



GHOSTS OF THE *TITANIC*

JULIE LAWSON

GRADES
4–7

About the Book

To mark the hundredth anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic* on April 15, 1912, Julie Lawson has written a haunting and suspenseful novel that weaves gripping fiction around fascinating historical fact.

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EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Literature/Language Arts

Questions for discussion or writing activities—Students may discuss the following questions as a whole class or in small groups, or choose one or more about which to write.

- ❖ The author provides narratives by two characters who differ in age and in the time in which they live—Angus, age seventeen, in 1912, and Kevin, age twelve, in 2011. Do you think this writing technique makes the story more real? More exciting? More believable? Give your reasons.
- ❖ The ghost of Annie plays a big part in this story—for Angus and for Kevin. Do you believe in ghosts? If so, why? Can you describe any experiences you've had when you thought a ghost might be present?
- ❖ Kevin worries a lot about pleasing his father. What is your opinion of the various things he does to accomplish this? Describe similar situations in your own life in which you really wanted to please a parent or another adult but it just never seemed possible.
- ❖ What are your reactions to the fact that when the *Titanic* sank, upper-class people were identified and saved first? Do you think this would happen today—on a cruise ship or in a plane crash? Why or why not?
- ❖ The dream in which Kevin sees himself saving baby Michael as the *Titanic* is sinking solves his problem with Annie, the ghost, and the mystery of the Shearwater Point house's history, and brings him and his father to a better relationship. Is it

believable to you that a dream could do this? What experiences have you had in which a dream helped you with a problem?

Compare and contrast—Students can do research on the sinking of the *Titanic* and the rescue ship, the *Carpathia*. Once they have established the facts, they can compare them with the descriptions of the sinking in the story. (See Online Resources below for links.)

Poetry

Students may be interested in reading/reciting parts of the two poems mentioned in the story: "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, here:

www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173253 and "The Convergence of the Twain" by Thomas Hardy, here:

www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/176678. Students might also write their own poetry related to the *Titanic* disaster.

Biography

Several very famous people were aboard the *Titanic*. John Jacob Astor IV, Lady Duff Gordon, Benjamin Guggenheim, and Margaret "Molly" Brown are the best known. Students can find information about these people's lives and create dialogues they could have had on board.

Geography

Using a globe, a wall map, or an atlas, students can plot the route of the *Titanic* and pinpoint where it went down. They can also locate Victoria, British Columbia; Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Prince Edward Island.

Research

There are many areas of knowledge related to the *Titanic* disaster that students may be interested in exploring to enhance their understanding of the story. Some possible areas for investigation are:

The *Titanic*, the *Carpathia*, and the *Mackay-Bennett*—Students can find out many details about the ships, the voyage, the disaster, the rescues, etc.

Food/Art/Music—See “Online Resources” below for links to information in these three areas in relation to the *Titanic*. In addition, students can find out what *Titanic* passengers ate on board. For menus, see “Online Resources” below. Students might want to find the recipes for some of the items on the menus, and perhaps prepare them at home for their families.

Online Resources

The *Titanic*—www.titanichistoricalsociety.org is the premier sources for information on the *Titanic* and includes the largest archive of related photos in the world.

The *Carpathia*—www.titanic-titanic.com/carpathia.shtml Presents an account of the rescue by the *Carpathia*'s captain and crew, including links to several other sources of information.

The *Mackay-Bennett*—www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/ Includes information on the cable ship on which Angus works, as well as links to lists of the crew and passengers. Students can search for names of people mentioned in the book to determine whether they were real or fictional.

Food/Menus—Students may be interested in knowing what *Titanic* passengers ate on board. www.webtitanic.net/framemenu.html. Includes first-class and second-class menus.

Art/“Wreck Wood”—Angus made a “wreck wood” box for his girlfriend, Sarah. Shows a photo of a similar box, as well as other articles recovered from the *Titanic*. www.titaniccollector.com/recovered/2_19.html

Music—www.answers.com/topic/titanic-music-as-heard-on-the-fateful-voyage describes the music that was probably played aboard the *Titanic* on April 14, 1912. Students can access many other sites where the music can be downloaded.

Newspaper article—www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/0415.html presents a facsimile of the front page of the *New York Times* of April 15, 1912, with a link to the various related articles that appeared in that day's paper.

Pictures of boats/ships—Students can enter *dory*, *cutter*, *dinghy*, and *forecastle* into Google Images to see photos of each of these types of boat/ship and sections of large ocean liners.

About the Author

Julie Lawson was born and grew up in Victoria, British Columbia, where she now lives. She spent eighteen years as an elementary school teacher before becoming a full-time author. She has written nearly two dozen books for young readers, published in Canada, which have garnered many awards and honors and wide critical acclaim. For more on Julie, visit www.julielawson.ca/.

Prepared by Sandy Schuckett, school library consultant 3.12

Holiday House • 425 Madison Avenue • New York, NY 10017