

Proposal: *Titanic*

In the wake of any man-made disaster, the immediate aftermath becomes well-documented as investigators and news reporters search for the reason the disaster occurred in the first place and determine who was responsible. In the aftermath of the sinking of the RMS *Titanic*, inquiries and investigations on both sides of the Atlantic were formed to determine the main cause of the disaster and collect eyewitness testimony from the survivors. While the tragedy did succeed in changing maritime laws for the better along with affecting the course of human history, the chain of events leading up to the tragedy are still being investigated today by authors and experts. The main cause of debate between authors and experts about the tragedy is whether the *Titanic* disaster could have been avoided and if more lives would have been saved if the crew and administration properly followed emergency protocols. **The purpose of the research paper is to examine if the crew and administration onboard contributed to the *Titanic* disaster by ignoring safety regulations regardless of how the *Titanic* was constructed or how hard it struck the iceberg.**

Since the *Titanic* disaster is a very broad subject and has numerous works published over the decades, an important decision was made to limit the timeframe from the day the *Titanic* set sail on its fateful voyage to the conclusion of the 1912 U.S. Senate inquiry. Although the *Titanic* had numerous difficulties during its construction ranging from being built with brittle metal to an onboard coal fire, the questionable decision-making of the crew and administration will be the main focus in that they indirectly caused the *Titanic* to hit the iceberg and made the tragedy worse. For example, White Star line executive Bruce Ismay wanted to quickly arrive to New York for publicity reasons and he ordered Captain Edward Smith to have the ship sail at full

speed despite the latter's nautical experience. In addition to the analyzing the testimony of the *Titanic* crew and administration, other key moments include deck officers releasing lifeboats halfway full and refusing to return the ship to help, the lookouts having no binoculars to spot the iceberg, and the deliberate ignorance of warnings of icebergs in the North Atlantic.

There are countless primary and secondary sources that cover the sinking of the *Titanic* and its immediate aftermath, but the main primary source that will be used in the research paper is the 1912 U.S. Senate inquiry transcript of the disaster. With Senator William Alden Smith leading the 18-day investigation, the 1,000-page transcript provide 82 interviews with surviving passengers and crew and gives a chronological account of the disaster. Along with the transcript of the U.S. inquiry, a 1999 *American Neptune* journal article will be used to explore the differences between the U.S. inquiry and British inquiry in addition to analyzing additional primary sources with *Titanic* survivors (Archibald Gracie and John B. Thayer) who published their accounts immediately after the disaster.

Although the construction of the *Titanic* had a massive contribution on the disaster, the crew and administration on the ship equally contributed to the tragedy and inadvertently killed themselves in the process. Between the ignorance of iceberg warnings or not loading enough passengers into the lifeboats, the exploration of the crew and administration's decision-making through primary and secondary sources will look at the *Titanic* disaster in a new light. However, the paper requires more research into the media circus around the 1912 U.S. Senate inquiry and how the survivors dealt with the aftermath in their personal lives.

Bibliography

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Honor Pledge

“I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work.”

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