

## Your Shortcut to... Titanic

It was elegant, expensive, and doomed... the greatest shipwreck of all time. This is your Squiz Kids Shortcut to the Titanic—the podcast where we dive into the who, what, when, where, why and how of the big news stories. I'm Amanda Bower.

And I'm Bryce Corbett.

Bryce, before 1912, the word titanic simply meant to have great force or power. It came from the Titans, a family of giants in Greek mythology... the element titanium, which is extremely strong, has the same root. But when the massive ship liner RMS Titanic sank on April 15, 1912, Titanic came to mean tragic.

Today, we'll take you through WHY Titanic is the most famous ship, and shipwreck, in history... HOW it all went so wrong ... and WHAT Titanic looks like today.

Listen carefully - there's a S'quiz at the end!

### WHY

Bryce, back in the early 1900s, people who wanted to travel the world couldn't just go to the airport and book a flight. Ships were really the only way to get around, and there was SERIOUS competition between two major ship lines, Cunard and White Star, to get passengers to buy tickets on their vessels.

In 1907, Cunard launched two ships that would later break speed records for crossing the Atlantic, going from Europe to America. White Star knew they had to do something special to compete.

Instead of trying to build an even faster ship, they decided to go for fancy. (FX) RMS Titanic was the biggest and most luxurious liner in the world when she set out on April 10, 1912. It had a swimming pool (FX), a squash court, a gym... beautiful cabins, carved wooden staircases, an elegant dining room. I've put a link in your episode notes to old photographs showing the opulence... which means luxuriousness... of the ship.

Because Titanic was so fancy, some of the world's richest and most famous people had bought first class tickets for her maiden - which means first - voyage.

That's exactly right. And none of that luxury mattered when the ship hit an iceberg and sank. The richest person on the boat was American businessman John Jacob Astor IV - he had \$2400 on him when his body was recovered, which is like carrying around \$71,000 today. (FX) Then there was the co-owner of Macy's Department store, Isidor Straus and his wife Ida. Ida was offered a place in a lifeboat, which was taking women and children on board, but she refused to leave her husband. The couple were last seen on the deck of the sinking boat arm in arm; an eyewitness described it as a "most

remarkable exhibition of love and devotion". But Bryce, there were a total of 2,228 people on board, and only about 700 of them survived.

One of the things that has always pulled at my heartstrings is that the ship's orchestra set up and played on deck as the ship went down... They, along with more than 1500 people, died that night.

Tragically, yes. You asked why the Titanic is so famous: well, to this day, that remains the greatest loss of life on a ship that wasn't at war. It was the world's biggest ship at the time, so it had gotten lots of attention during its building and launch; it was super luxurious, with lots of famous people on board, so people actually crowded outside newspaper offices to see pictures and read stories about it. So it was the most famous ship, and then the most famous shipwreck.

Titanic was said to be "unsinkable", and that was obviously, tragically, wrong. WHAT happened?

WHAT

The first thing to know is that there have been many books written on this topic; there were two official investigations into the sinking, one American, one English; there are documentaries that go into great detail; not to mention websites, including something called Encyclopedia Titanica.

Oh, you told me about this before... it's where you can type in passenger's names, and learn what happened to them. Let's put a link to that in the episode notes.

Done! Now in terms of what went wrong, you can dive into those more detailed explanations, but here are the main issues:

\* When ships ahead of Titanic warned that there were icebergs ahead, the captain did not slow the ship down. That meant that when it hit the iceberg, it caused more damage.

\* Then there was the fact that it was a very calm night, which meant that the lookouts in the crows' nest of the Titanic couldn't see waves breaking against the icebergs until they were extremely close to them.

\* Once the iceberg was spotted, the First Officer ordered that the engines be put in reverse, and the ship turn hard to starboard... which means right. The right side of the ship then scraped against the iceberg, and water started to come into five different compartments at the front, or bow, of the ship. The ship had been designed to survive four compartments flooding... but as the five filled, water spilled into more compartments. Experts believe the ship would have survived if it had hit the iceberg head-on and damaged fewer of those compartments.

\* Now, once it was clear that the ship would sink, the Titanic sent out distress signals. The closest boat had turned its wireless off for the night, because 24 hour

communications were not a thing back then. It took three hours for the closest boat that heard the distress calls, to arrive. Many of the people who died did so because of hypothermia... that is, being in extremely cold water for three hours.

\* The reason they were in the water was that there weren't enough lifeboats for all the passengers and crew - even though there were more than was legally required.

\* Add to that the fact that the crew hadn't done a lifeboat drill, and they were nervous that if the lifeboats were full, they couldn't be launched from the sinking ship. An extra 400 people could have survived if the lifeboats had been full.

\* The ship's captain never sounded a general alarm, so some passengers and even crew didn't realise how bad the situation was until it was too late.

All of which is to say: a LOT of things went wrong that night.

The silver lining, perhaps, of this tragedy is that the next year, in 1913, the first International Conference for Safety of Life at Sea was held. New rules required that every ship have lifeboat space for each passenger and crew; that lifeboat drills be held for each voyage; and, because other ships had not heard the distress signals of the Titanic, that ships maintain a 24-hour radio watch. The International Ice Patrol was also established to warn ships of icebergs, and to break up ice.

So 110 years later, WHERE is Titanic today?

WHERE

There's a map in your episode notes, but essentially, the Titanic is 4,000 metres below sea level, in the Atlantic Ocean, south of Newfoundland in Canada -- and not far from where she set off her distress signals. Within days of the ship sinking, people talked about finding the wreck, but 4km below the sea is a LONG way down... the seas above can be fierce, the wreck site itself is pitch black, and there are strong ocean currents. So it wasn't until 1985 that the first video images of the Titanic were sent from a submersible vessel. I've popped some video into your episode notes, but basically, the wreck is covered in something that scientists called rusticles... they look like icicles, but they're rust-coloured formations created by microscopic animals that are eating the wreck.

But some items have been salvaged, meaning rescued, from the wreck, haven't they?

Yes! Nearly 6,000 items have been retrieved, and they're worth more than \$100 million. I've put links in your episode notes to images of some of them... it's eerie seeing them and thinking that they've essentially come up from an underwater graveyard. It should be noted that some people think it's wrong to disturb and remove things from the wreck, because it is the resting place of so many people. Others think that it's important to preserve historical objects which would otherwise decay underwater.

Hmmm... quite the conundrum.

The S'Quiz

"This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening...

1. What was wrong with the lifeboats on the Titanic? (there weren't enough of them)"
2. Why didn't a nearby ship come and rescue people from the Titanic? (their radio was switched off for the night)
3. How far below sea level is the Titanic's wreck? (4000m, or 4km)

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for joining us as we explored the who, what, how, where, when, and why of the Titanic.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day!

Over and out.