

History Through a Porthole

Compare facts and storytelling in two portrayals of the Titanic.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.7.9a "Apply grade 7 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter..."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details in the historical account that could be checked in records. Circle personal or invented details in the fictional scene, then number one event that both portray.

Two Views of the Titanic

- ① Historical account: On April 14, 1912, the Titanic struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic shortly before midnight. The ship carried too few lifeboats for everyone aboard. After the collision, officers loaded women and children into lifeboats first, although the rule was not followed perfectly. At about 2:20 a.m. on April 15, Titanic sank. The rescue ship Carpathia arrived later that morning and picked up survivors from the lifeboats. More than 1,500 people died in the disaster.
- ② Fictional scene: I clutched my brother's violin case as Officer Lowe shouted for our lifeboat to pull away. A woman in a red coat begged us not to leave her husband, and I promised to deliver a letter for her. Icebergs shone like glass around us. When a distant roar rose behind the boat, I buried my face in the violin case. At sunrise, a ship's crew lifted us aboard, and I found the letter still dry inside my pocket.
- ③ Historians build accounts from survivor testimony, ship records, and later investigations. Such sources can disagree about small moments, so historians check several sources before making a claim. A novelist may study these records before creating a scene, but the novelist can invent a narrator, dialogue, and objects that are not documented. When readers compare the two kinds of writing, they should notice which details can be checked in records and which details make the event feel personal.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What event do both portrayals show? Use one detail from each portrayal in your answer.

2 How does the historical account's information about when Titanic sank differ from the information in the fictional scene?

3 Choose the violin case, red coat, or letter. Why is your chosen detail a fictional addition rather than a confirmed historical fact in this passage?

4 How does the narrator's first-person voice change the focus of the fictional scene compared with the historical account?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write exactly four sentences that compare the two portrayals. Identify one shared event, explain one personal detail added in the fictional scene, and explain one fact you would verify with the historical account.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details in the historical account that could be checked in records. Circle personal or invented details in the fictional scene, then number one event that both portray. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What event do both portrayals show? Use one detail from each portrayal in your answer.	Both show survivors leaving in lifeboats. The historical account says officers loaded lifeboats, and the fictional scene says a lifeboat pulled away.
2	How does the historical account's information about when Titanic sank differ from the information in the fictional scene?	The historical account says Titanic sank at about 2:20 a.m. on April 15, 1912. The fictional scene gives no exact date or sinking time.
3	Choose the violin case, red coat, or letter. Why is your chosen detail a fictional addition rather than a confirmed historical fact in this passage?	For example, the violin case is a fictional addition because the historical account does not document it, while the fictional scene centers it in the narrator's experience.
4	How does the narrator's first-person voice change the focus of the fictional scene compared with the historical account?	The narrator focuses on one survivor's feelings and personal details, while the historical account focuses on the larger event and documented facts.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Both portrayals show people leaving Titanic in lifeboats. The fictional scene adds a boy holding his brother's violin case and carrying a letter. These details make one survivor's fear and responsibility feel close. A reader should use the historical account to verify that Titanic sank at about 2:20 a.m. on April 15, 1912.

Accept other supported shared events and personal fictional details. For Part 3, require four sentences that include a comparison, a fictional addition, and a fact to verify through the historical account.