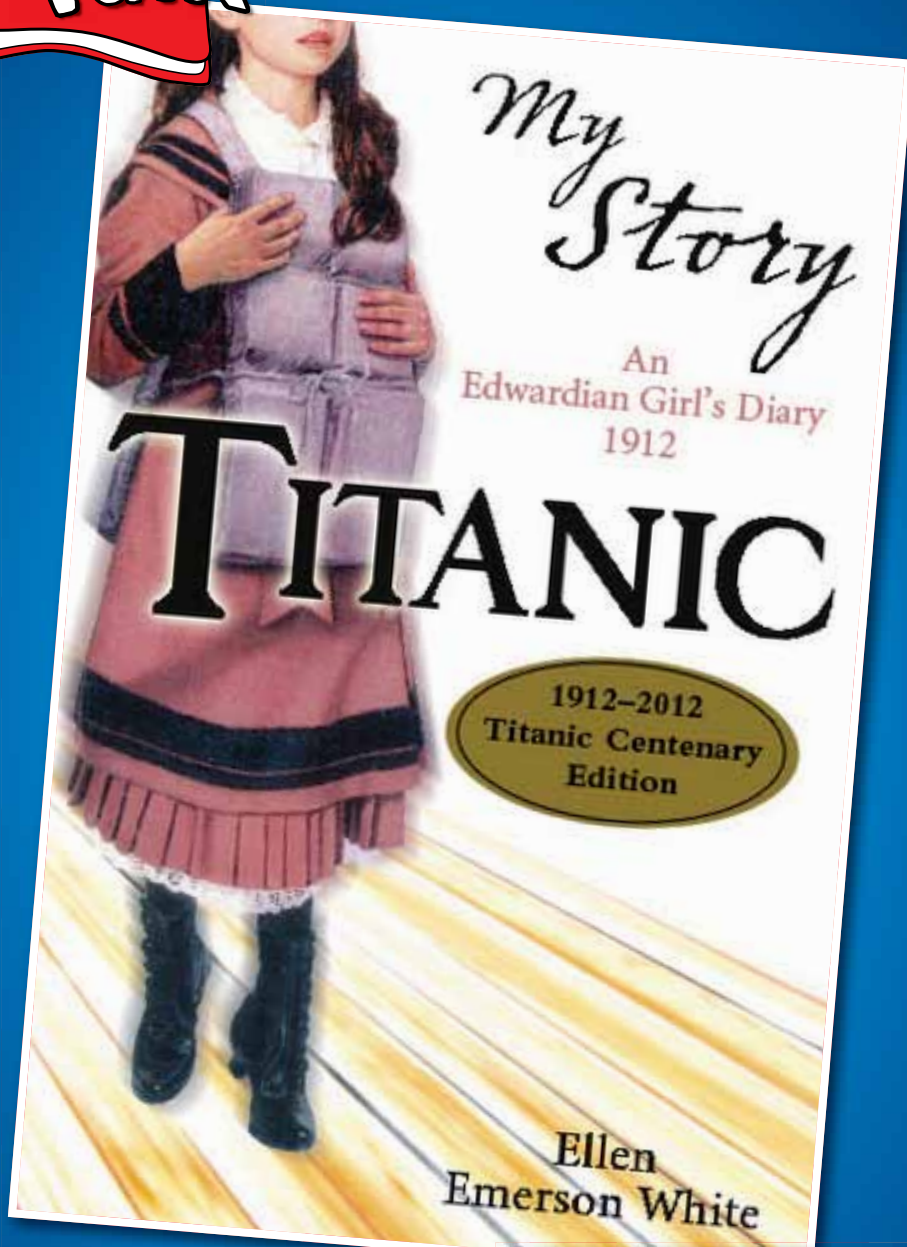
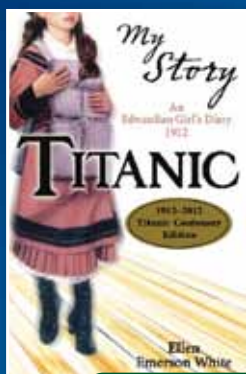


**Book
Talk**



AGES 8+

**Engage and inspire your
pupils with a Book Talk!**



Look out for this book at your Fair!

AGES 8+

Price	£6.99 / €8.20
Case	Read On
Author	Ellen Emerson White
Publisher	Scholastic Children's Books

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

This book gives a fascinating and entertaining first-person account of what it might have been like to sail on – and survive – the **Titanic**. The story gives lots of **historical insights** into life at the time, including differences between the **classes**. It also prompts readers to think about the nature of **loyalty** and **bravery**.

Summary

Thirteen-year-old Margaret Anne Brady is an orphan. She dreams of a time when she will be able to afford to buy a ticket to join her brother, William, who has gone to seek work across the ocean in America. That seems like an impossible dream, until one day she is told that a wealthy American lady, Mrs Carstairs, is looking for a travelling companion. Sister Catherine, Margaret's favourite nun at the orphanage, helps to prepare her for the job, and it is all arranged – Margaret will join Mrs Carstairs on her transatlantic trip aboard the Titanic.

Margaret is overjoyed at the thought of going to America – once there, she will be able to rejoin her brother. But nothing in Margaret's life so far prepares her for the incredible luxury she encounters on board the Titanic. She and Mrs Carstairs are travelling first-class, and as Mrs Carstairs' companion she has access to all the privileges on offer – wonderful restaurants, use of the gymnasium, swimming pool and even Turkish baths!

Despite all the luxury – or perhaps because of it – Margaret feels slightly uncomfortable with Mrs Carstairs and the other first-class passengers. She is much more at ease when she meets members of the crew, who seem to be more of her own class – particularly the cabin steward, Robert, with whom she develops a close friendship.

Then disaster strikes, and the Titanic crashes into an iceberg. There are not enough lifeboats, and families are separated as women and young children are allowed on to the boats, while men and boys are turned away. Margaret feels terrible about escaping the disaster when she knows that Robert will not be so lucky, but in the end she is persuaded to take a seat in the last available lifeboat. She escapes just in time, and survives to be reunited with her brother William in America. She and William make a happy life together, but she continues to feel guilty that she survived when so many people – around 1500, including her friend Robert – perished.

The Story Session

1. Introducing the book

- Have the children ever heard of the Titanic? They may have seen films or read about it. Briefly discuss what they already know, and if necessary explain that the Titanic was a huge passenger ship which made her ill-fated maiden voyage from London to New York in April 1912. The Titanic was widely believed to be unsinkable – but unfortunately this proved not to be true when the ship hit an iceberg and sank before reaching New York, with massive loss of life.
- Look together at the picture on the cover. What can the children infer from what the girl is wearing? What do they think the bulky purple thing tied round her waist is? (A life-jacket.) Read the back cover blurb and discuss the children's predictions about what will happen in this book.

2. Reading the story

- Read Margaret Anne's first diary entry (pages 3-6). What kind of person do the children think Margaret is? Would they like to have known her? Why, or why not? Ask them to pick out some of the words and phrases Margaret uses that children probably wouldn't use today – e.g. 'there is no question that today was nothing if not eventful'. Can the children 'translate' these into more modern English? (E.g. 'Lots happened today!')
- Read the second diary entry (pages 6-13) and ask the children to look out for more evidence about the sort of person Margaret is. Can they find evidence that she is quite mischievous? Do they think that she and Mrs Carstairs will get on well together? Can the children explain why Margaret is so keen to be Mrs Carstairs' companion?
- Read the rest of the diary, or encourage the children to read it in groups or independently. Ask them to look out for interesting historical details that help to show some of the differences between Margaret's life in 1912 and the children's life today.

3. Follow-up

- Do the children think Margaret was lucky to get the job as Mrs Carstairs' companion? Was she lucky to get to America, even though she had to go through such a horrible experience on the Titanic?
- Why do the children think Margaret felt so bad about leaving the Titanic on the lifeboat, when others (including Robert) couldn't get away?
- What sort of person do the children think Mrs Carstairs was? Why do they think Margaret and Mrs Carstairs never really became close? Mrs Carstairs describes Margaret as 'a most curious child ... and a very difficult child'. Do you think she is right?
- Ask the children to re-read the section of the diary which relates to the sinking of the Titanic (pages 96-126). Margaret says, of the men who stepped aside to let women and children use the lifeboats, 'There are not sufficient words in the English language to honour their valour and gallantry'. Do the children think this is true? How many different examples of brave and loyal behaviour can they find in Margaret's story of the sinking? Was it only the men who were brave?
- Encourage the children to role-play the scene at the sinking of the Titanic in small groups. They will need to think about how they would feel if they were woken in the night with news that the ship was sinking. Ask one child to be an officer in charge of a lifeboat, and the other children to be a mixed group of passengers (men, women and children). There isn't room for all the passengers in the lifeboat. How will they decide who gets a seat in the boat?
- The following BBC webpage has links to eye-witness accounts of the sinking of the Titanic: www.bbc.co.uk/archive/titanic. Encourage the children to listen to these, and then ask them to write or record their own 'eye-witness' account – perhaps in the voice of someone who escaped from the third-class section of the ship, or of one of the crew.

YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us at bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk