

Historical Research

History Experience Lesson 4

Remember Paul Revere's Boston Massacre engraving?

Was it a primary or secondary source?

Why do you think historians of the American Revolution would find the engraving important?



Ask students to recall the Revere engraving of the Boston Massacre.

Was it a primary or secondary source? Explain.

The engraving is a primary source because it was created around the time of the Boston Massacre. Note that it is considered a primary source even though Revere was not a witness to the event. Revere relied on witnesses to create his engraving. Students should understand that a witness account is probably a better source.

Why do you think historians of the American Revolution would find the engraving important?

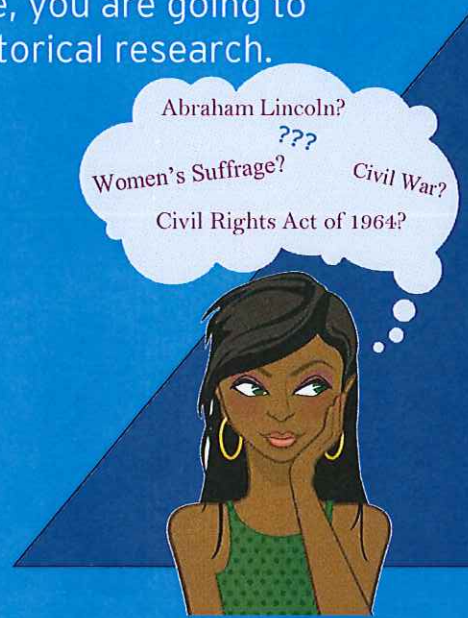
Since the engraving was printed and circulated throughout the colonies, it provides a good reflection of what many colonists believed happened at the Boston Massacre. Accept other reasonable answers.

Explain to students that they are going to be doing their own historical research, and today they are going to look at how historians conduct their research.

In the History Experience, you are going to be a historian and do historical research.

The first thing historians do is think about a topic they want to investigate.

Next, historians think about a research question on that topic.



Tell students that they are one step ahead as they have already chosen their topics.

A good research question:

- is open-ended
 - ✓ not just a simple yes or no answer
 - ✓ has different possible answers based on evidence
- explores how or why something happened
 - ✓ think about cause and effect, influence, or impact

Sample Questions:

What were the causes of the Civil War?

How did Martin Luther King Jr.'s belief/practice of non-violence impact the Civil Rights Movement?

Explain to students that having a good research question will help them narrow their topic and help them guide their research.

How Historians Research

Step One: Collect sources.



Step Two: Analyze sources.



Step Three: Use sources to develop and draw conclusions.



Note the steps of doing research.

Explain that this lesson will focus on how to collect and identify sources. Identifying sources is the first part of analyzing sources.

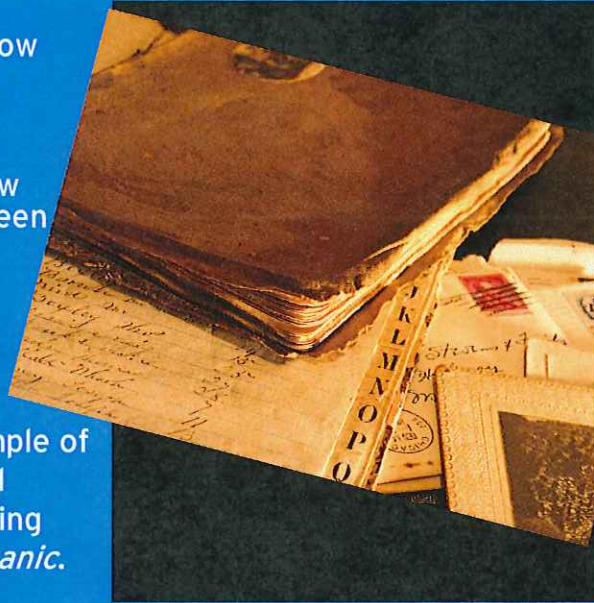
The next lesson will focus on more in-depth analysis and on assessing the credibility and accuracy of sources.

How do historians collect sources?

It often depends on how long ago something happened.

It also depends on how many sources have been left behind for the historian to look at.

Let's look at an example of how one historian did research when studying the sinking of the *Titanic*.



Ask: Why would it be easier to collect sources on the presidency of Barack Obama than to collect sources on the presidency of George Washington?

Possible answers: There were fewer sources created during Washington's time. There was no photography, film, video, or Internet.

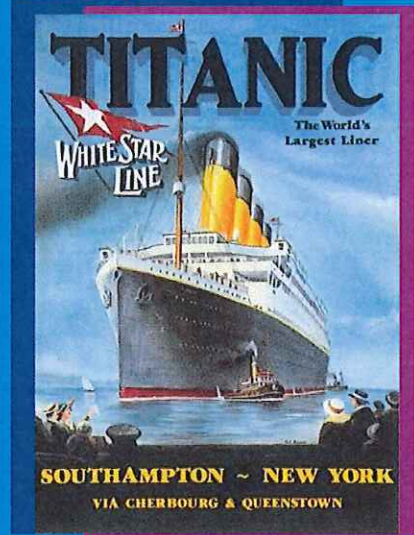
Ask: Who has heard of the *Titanic*? (Limit answers to a show of hands.)

The Story of the *Titanic*

On April 10, 1912, the ocean liner *Titanic* set out from England. Its destination was New York City.

The ship was the fastest ship in the world at that time. People called it "unsinkable."

About 2,200 passengers were on board, as well as about 800 crew members.

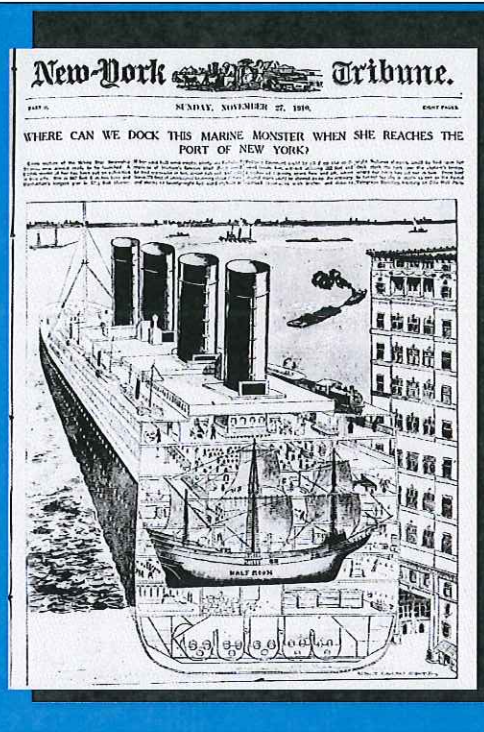


Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

Let students know that even though the *Titanic* was a British ship, its voyage and its sinking are considered part of both British and American history. J.P. Morgan, the American banker, was one of the major funders of the construction of the ship. Many Americans were aboard the ship.

For its time, the
Titanic was a big ship.

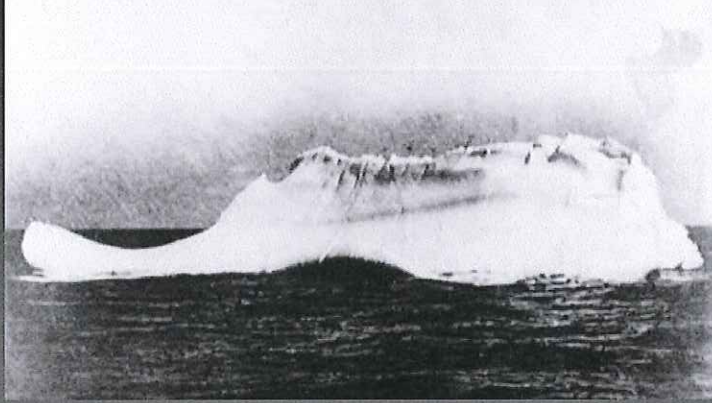
Really big.



Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

The fourth day of the voyage for the new ship would, unfortunately, be its last.

Twenty minutes before midnight one of the Titanic's sailors spotted an iceberg in the enormous ship's path.



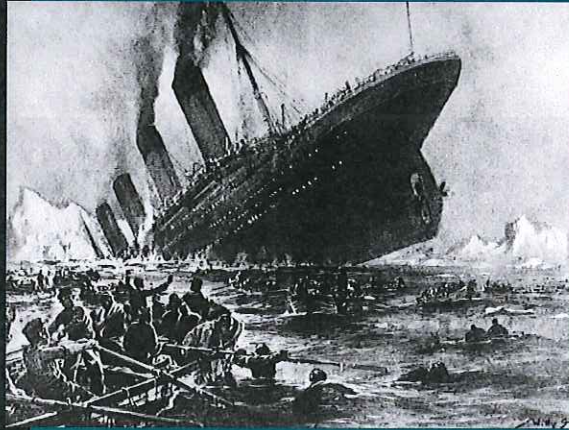
The crew tried desperately to steer the ship away from the iceberg.

Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

It was too late, the Titanic crashed into the huge iceberg.

Over the next three hours, water poured into the wounded ship, causing it to upend.

As the Titanic sank to the bottom of the ocean, the massive ship cracked in half.



Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

Over 1,500 people
went down with the
Titanic.

The ship did not
have enough
lifeboats for
everyone.



Titanic lifeboat reaches rescue ship.

Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

Emphasize that the ship carried only enough lifeboats to accommodate about half of the people on board. The makers of the ship were overly confident that the ship was "unsinkable."

The *Titanic* disaster led to reform of maritime, or ocean-voyage, laws. After the *Titanic*, international treaties on safety at sea required ships to have adequate lifeboats for all persons on board.

Most of the survivors were women and children.



Survivors on board rescue ship.

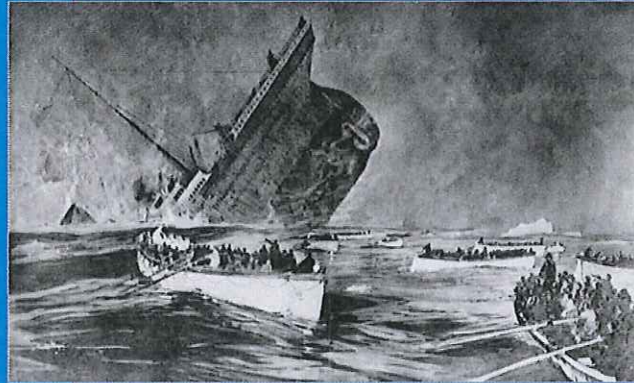


Titanic "orphans" who were finally reunited with their mother.

Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

The sinking of the Titanic is remembered as one of the worst disasters at sea.

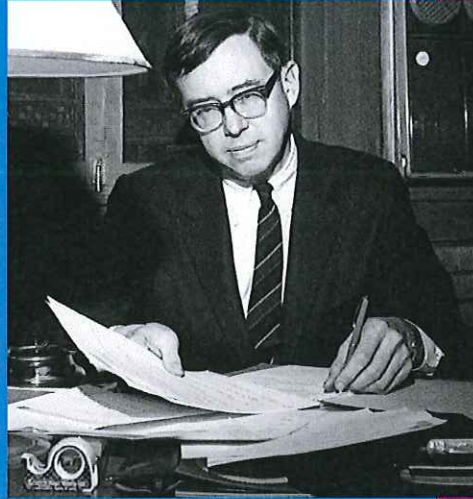
Many years later, the history of this disaster would be written...



Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

Walter Lord was a historian. Born in Baltimore, Maryland, he studied history and law.

After serving in World War II, he decided to write about history.



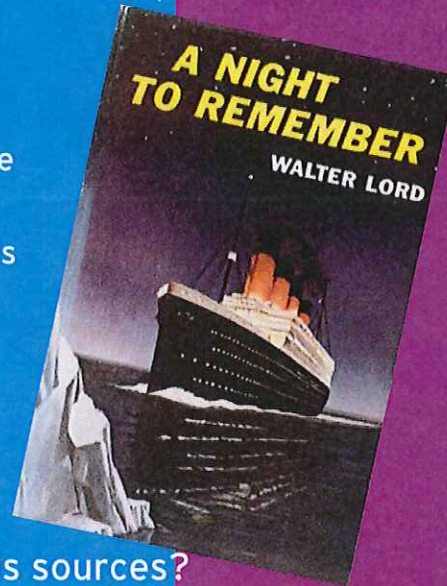
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Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

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Lord's book, *A Night to Remember*, was published in 1955.

It was the first book to give a detailed and accurate picture of what happened on the night of the *Titanic's* sinking.



How did Lord collect his sources?

Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

Ask students: Where do you think he got his sources?

Accept reasonable answers.

Over 40 years had passed since the sinking. Lord tracked down 63 survivors and interviewed them. He based his book on these interviews.

Let's listen to one of the passengers...

Edith Russell



Lord wrote in a "you are there" style, making you feel like you were on the ship—or a lifeboat—that terrible night.

Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

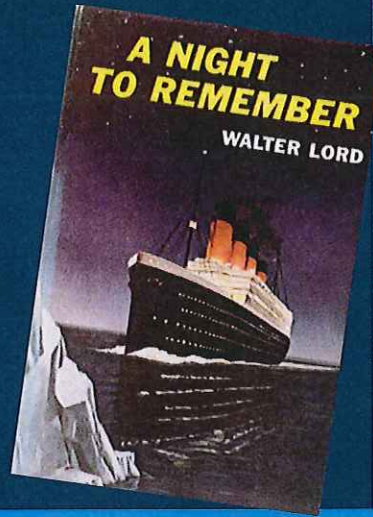
In this excerpt from *A Night to Remember*, passengers recall what it felt like when the ship and the iceberg collided:

The passengers in their cabins felt the jar too, and tried to connect it with something familiar....

Major Arthur Godfrey Peuchen, starting to undress for the night, thought it was like a heavy wave striking the ship.

Mrs. J. Stuart White was sitting on the edge of her bed just reaching to turn out the light, when the ship seemed to roll over "a thousand marbles."

Mrs. John Jacob Astor thought it was some mishap in the kitchen.



You may want to have a student give a dramatic reading of this passage from *A Night to Remember*.

Interviews are one excellent way that historians gather information.

An interview of a person who was there is a **primary source**.



A book about the interview is a **secondary source**.



Emphasize that interviews are only one way that historians have of finding out about the past.

Have students respond to this question before clicking to read the answer.

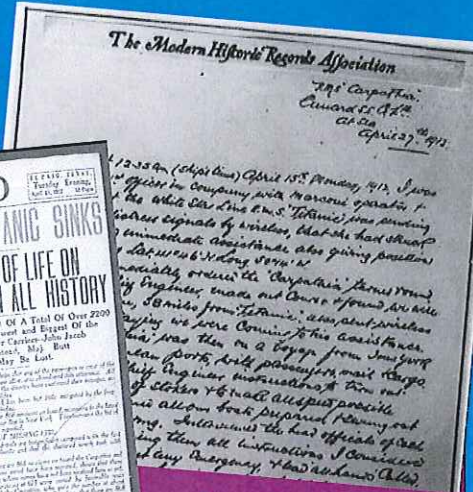
What is the difference between a primary and secondary source?

Lord used other sources too:

Newspapers,
Government records,
Ships' logs, and more.



Front Page of El Paso, TX
newspaper on Tuesday, April 16, 1912



Titanic Captain's
Written Account of
Disaster

Ask students: How else might we find out about what happened that night?
Accept reasonable answers.

Since 1955 when Lord published his book, we have learned much more about the *Titanic*.

In 1985, a team of scientists found the *Titanic's* remains, 2 miles below the ocean's surface.

Since then, many artifacts (historical objects) from the *Titanic* have been found.



Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

Ask students: What is an artifact? (It is an object from the past.)

Ask students: Are these artifacts from the ship primary or secondary sources? Why? (Primary because they are from the time that the *Titanic* sank.)

Note: Artifacts are another source for finding out about the past.

Where do historians find sources?

Libraries

You can find books and manuscripts (original copies of historic documents) in libraries.

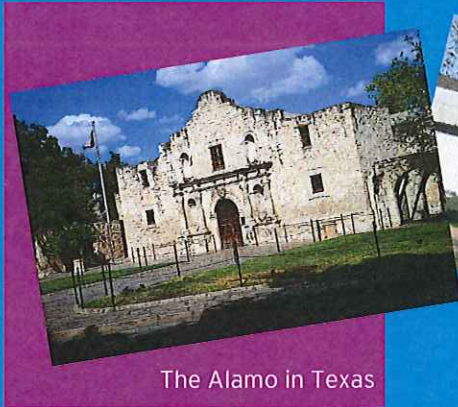
Many libraries have special collections devoted to one historic person or historical subject.



Ask students: Can you think of examples of libraries in the community?
(Students should consider school and other libraries.)

Historic Sites

Often, the places where events occurred have their own libraries, museums, and even historians.



The Alamo in Texas

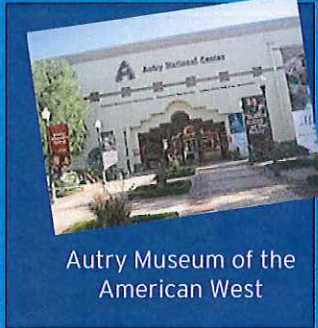


Sutter's Fort in California

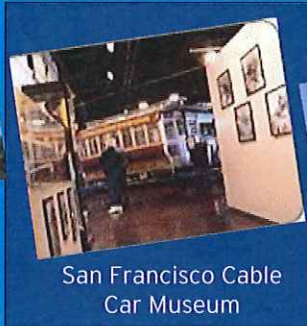
Ask students: Have you ever been to a historic site?

Museums

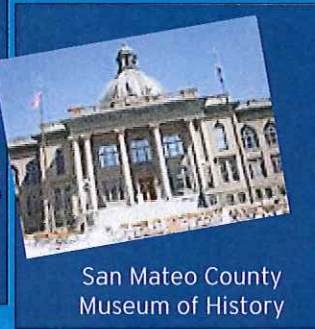
Art museums might contain art and artifacts from the past, such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Other museums are devoted to specific historical subjects, such as the Autry Museum of the American West.



Autry Museum of the American West



San Francisco Cable Car Museum



San Mateo County Museum of History

Ask students: Can you think of museums in the community?

Internet

You can find many documents, pictures, and other sources. You have to make sure that the web sites are trustworthy and accurate information.

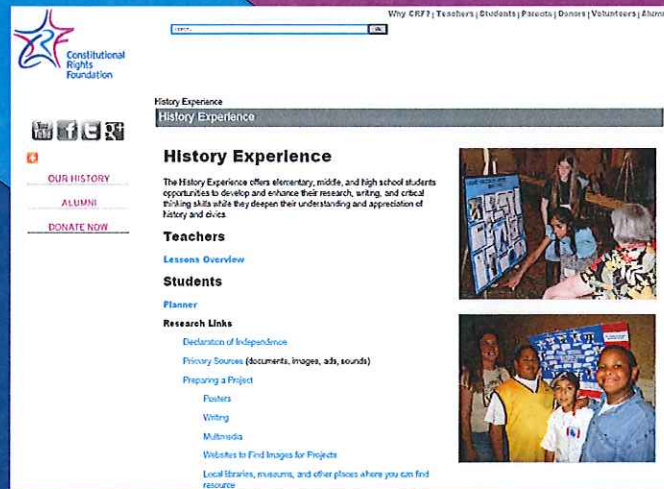
Many libraries, historic sites, and museums have digital archives online.



Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

Ask students: How can you make sure that you can trust the information you find online?

A good place to begin your Internet research is at the History Experience web site.



Remind students the History Experience web site has links to help them with their projects.

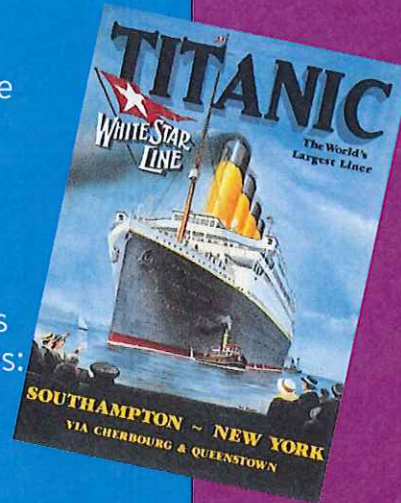
Now you are going to act as historians.

Imagine that you have done research about the sinking of the *Titanic*.

You have found artifacts and documents.

The next step in your research is to **analyze** these primary sources:

What do they tell us about the *Titanic*?



Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

In a moment, you'll team up with others and...

Take a look at two handouts:

1. "What Is This?"
2. An artifact or document related to the sinking of the *Titanic*.

Organize students into small groups.

Distribute **Handout: What Is This?** to each student.

Provide each group with a handout, any one of the **Source Handouts 4B-4H4A-4G**.

Your group will create an exhibit for the *Titanic* Museum.

Step 1

Look at both handouts. Discuss the questions on the What is This handout, then write your answers.

Step 2

Select a speaker to report your answers to the rest of the class.

Step 3

Create a poster presentation for your exhibit.

- Include the title of your source on the poster.
- Make your poster visually attractive.
- Include information from your What Is This? handout.

Review the information on this slide, answering any questions that students may have.

All groups should discuss the questions on the **What Is This?** handout while looking at the **Source Handout** they have been given. Each student should record their answers based on discussion on their individual **What Is This?** handouts.

Each group creates a poster to present their information as a simulated exhibit from a history museum. The poster should include the information from the **What Is This?** handout, the name of the source clearly labeled at the top, and a visually attractive presentation.

Ask each group to select one speaker to share back information to others during the gallery walk.

What Is This? – Source #1

1. What is your source? (book, song, article, object, etc.) *Front page of the New York Herald*
 - a. When was your source created? *April 15, 1912*
 - b. Who created your source? *The New York Herald newspaper*
 - c. Is your source primary or secondary? *Primary*
2. Why was your source created? *To report on the sinking. It told the public what had happened.*
3. What does this source tell you about the *Titanic*? Answer as many of the following questions as you can:
 - Who were the passengers and what was their experience on the ship like? *Many of the world's "most widely known persons" were on board.*
 - What were the causes and effects of the sinking? *A drawing showed the ship colliding with the iceberg. The map shows the location of the sinking in the North Atlantic.*
 - What can you find out about the ship?
 - What makes the *Titanic* so memorable? *It was the "most appalling disaster in marine history." The ship was the world's largest steamship at the time. There were a high number of fatalities. Many famous people died.*
4. What other sources might you use to get more information about this source? *Other newspaper front pages, biographies of some of the famous people listed (e.g., John Jacob Astor and Isidor Straus).*

What Is This? – Source #2

1. What is your source? (book, song, article, object, etc.) *Ad for high-quality soap*
 - a. When was your source created? *Days before the voyage in 1912*
 - b. Who created your source? *Vinolia Otto Soap Company*
 - c. Is your source primary or secondary? *Primary*
2. Why was your source created? *To promote the soap products and, possibly, to attract people to sail aboard the Titanic.*
3. What does this source tell you about the *Titanic*? Answer as many of the following questions as you can:
 - Who were the passengers and what was their experience on the ship like? *First-class passengers were given good quality products. The first-class state room had a sink.*
 - What were the causes and effects of the sinking? *Not shown.*
 - What can you find out about the ship? *The full name of the ship was R.M.S. Titanic. It was part of the White Star Line. The picture demonstrates*

how enormous the ship was compared to a smaller boat. The ship had two masts, four smokestacks, three levels below deck. There was a Turkish bath on the ship.

- *What makes the Titanic so memorable? There was probably a lot of cross-marketing, with advertisers using the notoriety of the Titanic to help promote their products, and vice versa. The ship was so famous that advertisers wanted to associate their products with the ship.*
4. *What other sources might you use to get more information about this source? Other ads of the time, other product “tie-ins,” lists of provisions given to passengers, whether for first- or third-class.*

What Is This? – Source #3

1. *What is your source? (book, song, article, object, etc.) Newspaper article from the Chicago American*
- When was your source created? April 25, 1912*
 - Who created your source? A writer for the newspaper*
 - Is your source primary or secondary? Primary*
2. *Why was your source created? To report on events following the disaster. In this case, a 17-year-old girl who was seriously injured was told by “four men” in her hospital room to sign away her claims in exchange for \$25.*
3. *What does this source tell you about the Titanic? Answer as many of the following questions as you can:*
- *Who were the passengers and what was their experience on the ship like? “Steerage passengers” (the lowest class of passenger) were not given the same chance to survive as first-class passengers. There were only two stewards on board to wake 1,000 steerage passengers. Many steerage passengers did not even know there was a collision.*
 - *What were the causes and effects of the sinking? Effects included pressure placed upon survivors to sign away their claims against the White Star Line. The girl in the article was expected not to regain “normal condition.”*
 - *What can you find out about the ship? There was a steerage class. There was a first class... The ship had stewards. It was run by the White Star Line.*
 - *What makes the Titanic so memorable? The treatment of the steerage passengers was worse compared to the first class passengers.*
4. *What other sources might you use to get more information about this source? Other sources that describe steerage passengers’ experiences, encyclopedias; photographs and diagrams showing steerage conditions; statistics and figures about claims made against the White Star Line.*

What Is This? – Source #4

1. What is your source? (book, song, article, object, etc.) *Lyrics to an American folk song called “The Great Titanic.”*
 - a. When was your source created? *Probably in 1912, after the disaster, but the lyrics were probably not written down until 1915 or 1916.*
 - b. Who created your source? *Unknown.*
 - c. Is your source primary or secondary? *Primary*

2. Why was your source created? *To tell the story of the tragedy of the Titanic. The chorus is “It was sad when that great ship went down; Husbands and wives and little children lost their lives.”*

3. What does this source tell you about the *Titanic*? Answer as many of the following questions as you can:
 - Who were the passengers and what was their experience on the ship like? *Passengers were rich people and poor people. The lyrics say, “The rich had declared they would not ride with the poor, so they put the poor below” and “they were the first to go.”*
 - What were the causes and effects of the sinking? *The ship sank around 1:00 in the morning. People were screaming and crying during the event. The song says that God “with power in hand” sank the ship that builders said “water can’t go through.”*
 - What can you find out about the ship? *It says, “The rich had declared that they would not ride with the poor, so they put the poor below; they were the first to go” It also describes the irony in how they tried to “build a ship that water can’t go through.”*
 - What makes the *Titanic* so memorable? *As a folk song, this song was probably heard by many people for several years after the disaster. The song emphasizes the different treatment of rich and poor on the ship, which has since become a memorable part of the story.*

4. What other sources might you use to get more information about this source? *Other folk songs about the Titanic; recordings of the songs; newspaper articles, encyclopedias, and books that might show what many of the lyrics were about.*

What Is This? – Source #5

1. What is your source? (book, song, article, object, etc.) *The property list of the “Unsinkable Mollie Brown.”*
 - a. When was your source created? *Unknown, but probably not long after the disaster.*
 - b. Who created your source? *Margaret Brown, a passenger aboard the ship.*
 - c. Is your source primary or secondary? *Primary*

2. Why was your source created? *Many survivors filed claims to recover the value of their lost property. Margaret Brown made this list to show what had gone down with the ship.*
3. What does this source tell you about the *Titanic*? Answer as many of the following questions as you can:
 - Who were the passengers and what was their experience on the ship like? *Margaret Brown's list is worth about \$660,000 in 2012 dollars. That shows that at the time, she was very wealthy. Her property included many luxury items, such as furs, gowns, and 14 hats. There were many wealthy people on board.*
 - What were the causes and effects of the sinking? *One effect of the sinking was that passengers wanted their money back for lost property. The sinking was so quick that people could not retrieve their valuables.*
 - What can you find out about the ship? *There were lifeboats.*
 - What makes the *Titanic* so memorable? *Margaret Brown is one of the most famous passengers because she was known as "Unsinkable Mollie Brown" for her attempt to save people swimming away from the sinking ship.*
4. What other sources might you use to get more information about this source? *Biographies of Margaret Brown; other survivor property lists; articles, books, photographs, and encyclopedias to show what the fashions of the time were for rich and poor (for comparing and contrasting).*

What Is This? – Source #6

1. What is your source? (book, song, article, object, etc.) *An engraving of "The Sinking of the Titanic."*
 - a. When was your source created? *Shortly after the sinking in 1912.*
 - b. Who created your source? *Willy Stower, a German painter.*
 - c. Is your source primary or secondary? *Primary*
2. Why was your source created? *Stower made this engraving to be used in a German-language magazine. He depicted the sinking ship and the survivors fleeing in lifeboats. It looks like he wanted to show the chaos and fear of the event.*
3. What does this source tell you about the *Titanic*? Answer as many of the following questions as you can:
 - Who were the passengers and what was their experience on the ship like? *The lifeboat in the foreground looks like it is has several crewmembers of the ship.*
 - What were the causes and effects of the sinking? *Icebergs are shown close by the ship. One effect of the sinking was panic in the water: A man is hanging onto an oar in the water, and people are scattered in the water.*

- The ship went down bow first. It happened at night. The water must have been ice-cold. Some people fell off the ship as it went down.*
- What can you find out about the ship? *The lifeboats had oars.*
 - What makes the *Titanic* so memorable? *The disaster was clearly newsworthy not just in English-speaking countries. People in Germany felt the tragedy, too.*

4. What other sources might you use to get more information about this source?
Other paintings and works of art from Germany and other countries; books and articles to describe who was in the lifeboats, and if the ship was surrounded by icebergs as shown in the engraving.

What Is This? – Source #7

1. What is your source? (book, song, article, object, etc.) *Luncheon menu for R.M.S. "Titanic"*
- a. When was your source created? *April 14, 1912.*
 - b. Who created your source? *Unknown.*
 - c. Is your source primary or secondary? *Primary*
2. Why was your source created? *It was created for first-class passengers.*
3. What does this source tell you about the *Titanic*? Answer as many of the following questions as you can:
- Who were the passengers and what was their experience on the ship like? *First class passengers had a privileged experience aboard the ship. Their menu choices were varied and exclusive. For example, they had choices of beef, chicken, mutton, fish, and ham.*
 - What were the causes and effects of the sinking?
 - What can you find out about the ship? *The ship was probably equipped with at least one very large kitchen to accommodate the variety of foods. Also, the ship would have some kind of refrigeration unit to store the vast amounts of perishables (like meat and eggs) for the duration of the voyage.*
 - What makes the *Titanic* so memorable? *It was a luxury liner that catered to a very elite group of passengers.*
4. What other sources might you use to get more information about this source?
If possible, menus for the second- and third-class passengers for comparison; photos of the kitchen facilities before the launch of the ship; historical secondary or primary written sources to find out what some of the more exotic dishes are (for example, "galantine of chicken").

Gallery Walk

You will go with your group to see the other exhibits in the *Titanic* Museum one-by-one.

Your speaker will stay to present your exhibit to other groups.

As students rotate from exhibit to exhibit, each speaker should stand by his or her group's poster and share the following information with the class:

What the source is.

Why the source was created.

What information the source tells us about the *Titanic*: its passenger life, its sinking, or its fame.

What other sources might you use to get more information.

2. After a minute at an exhibit, students should rotate to the next exhibit. You may want to use a stopwatch and a bell to assist you in announcing the rotations. They should continue this until they rotate back to their own group's exhibit.

Debriefing Discussion

- What did you learn about finding sources?
- What makes an interview a primary source?
- What makes an artifact a primary source? What are examples of artifacts?
- Why are secondary sources important?

What methods for finding historical sources did you learn about today?

Look for: Accessing libraries, conducting interviews, using digital archives and other online resources, visiting historic sites, etc.

What makes an interview a primary source?

Look for: The information a person gives in an interview is from the time of the historic event. That makes it primary.

What makes an artifact a primary source? What are examples of artifacts?

Look for: An artifact was made at the time of a historic event. Examples we saw were the menu, the old money, and the hull of the Titanic.

Why are secondary sources important?

Look for: Secondary sources provide analysis of primary sources. Walter Lord, for example, helped all his readers to know what happened in 1912. They otherwise might not have known much about the events he described. Secondary sources increase the knowledge of the general public about history. Secondary sources also help historians identify important primary sources used by other historians.

Image/Sound Credits

Titanic Advertisement

<http://www.retronaut.com/2012/09/titanic-ads-1912/>

Sinking (Stower)

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/archive/6/6e/20120507201420%21St%C3%B6wer_Titanic.jpg

Ice berg that sunk Titanic

<http://www.retronaut.com/2012/09/the-ice-berg-that-sunk-the-titanic-1912/>

Captain's Account

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001704336/>

Oral History Audio: Edith Russell

[http://www.nmni.com/titanic/Home/Audio-\(1\).aspx](http://www.nmni.com/titanic/Home/Audio-(1).aspx)

El Paso Newspaper

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88084272/1912-04-16/ed-1/seq-1.pdf>