UNIT 3 · LESSON 8 ANSWER KEY

Too fast for the ice?

Corroborate or contradict?

AIMS

How confident are you now? Circle one face for each aim at the end of the lesson.

Content Decide how far five sources support one view about why Titanic sank. ☹ 😐 🙂

Language Compare sources: supports / partly supports / challenges, both, however, corroborates / contradicts. ☹ 😐 🙂

Skills Select relevant evidence and explain what it shows. ☹ 😐 🙂

The view: Titanic sank mainly because it was travelling too fast for the icy conditions.
The question: How far do the sources support this view?

Read: The source pack

Five sources about one question. Read Source A with your teacher. Then read your group's source. Underline the relevant evidence: the words that help answer the question.



Modern illustration.

Source A: the British inquiry report

The British inquiry [an official investigation] asked nearly 100 people questions: survivors (mostly crew), sailors from other ships and experts. In July 1912, it wrote a report.

The report said that Titanic was travelling at "about 22 knots" [about 40 km per hour].

It said this speed was "excessive" [too fast] for the conditions.

"No directions were given to reduce speed." [Nobody told the crew to go slower.]

It also said that the look-out [the people watching for ice] was not "sufficient" [enough].

Adapted from: British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry, Report on the Loss of the "Titanic", 30 July 1912 (answers 10b, 10c, 14a, 14b).

Relevant evidence: **"about 22 knots" · "excessive" · "No directions were given to reduce speed." · look-out not "sufficient"**



Titanic's surviving officers, 1912. Lightoller is in the centre. Public domain.

Source B: the Second Officer

Charles Lightoller was Titanic's Second Officer [one of the senior officers]. He survived. The British inquiry asked him questions in May 1912.

A lawyer asked: was it "recklessness" [very careless and dangerous] to travel at 21½ knots near ice?

Lightoller answered: "It is ordinary navigation" [the normal way to sail a ship].

He also said: "Then all I can say is that recklessness applies to practically every commander and every ship crossing the Atlantic Ocean." [commander = captain]

Adapted from: Charles Lightoller, evidence to the British Wreck Commissioner's Inquiry, Day 12, May 1912 (questions 14414–14416).

Relevant evidence: **"It is ordinary navigation" · "recklessness applies to practically every commander and every ship"**



Frederick Fleet, April 1912. Public domain.

Source C: the lookout

Frederick Fleet was a lookout. He was in the crow's nest [a high place on the mast] when he saw the iceberg. He survived. The US Senate inquiry asked him questions on 23 April 1912.

The lookouts on Titanic had no binoculars. "We had nothing at all, only our own eyes, to look out," Fleet said.

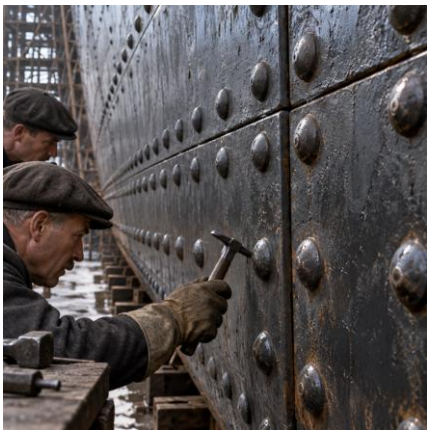
A senator asked: with binoculars, could you see the iceberg sooner?

Fleet answered: "We could have seen it a bit sooner."

How much sooner? "Well, enough to get out of the way."

Adapted from: Frederick Fleet, evidence to the United States Senate Inquiry, Day 4, 23 April 1912.

Relevant evidence: **no binoculars · "We could have seen it a bit sooner." · "enough to get out of the way"**



Modern illustration: building a ship with rivets.

Source D: the scientists

In 2008, two scientists, Jennifer McCarty and Tim Foecke, wrote a book about Titanic. They tested rivets [metal pins that hold the steel plates of a ship together] from the wreck.

At the front and the back of the ship, the builders used iron rivets. Iron rivets are weaker than steel rivets.

Some of the iron had a lot of slag [waste material] in it. This made the rivets weaker.

The builders were making three giant ships at the same time and needed millions of rivets quickly. The scientists think the company wanted to build fast and save money, so it bought some cheaper rivets.

They think weak rivets broke when Titanic hit the iceberg, so water came in faster.

The builders disagree. Titanic's sister ship, the Olympic, had the same rivets. It sailed for 24 years.

Based on: J. H. McCarty and T. Foecke, What Really Sank the Titanic (2008), and reports of their research (Live Science, 2008). Our own summary.

Relevant evidence: **iron rivets are weaker · slag · cheaper rivets · water came in faster · the builders disagree**



Modern illustration: the Californian in the ice.

Source E: the other ship

Cyril Evans was the radio operator on another ship, the Californian. It was near Titanic that night. The US Senate inquiry asked him questions in 1912.

On 14 April, the Californian stopped because there was so much ice.

Less than an hour before Titanic hit the iceberg, Evans sent a radio message to Titanic: "Say, old man, we are stopped and surrounded by ice."

Titanic's radio room answered: "Shut up, shut up, I am busy; I am working Cape Race." [busy sending passengers' messages to a radio station in Newfoundland]

Adapted from: Cyril Evans, evidence to the United States Senate Inquiry, Day 8, 26 April 1912 (question 11361).

Relevant evidence: **"stopped and surrounded by ice" · less than an hour before · "Shut up… I am busy"**

Test: Your group's source

Use the four steps. Then teach the class.

Our source: Source A B C D E (circle one)

1 What does it say? Say it in your own words.

Suggested answer: **B: Lightoller said 21½ knots was normal for ships at that time. · C: The lookouts had no binoculars, so they saw the iceberg late. · D: Weak iron rivets may have let water in faster. · E: The Californian warned Titanic about ice, but Titanic's radio was busy.**

2 Relevant evidence: copy two or three key words.

See the relevant evidence under each source.

3 Decide: circle one.

supports	partly supports	challenges

Teacher: B challenges (speed was normal) · C partly supports / challenges (the look-out was a problem too) · D challenges (another reason) · E partly supports (more ice = more danger = a need to slow down, but Source E does not tell us Titanic's speed). Accept other decisions with a good reason.

4 Give a reason.

Suggested answer: **Source E partly supports the view because Evans says the Californian was "stopped and surrounded by ice".**

Suggested answer: **This shows that the ice was very dangerous, so it was safer to slow down. However, Source E does not tell us Titanic's speed.**

Compare: Compare and contrast the sources

Listen to each group. Complete rows B–E with key words only. Row A is done.

Source	Relevant evidence (key words)	Decision	Agrees or disagrees with…? About what?
A	"about 22 knots" · "excessive" · look-out not "sufficient"	supports	
B	**"ordinary navigation": normal speed for ships then**	**challenges**	**agrees with A on the speed (about 22 knots), but contradicts A: "ordinary", not "excessive"**
C	**no binoculars; "enough to get out of the way"**	**partly supports**	**agrees with A: the look-out was not good enough**
D	**weak iron rivets; water came in faster**	**challenges**	**a different reason, not a direct contradiction of A; the builders contradict the scientists**
E	**"stopped and surrounded by ice"; radio too busy**	**partly supports**	**corroborates A: the icy conditions were dangerous (A adds: nobody slowed down); contradicts B: another ship stopped for the ice**

Teacher: Accept other decisions with a good reason. Column 4 is the new thinking. Corroborate: A + C (look-out), A + E (dangerous icy conditions), A + B (the speed number). Contradict: A vs B (excessive or ordinary?), E vs B (the Californian stopped: not every ship carried on). D gives another reason: that is not the same as a contradiction.

Write: Compare the sources

Use your grid. Write four sentences with the frame.

Suggested answer: **Source A and Source E both suggest that the icy conditions were dangerous.**

Suggested answer: **This means Source E corroborates Source A.**

Suggested answer: **However, Source B contradicts Source A because Lightoller says the speed was "ordinary navigation".**

Suggested answer: **This suggests that the speed was normal in 1912,**

Suggested answer: **but the sources do not show what other ships did that night.**

CHECK

- ☐ Did I say what two sources *both* suggest?
- ☐ Did I say which source *corroborates* another?
- ☐ Did I use *however* and *contradicts*?
- ☐ Did I use one quote from a source?
- ☐ Did I say one thing the sources do not show?