

to start loading the lifeboats—women and children first. Even though
310 the *Titanic* was by now quite noticeably down at the bow and listing¹⁶
slightly to one side, many passengers still didn't want to leave the huge,
brightly lit ship. The ship's band added to a kind of party feeling as the
musicians played lively tunes.

About 12:45 the first lifeboat was lowered. It could carry sixty-five
people, but left with only twenty-eight aboard. Indeed, many of the
first boats to leave were half empty. Ruth Becker noticed that there was
no panic among the crowds of passengers milling about on the decks.
"Everything was calm, everybody was orderly." But the night air was now
biting cold. Ruth's mother told her to go back to their cabin to get some
320 blankets. Ruth hurried down to the cabin and came back with several
blankets in her arms. The Beckers walked toward one of the lifeboats, and
a sailor picked up Ruth's brother and sister and placed them in the boat.

"That's all for this boat," he called out. "Lower away!"

"Please, those are my children!" cried Ruth's mother. "Let me go
with them!" **C**

The sailor allowed Mrs. Becker to step into the lifeboat with her two
children. She then called back to Ruth to get into another lifeboat. Ruth
went to the next boat and asked the officer if she could get in. He said,
"Sure," picked her up, and dumped her in.

330 Boat No. 13 was so crowded that Ruth had to stand up. Foot by foot
it was lowered down the steep side of the massive ship. The new pulleys
shrieked as the ropes passed through them, creaking under the weight
of the boat and its load of sixty-four people. After landing in the water,
Ruth's lifeboat began to drift. Suddenly Ruth saw another lifeboat coming
down right on top of them! Fearing for their lives, the men in charge of
her boat shouted, "Stop!" to the sailors up on the deck. But the noise was
so great that nobody noticed. The second lifeboat kept coming down, so
close that they could actually touch the bottom of it. All of a sudden, one
of the men in Ruth's boat jumped up, pulled out a knife, and cut them
340 free of their lowering ropes. Ruth's boat pushed away from the *Titanic*
just as boat No. 15 hit the water inches away from them.

Below, in the third-class decks of the ship, there was much more
confusion and alarm. Most of these passengers had not yet been able
to get above decks. Some of those who did finally make it out had to
break down the barriers between third and first class. **R**

By 1:30 the bow was well down, and people were beginning to notice
the slant of the decks. In the radio room, Bride and Phillips were still
desperately sending out calls for help: "We are sinking fast . . . women
and children in boats. We cannot last much longer." The radio signal

**C NARRATIVE
NONFICTION**

How does Ruth's
mother's pleading
with the sailor add
to the **conflict**?

R MAKE INFERENCES

Given the lifeboat
situation, what do delays
in getting above decks
mean for the third-class
passengers?

16. **listing**: tilting; leaning.