



Who was to blame for the sinking of the Titanic?



OBJECTIVE 1

To construct an interpretation as to who was most to blame for the Titanic disaster.

OBJECTIVE 2

To compare and critically analyse British and American enquiries.

Summary of lesson

Throughout this lesson, students will build on their prior learning from the previous lessons looking at why the Titanic disaster happened and why it was significant. Using the different cause factors identified in lesson 2, students will now apportion blame for these errors, building to them creating their own interpretation of "Who was to blame". Students will then have the chance to compare their interpretation to two real life views, that of the US and British enquiries into the disaster.

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Lesson PowerPoint

Resource 1: Worksheet on slide 8

National Curriculum links

This lesson links to the National Curriculum aim for pupils to:

- pursue historically valid enquiries
- understand how different types of historical sources are used rigorously to make historical claims and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed
- make connections, draw contrasts focusing on the concepts of differing interpretations.

If in the local area to Southampton or another Titanic site, this lesson provides the opportunity for students to study a local history study linking to the:

- challenges for Britain, Europe and the Wider World 1901 to the present day

Lesson guidance

Slide by slide

SLIDES

1–2

Recall quiz

Five question recall quiz for students to complete at the start of the lesson. This is in keeping with Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (2012) which suggests that regular daily review and checking for students' understanding are both vital for new learning to take place. Answers on slide 2.

SLIDE

3

Learning objectives

Display Learning Objectives to students and explain the rationale for today's learning.

SLIDE

4

New vocabulary

Introduce new vocabulary, "Culpable" and "Interpretation". We are going to be creating our own interpretation as to who was most to blame (or in other words, most culpable) for the sinking of the Titanic, as well as looking at different interpretations from the US and British enquiries.

SLIDE

5

Think back

Ask students to think back to the previous lessons. Which people have we met that might have played a part in causing the Titanic to either sink, or led to it being such a disaster? At this point, students might not recall specific names or people, but might be able to recall 'The Captain', 'The lookout', 'The Designer' etc.

SLIDE

6

Meet the six key people

Now to put some names to these positions. Introduce students to our 6 key people that we are going to consider as possibly being most culpable for the disaster.

WHO IS MOST CULPABLE?

Captain Smith

Ship's captain

Firstly, should he take the blame as the ship's captain?

Thomas Andrews

Ship's designer

There were several changes that could have been made to the design (such as waterproof bulkheads, stronger rivets and more lifeboats) which, if he had incorporated these into his design, would have mitigated the disaster.

William Murdoch

First Officer

Perhaps the blame should lie with him, as he had been in charge at the time when it hit the iceberg?

J Bruce Ismay

Chairman, White Star Line

Another often cited culprit. Was it his cost cutting measures, and demand for increased speed that led to the disaster?

Frederick Fleet

Lookout

Everyone knows the Titanic sank because it hit an iceberg, so surely some of the blame should be given to the lookout who failed to spot it?

Stanley Lord

Captain of the nearby California

And finally, what about his culpability? He ignored the distress calls of the Titanic. If he had intervened, the death toll would likely be dramatically reduced.

SLIDE

7

The song of blame

The embedded video clip is a song from 'Titanic: The Musical', sung by Andrews, Smith and Ismay. In it, they all blame each other for the disaster. Ask students to listen through to the song and read the accompanying lyrics. What reasons do they each put forward for blaming the others?

SLIDE

8

Worksheet

Print for students. Students to read the information in the first column. In the second column, ask them to fill in who this suggests was to blame, as well as giving an explanation as to why. In the final column, pupils can reflect on if there is anything that could have been done differently to reduce the severity of the disaster.

SLIDE

9

Their own interpretation

Ask students to create their own interpretation of who was most culpable for the disaster, as well as explaining why they have taken this view.

SLIDES

10–11

The two enquiries

Following the disaster, there were enquiries carried out by both the British and the Americans. On these slides you will see summaries of their findings. Ask pupils who each enquiry blames for the disaster, do they agree?

SLIDE

12

Consolidate

Consolidatory writing activity, pupils to answer the 3 questions. This can then be fed back as a class.