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Iceberg, Right Ahead!: The Tragedy Of The Titanic



Synopsis

Approaching its one-hundredth anniversary in 2012, the 1912 tragedy of the sinking of the Titanic still looms large in the public imagination, as attested by numerous books, films, and exhibitions. Through a straightforward account of events both before and after the largest ship in the world hit an iceberg and sank, Stephanie McPherson examines why the Titanic continues to intrigue us.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The story opens on the fateful night of April 14, 1912, when a lookout on the Titanic calls the bridge to report, "Iceberg, right ahead!" A few hours later, the ship rests at the bottom of the ocean and about two-thirds of those aboard have died. Hugely informative, this large-format volume discusses matters such as the planning and building of the enormous ship, the fanfare surrounding its maiden voyage, ice in the North Atlantic, communications with other ships, and the reactions of passengers and crew during and after the catastrophe. Sidebars spotlight individuals on board and carry information related to the story. The final chapters look at later explorations of the sunken ship as well as representations of the event in art, literature, and film. Back matter includes a time line, a glossary, source notes, a selected bibliography, and lists of recommended books, websites, and DVDs. Illustrated mainly with period photos, this handsome, clearly written book is a solid resource for the learning about the Titanic 100 years later. Grades 6-10. --Carolyn Phelan

Stephanie Sammartino McPherson wrote her first children's story in college. She enjoyed the process so much that she's never stopped writing. A former teacher and freelance newspaper

writer, she has written twenty-eight books and numerous magazine stories. She especially enjoys writing about science and the human interest stories behind major discoveries. Her most recent book is a biography of Tim Berners-Lee, who invented the World Wide Web. Stephanie and her husband Richard live in Virginia but also call California home. They are the parents of two grown children.

Iceberg Right Ahead! may be aimed mostly at children (specifically ages 8-12), but it is a wonderful addition to any Titanic buff's collection. Author Stephanie Sammartino McPherson follows the story of the creation of the great ship right through its most recent developments and what a journey it is! Illustrated beautifully throughout with photographs and recreations of drawings and paintings, the doomed liner is brought to life through detailed accounts of survivors and careful research. Ms. McPherson adds lots of facts about how debate has arisen over the exact way the Titanic sank, and she doesn't shy away from the less savory aspects and people (including how J. Bruce Ismay was derided for leaving the dying ship). I particularly enjoyed the stories of what happened to some of the survivors, including many of the officers. There really isn't anything too terribly revealing or new in *Iceberg Right Ahead!* and yet it's incredibly absorbing. At just over 100 pages, it is chock full of anecdotes and trivia and interviews, written in such a way that a younger reader will get the essence of what happened and yet still engage any older reader (like me) who loves to read anything and everything Titanic. It's fairly comprehensive in its telling, and even describes the debate about the retrieved artifacts. For those looking to learn as much as possible as the centenary of the sinking approaches, this gem is a good place to add to their knowledge. Recommended.

This book is fabulously done. It is definitely going on my shelf of favorites. Not only is the writing crisp and easy to read, but the whole design is beautifully done. The photographs, illustrations, and sidebars are placed so that they add to the overall design but don't interrupt the flow of the narrative. This is the sort of nonfiction that would work really well as a read-a-loud. One of the things I especially appreciated were the sidebars explaining some of the things we are still learning about the Titanic and why she went down. For example, on page 10, the author points out that ideas are changing about just what damage the iceberg did to the ship. From the beginning, it was assumed that the iceberg created a 300 foot long gash in the starboard side of the ship. But a new theory suggests that was not the case, instead the rivets gave way creating hundreds of small holes. The water pressure was so great that it forced water through these holes at a remarkably fast pace. I highly highly recommend this book.

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A short read at just over 100 photo-enhanced pages, *Iceberg, Right Ahead!* is an excellent account of the Titanic, from its conception through the 1985 discovery of its North Atlantic resting place. Author Stephanie Sammartino McPherson has done a stellar job of laying out the story, humanizing the facts with personal accounts and conveying the horror and tragedy of the great ship's sinking - and all in a straightforward, highly readable manner. Even though much of the story of the sinking was familiar to me, I was completely absorbed in McPherson's telling. Less familiar (to me, at any rate), but just as interesting, were the sections on the aftermath - the American and British inquiries into the disaster, the formation of the ice patrols in the hope of preventing future tragedies and the stories of some of the survivors. While, because of the book's short format, none are explored in great depth, *Iceberg, Right Ahead!* touches on many of the issues and controversies surrounding the Titanic - the insufficient number of lifeboats, the ship's speed, the higher mortality rate of third class passengers and the failure of the nearby Californian to render aid, among others. IMHO, *Iceberg, Right Ahead!* could well spur readers into further research on any or all of these issues. Fortunately, there is a wealth of material available for curious minds. Aimed at the younger end of the YA market, the text includes parenthetical definitions of terms that might be unfamiliar to readers. (Example: "boatswain" - supervisor of unlicensed deckhands.) The book design is appealing and the many photos and other artwork illuminate the text well, adding great visual appeal. A timeline, a brief glossary, source notes and a bibliography are included along with mention of the fate of other famous ships of the Titanic's era. *Iceberg, Right Ahead!* is concise, yes, but nonetheless, it's a riveting telling of one of the most famous disasters of all time. I literally could not put it down. Highly recommended. For those who find their interest in the Titanic piqued by *Iceberg, Right Ahead!: The Tragedy of the Titanic* and are looking to read further, I suggest starting with Walter Lord's *A Night to Remember* and its follow up *The Night Lives On*. IMHO, they give an excellent account and provide a solid base for further reading on the subject.

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