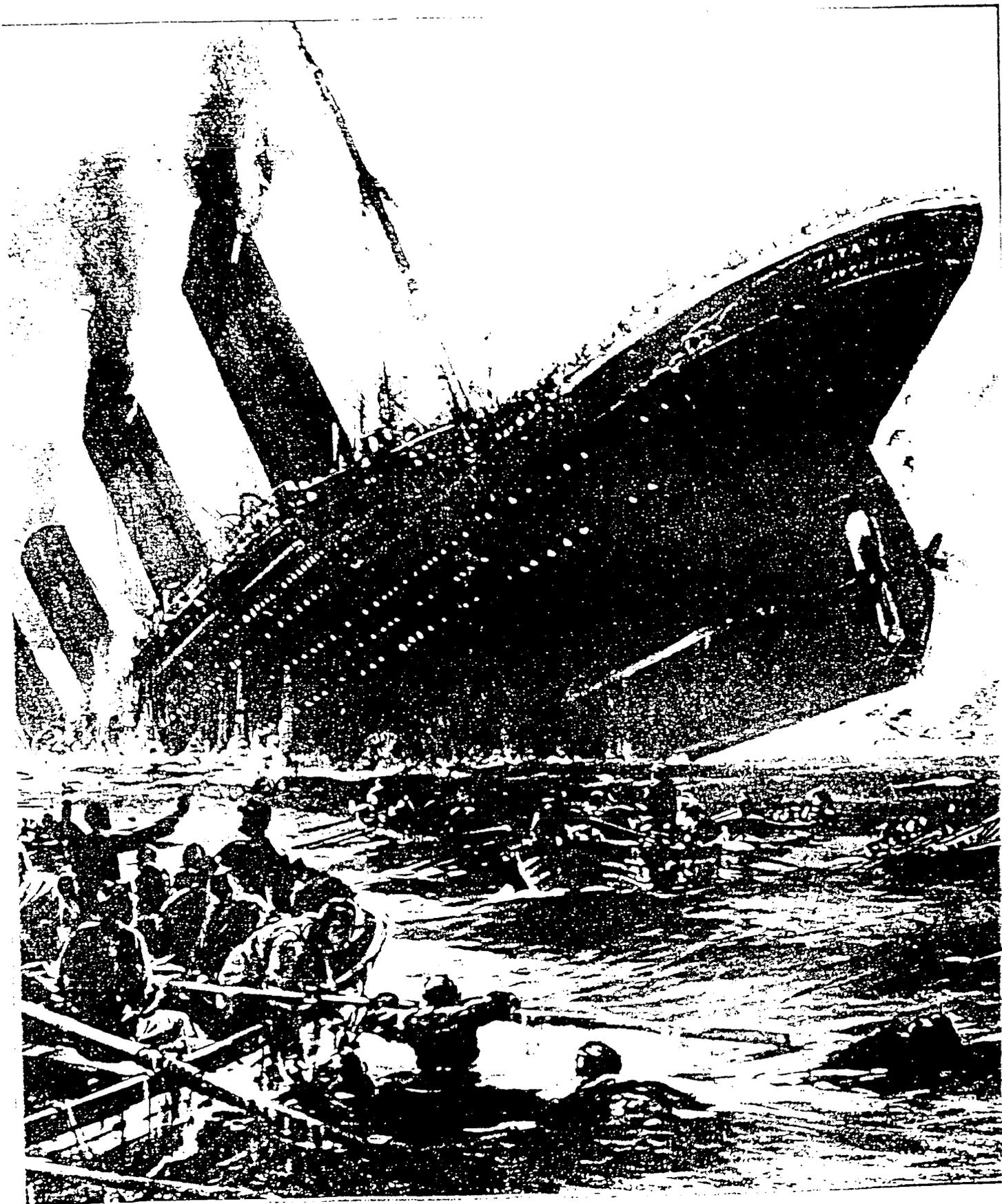

Nightmare at Sea

Captain Edward Smith stared out into the cold, still night. He had been given the honor of taking the Titanic on her very first trip. After this trip, Smith planned to **retire**.

Smith told the **lookout**, Frederick Fleet, about the reports of ice he had received. Then he went inside the ship to dinner.

Fleet searched the darkness. His job was to watch for **icebergs**. Fleet watched carefully, but he wasn't really worried. The Titanic was the biggest, strongest, safest ship ever built.

All at once, Fleet saw a black shadow right in front of the ship. It was an iceberg! Quickly he rang the warning bell.



Bad News

For the next 37 seconds, Fleet stood frozen as a mountain of ice came closer. The crew tried to steer the ship out of the way. But it was no use. At 11:40 P.M. on April 14, 1912, the iceberg tore a hole in the side of the Titanic. Slowly, the huge **unsinkable** ship started to sink.

Word of the accident spread quickly through the ship. The passengers were confused but not upset. They thought this was a new adventure. A few crew members knew better. The ship's carpenter had been near the bottom of the ship when the 80-foot iceberg hit. He rushed upstairs.

"She's taking water fast!" he called to Captain Edward Smith.

A mail clerk also came running. He announced that water was filling the mail room.

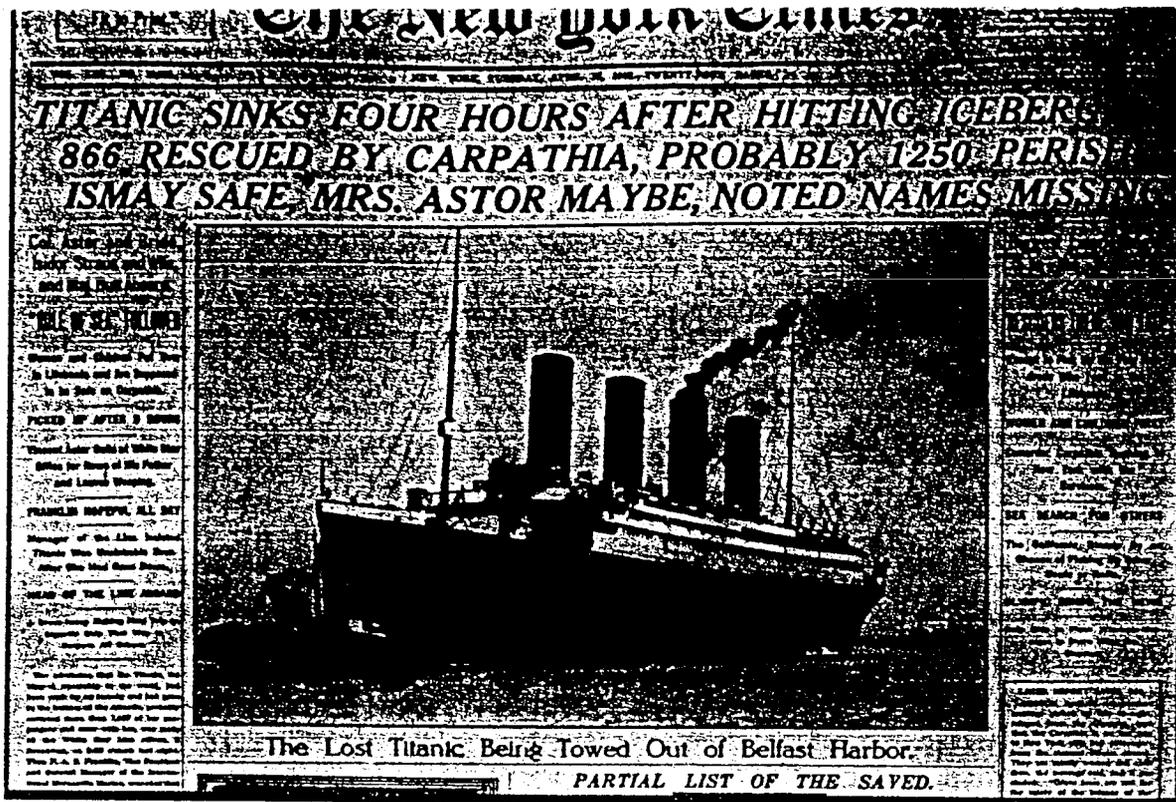
Captain Smith went to check the sixteen **watertight compartments** at the bottom of the ship. These rooms were supposed to keep the ship from sinking. The Titanic should float even if three or four of them filled with water.

Captain Smith found that five of the rooms had been torn open by the iceberg. They were now hopelessly flooded. Water was filling the other rooms as well. There was no doubt about it. The Titanic was going down.

Women and Children First

On the deck, crew members hurried to get out the **lifeboats**. No one knew exactly what to do. They had never had a practice drill. It had not seemed necessary. Finally, they got the first boat ready. Captain Smith called out the order.

"Women and children first!"



But most women and children refused to go. They felt safer staying on the big warm ship. They didn't want to go out into the cold darkness. They didn't trust the small boats. Many still did not believe the ship was in danger.

"Hurry! Hurry! There's no time to lose!" a crew member shouted.

But few people listened to him. An hour later, only 20 people were in the first lifeboat. There was room for 45 more people, but the crew could wait no longer. At 12:45 A.M., they lowered the half-empty lifeboat into the water.

Cowards and Heroes

Finally, people understood that the Titanic was sinking. Suddenly, everyone wanted to get into a lifeboat. But there were not enough to go around. There were 2,207 people on the Titanic. But there were only enough lifeboats for 1,178 people.



The **shortage** of lifeboats brought out the worst in some people. One man snuck into a lifeboat dressed as a woman. Others pushed ahead of mothers and small children. Some men had to be dragged kicking and screaming out of the boats.

But while some people became cowards, others became heroes.

Dr. W.T. Minahan helped his wife into a boat, then stepped back to make room for someone else. "Be brave," he called to his wife. "No matter what happens, be brave."

Someone else tried to help an older man named Isidor Straus into a lifeboat. But Straus shook his head.

"I will not go before the other men," he said.

Mrs. Straus, like many other women, refused to leave her husband. "We have been living together for many years," she said. "Where you go, I go." Then the two of them sat down in deck chairs to wait for the end together.

A Sad End

On the deck, the ship's band played. None of these men had tried to leave. They felt it was their duty to stay with the ship. They did their best to comfort the passengers. They played loud, cheerful music.

By 2:00 A.M., all of the lifeboats were in the water. There wasn't much hope left for those still on the ship. Some jumped into the water. They tried to swim out to the lifeboats. A few made it. But most quickly died in the freezing water.

One swimmer looked back and saw Captain Smith standing on the ship. The water was up to his waist.



Captain Edward Smith

The **bow** of the ship was underwater. The **stern** was up in the air.

At 2:18 A.M. with the band still playing, the stern of the Titanic slid into the water. The great ship sank to the bottom of the ocean, taking more than 1,500 people with it.

A Call for Help

The Titanic's radio operator had called for help on the ship's radio. Several ships heard the cries for help and sailed to her as fast as they could.

The Carpathia was the first ship to arrive. Its crew began picking up the people in the lifeboats at 4:10 A.M. Of the 2,207 people who had sailed on the Titanic, only 711 were still alive.

The Titanic became a legend. For 73 years, people searched for the remains of the great ship. Finally, on September 1, 1985, a team of French and American explorers found her. The rusty wreck lay two miles under the Atlantic Ocean. She was no longer the beautiful and graceful ship she had once been.

Do You Remember?

■ Read each sentence below. Write T if the sentence is true. Write F if the sentence is false.

- _____ 1. The Titanic hit an iceberg.
- _____ 2. Captain Smith ordered his crew to get into lifeboats.
- _____ 3. There were not enough lifeboats for everyone.
- _____ 4. Frederick Fleet was the ship's carpenter.
- _____ 5. Every lifeboat was packed full of passengers.
- _____ 6. Mr. Isidor Straus snuck onto a lifeboat dressed as a woman.
- _____ 7. The band played songs as the Titanic sank.
- _____ 8. None of the passengers were saved.

Critical Thinking – Main Ideas

■ Underline the two most important ideas from the story.

- 1. The Titanic sank after it hit an iceberg.
- 2. Captain Smith was planning to retire.
- 3. The mail room was filled with water.
- 4. The Carpathia was the first ship to arrive.
- 5. Many people died because there were not enough lifeboats.

Exploring Words

■ Write the correct word in each sentence.

retire	lookout	icebergs	unsinkable	watertight
compartments	lifeboats	shortage	bow	stem

1. Big blocks of ice floating in the ocean are called _____.
2. When there isn't enough of something, there is a _____.
3. If something is _____, water cannot get in or out of it.
4. A _____ watches for danger.
5. The front part of a ship is called the _____.
6. _____ are small boats which people use if they have to leave the main ship.
7. If something cannot sink, it is called _____.
8. _____ are small, separate rooms.
9. The back part of a ship is called the _____.
10. Captain Edwards was almost ready to _____.

