



lingoda

The book that predicted the Titanic

READING

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_1035R_EN

LANGUAGE
English



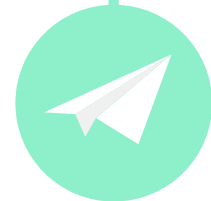


Goals

- Can read, listen to and understand a factual text about the Titanic.
- Can evaluate the impact of a historical event and offer a sophisticated opinion on technological advances.



They say that **reality** is **stranger** than **fiction**, but sometimes fiction and reality are so **closely intertwined** that it's hard to tell one from the other.





The Titanic

What do you know about the
sinking of the Titanic?
Have you read any books or
watched films about it?





Making predictions

Have you heard about any historical events that were predicted before they occurred?



Nostradamus
predicting the
Great Fire of
London in 1666

Jules Verne
predicting the
Apollo moon
landing



Predicting the future

**Do you
believe it is
possible to
predict the
future?**





The book that predicted the Titanic

In 1898, Morgan Robertson published a novella entitled *The Wreck of the Titan: Or, Futility*. The plot followed a large **ocean liner**, the Titan, which **struck an iceberg** in the North Atlantic and **sank**. Sound familiar? The book was published over a decade before the **passenger liner** RMS Titanic sank in one of the most famous ocean disasters recorded in history, and the similarities between fiction and reality go beyond the ships having a similar name. They are, in fact, **uncanny**.





The book that predicted the Titanic

Firstly, the Titan was described as *the largest craft afloat* and both ships were described as the **unsinkable**, a description which is now famous for being proven wrong by the Titanic. Both ships were British-owned and, while the Titan was 800 feet long, the Titanic was 882 - a very small difference. Both ships displaced almost equal amounts of water and had three **propellers**. The number of **watertight compartments** on the two ships was also similar: 19 on the Titan, 16 on the Titanic. These technical details may seem a little **eerie** but, in those days, large ships were built similarly. The fact that one man's imagination extended to predicting a ship the size of the Titanic is really nothing to be surprised about.



Vocabulary

ocean liner

**to strike an
iceberg**

to sink

**passenger
liner**



uncanny

unsinkable

eerie

**watertight
compartment**



Answer the questions

Answer these questions based on what you learnt from the text.

1. When did Robertson write his novella?
2. Which description was used for both ships?
3. How long were the ships?
4. How many propellers did they both have?
5. How many watertight compartments did each ship have?



A changing society

Robertson's book was written at the end of the nineteenth century, a century which had seen the greatest technological leaps of humankind.

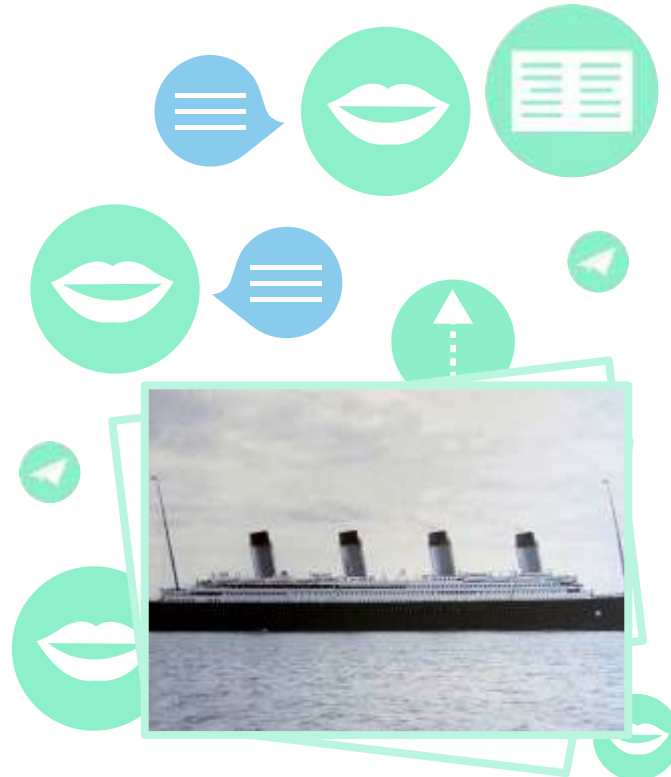
Consider the ideas below. Do you think they materialised because of the Titan and the Titanic?



The idea that a giant ship, almost like a palace crossing the sea, could sink was a symbol for a society that was changing.



The ship may also have represented the idea that technological progress had its limits.

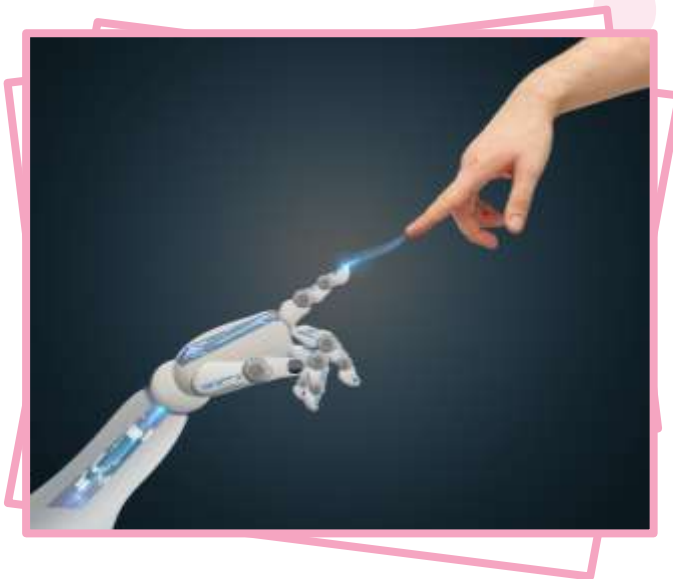




Technological progress

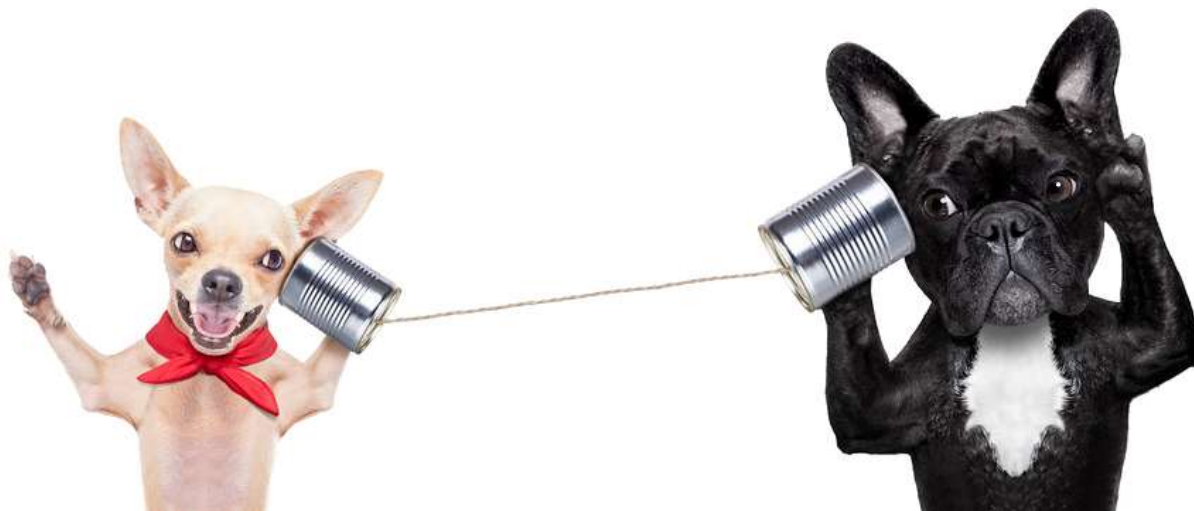
Why do you think technological progress is so fascinating for everybody?

Can you think of other works of fiction which deal with this theme?





Get ready to listen



The next few pages will focus on your listening comprehension.



Make notes on what you hear

Your teacher will now talk about the sinkings of both the Titan and the Titanic.

As you are listening, make notes on the key facts of both events.

Titan

Titanic



Vocabulary review

Did you hear these words during the listening activity?
Do you know what they mean?



starboard

lifeboat

perish

crew

clairvoyance

maritime
disaster

prescient



Discuss your notes

Review the key facts that you noted down with your teacher or classmates.



starboard

Newfoundland



lifeboats

April



Women and children first



**Do you think it
was right that
women and
children were
evacuated first
from the Titanic?**



Robertson



Do you believe **Robertson's** claim that it was his **technical knowledge** that allowed him to predict the Titanic's **sinking**? Does this explain all of the coincidences?



Lifeboats

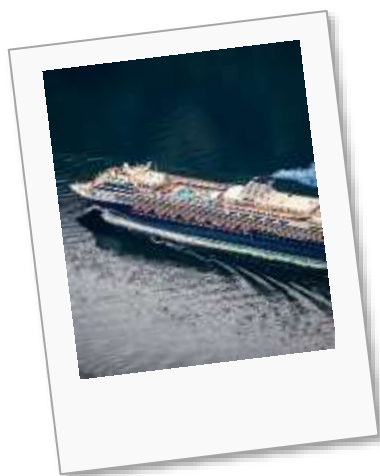
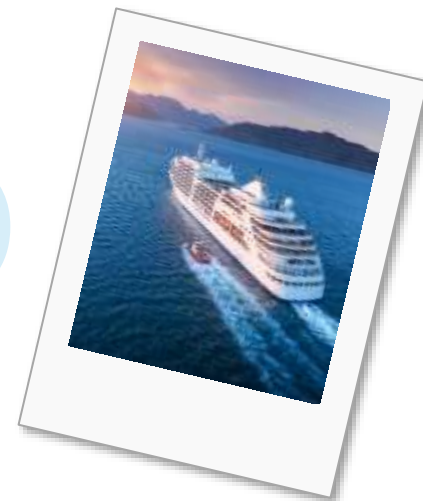
There were fewer lifeboats on the actual Titanic than on the fictional Titan. What does this say about the idea the architects of the ship had in mind? Why would a ship not carry sufficient lifeboats?





Ships

Nowadays we build ships much bigger than the Titanic, particularly cruise liners.



What have we learnt from the Titanic disaster? Do you think we should be building such large ships?



Survivors

Around 700 people survived the Titanic's sinking compared to just 13 on the Titan. Does this prove that reality can overcome pessimistic expectations of the future?





Technological development

Do you think there is a limit to technological progress or will civilisation keep developing infinitely?

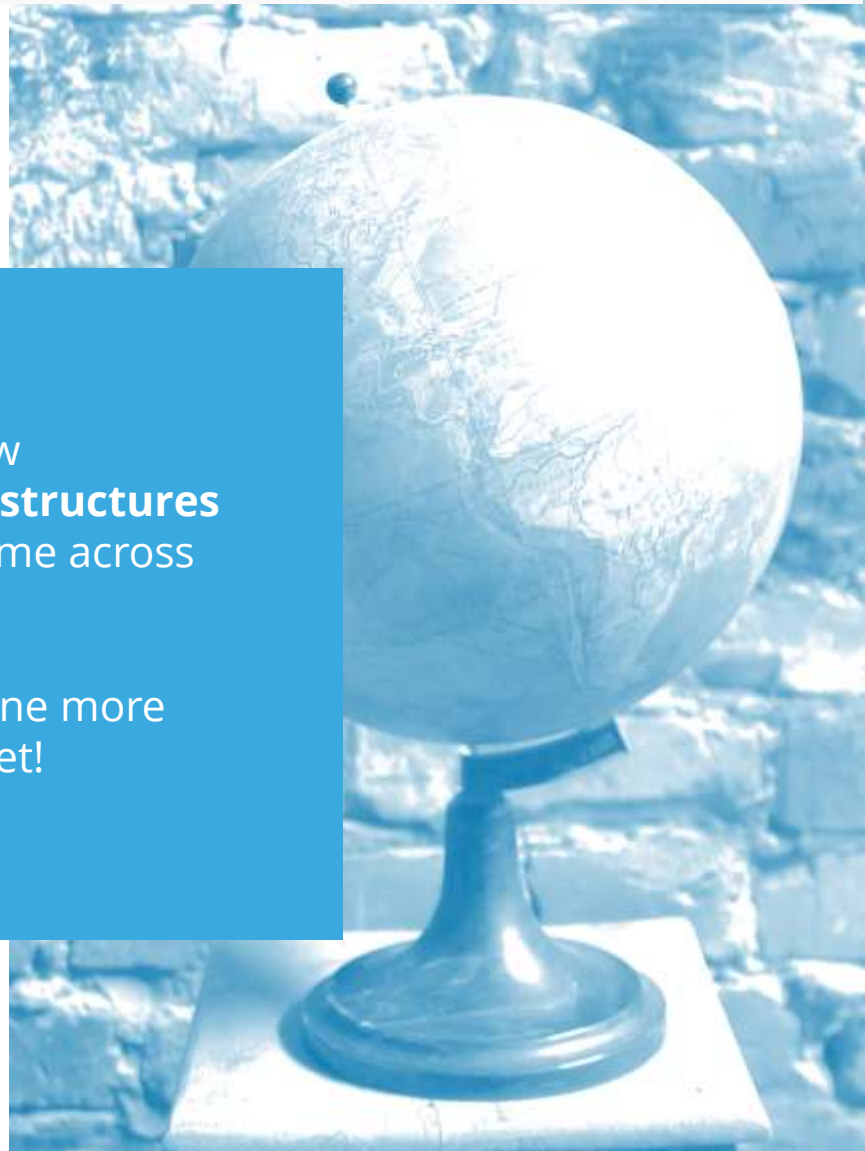




Reflect on this lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!





Answer key

Exercise p. 10

1. 1898
2. unsinkable
3. Titan: 800 feet, Titanic: 882 feet
4. three
5. Titan: 19, Titanic: 16



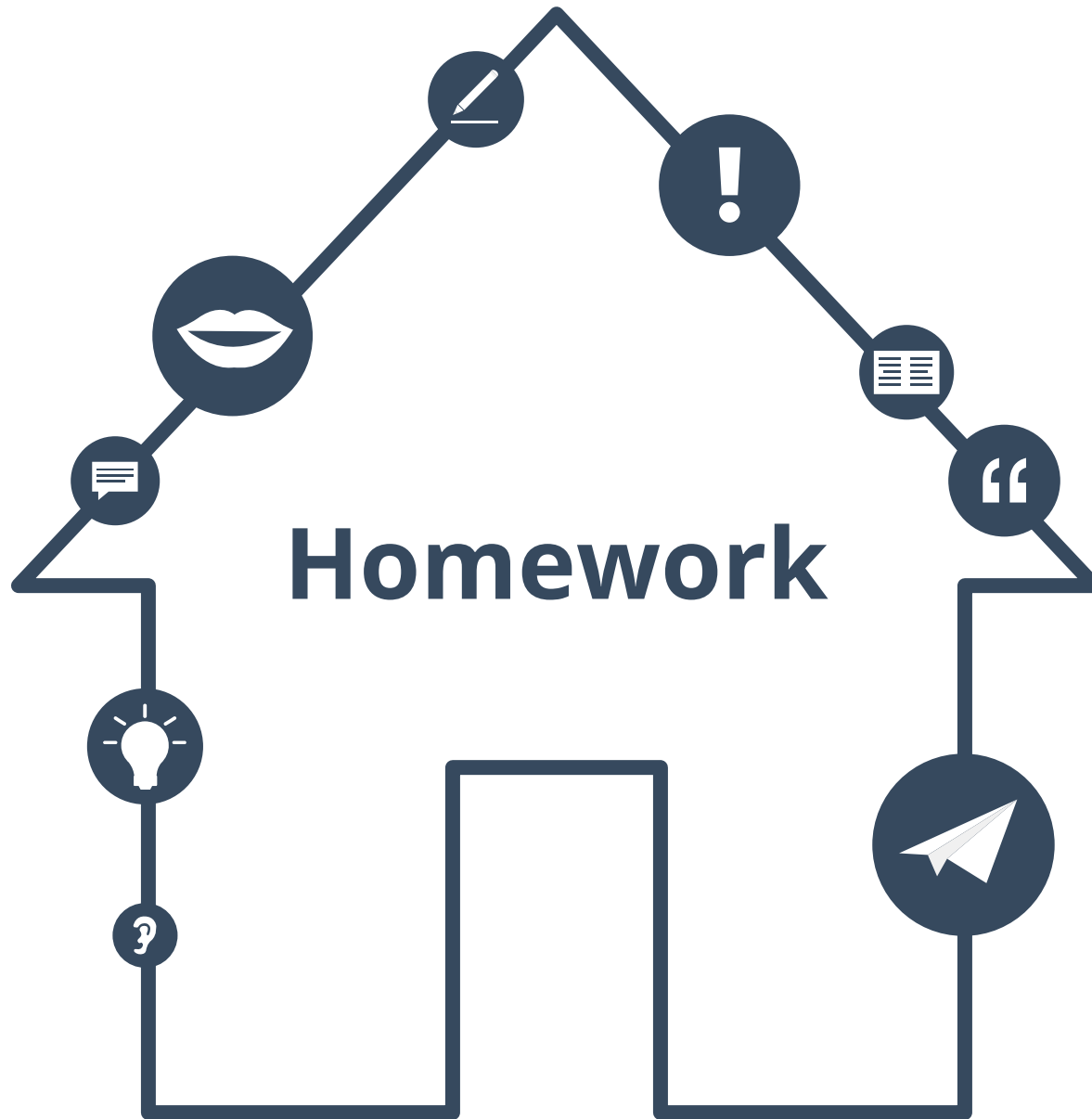
Transcription

p. 14

What is surprising is the similarities between the sinkings of both the Titan and the Titanic. The Titan, travelling at a speed of 25 knots, struck an iceberg on its **starboard** side, 400 nautical miles off Newfoundland, on an April night at around midnight. The ship sank quickly and, due to a lack of **lifeboats** - only 24 for the entire ship of 2,500 passengers - most people on board **perished**.

The Titanic also hit an iceberg on its starboard side. It was travelling at a speed of 22.5 knots and sank at around midnight on the 14th April, 400 nautical miles from Newfoundland. For the 2,200 passengers on board, there were just 20 lifeboats. We know that the policy was *women and children first*, and around 705 of the Titanic's passengers and **crew** were saved. While this was less than half of those on board, it compares favourably to the 13 people saved from the Titan.

Robertson has been credited with **clairvoyance** in his predictions about the sinking of a large passenger ship and the worst **maritime disaster** during peacetime, but he denied this. He claimed that his knowledge of shipbuilding and naval trends led him to write such an accurate and, as it turned out, **prescient** portrayal.





Fill in the gaps with the words on the right

1. Both the Titan and the Titanic hit an iceberg on their _____ side.
2. The sinking of the Titanic was the worst peacetime _____ disaster in history.
3. The stories of the Titan and the Titanic bear an _____ resemblance to one another.
4. Neither ship had enough _____ on board to evacuate the passengers.
5. Both ships were given the _____ of being *unsinkable*.

lifeboats

maritime

moniker

starboard

uncanny



Writing

Write your answer to this question:
Do you think there is a limit to technological progress or will civilisation keep developing infinitely?

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Homework answer key

Exercise p. 27

1. starboard, 2. maritime, 3. uncanny, 4. lifeboats, 5. moniker



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