the *Californian*, warned the *Titanic* that it was heading for an iceberg. No action was taken and around 11:40 PM on April 14th, 640 km south of Newfoundland, the ship plowed into a massive iceberg that ripped into the liner's underside, making a horrendous grinding noise.

## The Ship Goes Down

The *Titanic* disaster was preceded by warnings that were not heeded but it was also largely caused by a design flaw. In the bottom of the ship, there were a number of supposedly watertight rooms, but not all of them had walls that extended to the top of the deck above. This meant that when water began coming in, it had somewhere to go - the weight of the water pulled the ship down.

Captain E.J. Smith and his officers did not believe the ship would sink, but they did signal for help from a nearby ship, the *Carpathia*, heading to Europe. The *Carpathia* would have to turn around and would need several hours to arrive; meanwhile lifeboats were launched (but many were lowered into the ocean with room for more), mainly with women and children, to await rescue. Most of the male crew and passengers remained on board.

In the early-morning hours of Monday, April 15th, 1912, the *Titanic* disappeared into the ocean, breaking in two; almost all of those still on board perished.

# ***Canada and the Titanic***

## Comprehension Questions p. 1 and 2



1. What new information did you learn about the era of the *Titanic* from reading Part 1? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who was Samuel Cunard and where was he from? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Where was the *Titanic* built? Why do you think it was built there? \_\_\_\_\_

4. What was the planned route of the *Titanic* after it left Northern Ireland on April 2, 1912? \_\_\_\_\_

5. How long did it take the *Titanic* to be ready for its Atlantic crossing after arriving in England? \_\_\_\_\_

6. When did the *Titanic* leave Southampton? Where and when did the liner hit the iceberg? \_\_\_\_\_

7. What were two of the reasons mentioned that played a part in the sinking of the *Titanic*? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How did the technology of the time save many lives? \_\_\_\_\_