

“What did you see?” asked the duty officer.

“Iceberg right ahead,” replied Fleet.

Immediately, the officer on the bridge ordered the wheel turned as far as it would go. The engine room was told to reverse the engines, while
210 a button was pushed to close the doors to the watertight compartments in the bottom of the ship.

The lookouts in the crow’s nest braced themselves for a collision. Slowly the ship started to turn. It looked as though they would miss it. But it was too late. They had avoided a head-on crash, but the iceberg had struck a glancing blow along the *Titanic’s* starboard bow. Several tons of ice fell on the ship’s decks as the iceberg brushed along the side of the ship and passed into the night. A few minutes later, the *Titanic* came to a stop. **K**

Many of the passengers didn’t know the ship had hit anything. Because it was so cold, almost everyone was inside, and most people had already gone
220 to bed. Ruth Becker and her mother were awakened by the dead silence. They could no longer hear the soothing hum of the vibrating engines from below. Jack Thayer was about to step into bed when he felt himself sway ever so slightly. The engines stopped. He was startled by the sudden quiet.

Sensing trouble, Ruth’s mother looked out of the door of their second-class cabin and asked a steward¹⁰ what had happened. He told her that nothing was the matter, so Mrs. Becker went back to bed. But as she lay there, she couldn’t help feeling that something was very wrong.

Jack heard running feet and voices in the hallway outside his first-class cabin. “I hurried into my heavy overcoat and drew on my slippers. All
230 excited, but not thinking anything serious had occurred, I called in to my father and mother that I was going up on deck to see the fun.”

On deck, Jack watched some third-class passengers playing with the ice that had landed on the forward deck as the iceberg had brushed by. Some people were throwing chunks at each other, while a few skidded about playing football with pieces of ice.

Down in the very bottom of the ship, things were very different. When the iceberg had struck, there had been a noise like a big gun going off in one of the boiler rooms. A couple of stokers¹¹ had been immediately hit by a jet of icy water. The noise and the shock of cold water had sent them
240 running for safety. **L**

Twenty minutes after the crash, things looked very bad indeed to Captain Smith. He and the ship’s builder, Thomas Andrews, had made a rapid tour below decks to inspect the damage. The mail room was filling up with water, and sacks of mail were floating about. Water was also pouring into some of the forward holds and two of the boiler rooms.

K CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

What is the time order of the events that happen after Fleet spots the iceberg? Record the events on your timeline.

L NARRATIVE NONFICTION

In lines 218–240 the author describes how the passengers react after the collision.

Compare and contrast the responses of the passengers and the workers in different areas of the ship.

10. **steward:** a worker on a ship who attends to the needs of the passengers.

11. **stokers:** workers who tended the boilers that powered steamships.