

AN INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY

TRAGEDY AT SEA

The Sinking of the Titanic

DAVID
LONG

Illustrated by
**STEFANO
TAMBELLINI**





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Barrington  Stoke

*In memory of Captain Jack Irwin
of the Duke of Lancaster*

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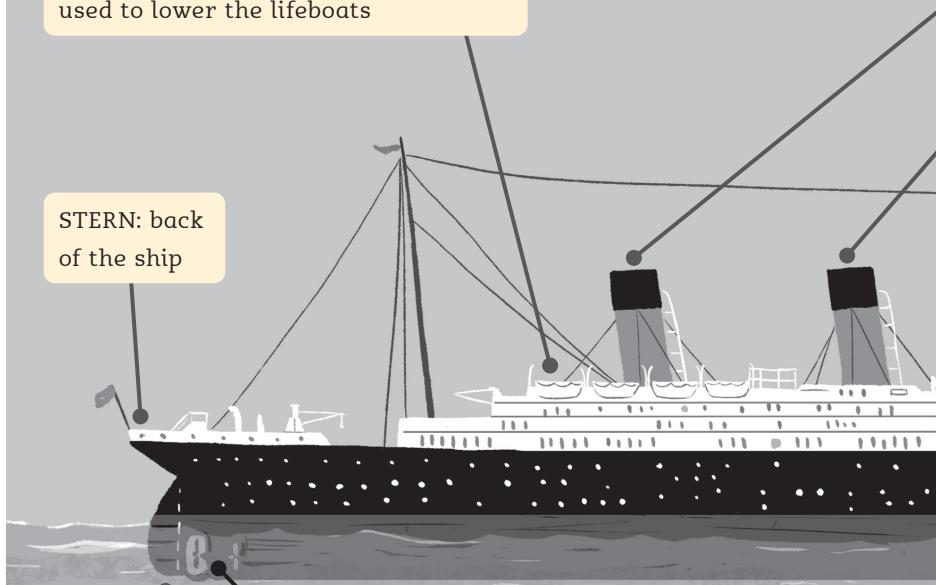
Titanic

LIFEBOATS & DAVITS: there was room for 64 lifeboats on *Titanic* but only 20 were fitted; davits are a type of crane used to lower the lifeboats

STERN: back of the ship

RUDDER: a large blade that moved from side to side to steer the ship

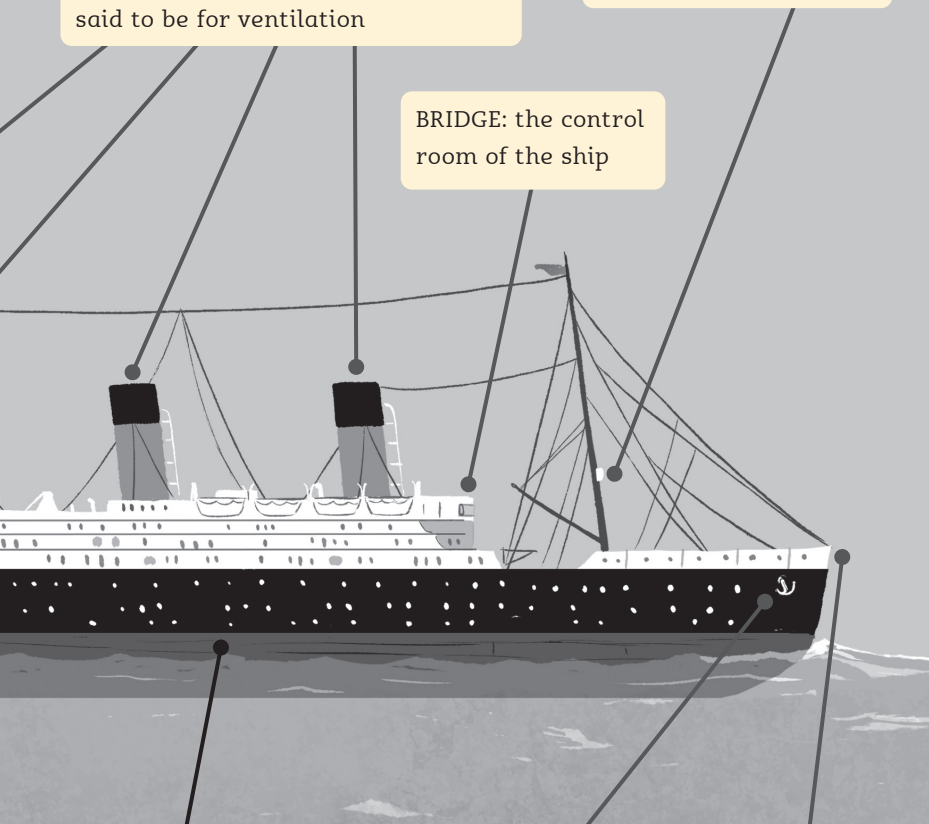
PROPELLERS: *Titanic* had three large propellers that pushed the ship through the water



FUNNELS: three of the funnels were the ship's chimneys, which allowed steam and smoke to escape from the engines; the fourth funnel was said to be for ventilation

CROW'S NEST: a small platform high up on the ship where the lookouts were stationed

BRIDGE: the control room of the ship



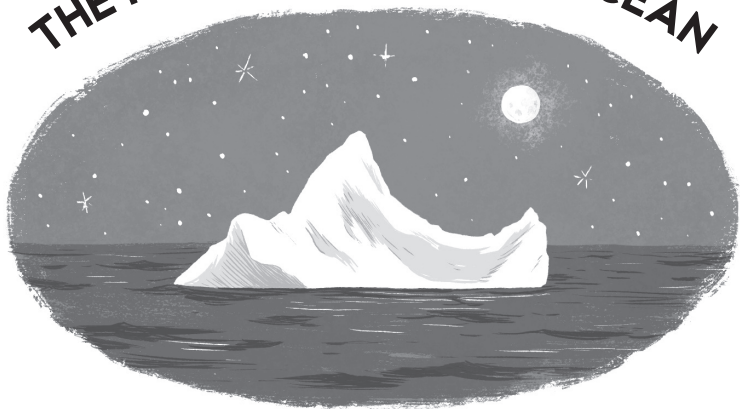
HULL: the main body of the ship

ANCHOR: a huge, heavy metal hook that could be lowered to the seabed to stop the ship from moving

BOW: front of the ship

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THE RACE ACROSS THE OCEAN



Just over a hundred years ago, the only way to travel from Europe to America was by sea. There were no aeroplanes that could fly such a long way without landing to refuel.

But although you couldn't fly between Europe and America, transatlantic travel was already big business. Ship owners made enormous profits carrying rich people between the two continents. As well as very rich people, poor migrants wanted to start new lives on the other side of the ocean in America, so there was a lot of travel to and fro.

Two of the biggest shipping companies were the White Star Line and Cunard. These were both based in Liverpool in the north of England and competed with each other to attract passengers onto the fastest, most lavish ocean-going liners that the world had ever seen.

Transatlantic ships had to be luxurious because the richest travellers expected the very best. Wealthy passengers would pay much more to travel in a ship that offered the space and comforts they enjoyed at home than in one that didn't.

The best liners had comfortable cabins as well as large saloons or lounges. Their elegant restaurants served fine food and wine, and some of the ships even had swimming pools and libraries where passengers could relax during the long voyage.

Speed was also important. Crossing the Atlantic by ship could take a week or more. Passengers on even the most luxurious liners wanted to get there quickly, especially if they were travelling on urgent or important business.

The ship that made the fastest crossing could win a prize called the Blue Riband. White Star and Cunard were both determined to win. Both companies knew they could charge even more for their most expensive cabins if they could prove that one of their vessels could reach America in less time than it took their rivals.

For many years the record for the fastest speed passed between different shipping companies. A total of 25 British ocean liners won the Blue Riband; a few of them won more than once. Five German ships were also successful and three American ones. Italy and France won it only once each.

The competition between the companies was extremely fierce as first one captain and then another raced to break the record. Cunard looked like it was about to move into first place in 1906 when it launched two huge new ships called the *Lusitania* and the *Mauretania*.

The company said that these two ships were faster and more luxurious than any of the ones operated by the White Star Line. They were right – both ships went on to win the Blue Riband. The *Lusitania* managed to break the record an impressive four times and the *Mauretania* held on to it for nearly 20 years.

The *Mauretania* was also the biggest ship ever built anywhere in the world.



The White Star Line was desperate not to be left behind. They had already won several Blue Ribands, and Joseph Bruce Ismay, the

head of the company, decided that he didn't need another one. Now he didn't want to make his ships faster – he wanted to do something different.

Ismay was sure that the best way to compete with the giant “Cunarders” was to build three new ships that were bigger than even the *Lusitania* or the *Mauretania*. Ismay wanted to offer his passengers more space, more comfort and even more luxury than they would find on any of Cunard's ships.

In 1907 Ismay had a meeting with Lord Pirrie, the boss of an important shipyard in the north of Ireland called Harland and Wolff. For nearly 40 years most White Star Line vessels had been built at Harland and Wolff's shipyard in Belfast, and over dinner one evening Ismay told Pirrie he was thinking of ordering three gigantic new ones. He wanted to call them the *Olympic*, *Britannic* and *Titanic*. No one knew it

yet, but one of them would go on to become the most famous ship of all time.