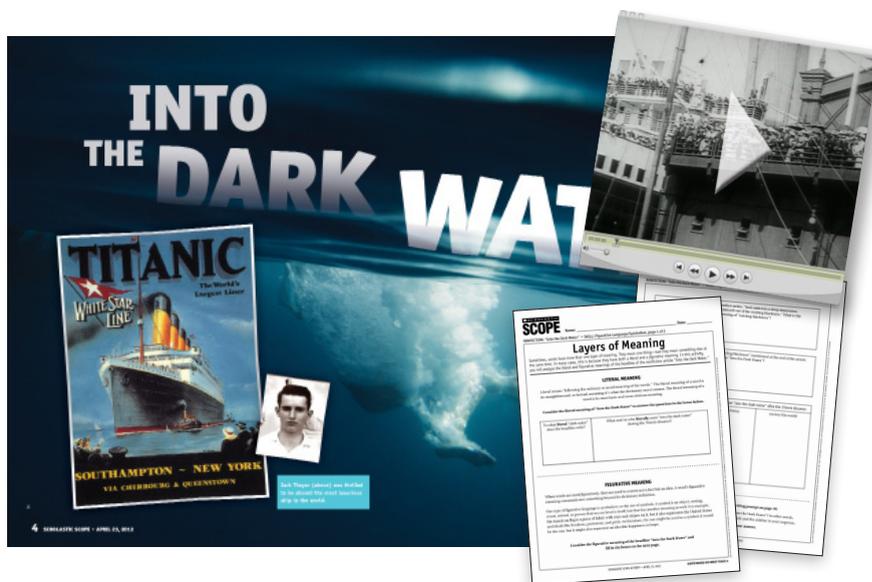


Step-by-step, whiteboard-ready

SCHOLASTIC
SCOPE
 DIGITAL LESSON

Exploring Symbolism Through the *Titanic*

Approximate
time to
complete
lesson: three
to four class
periods



FEATURED SKILL

Layers of meaning: understanding literal and figurative, or symbolic, meanings in literature

SUMMARY

Students will discuss symbols and view a video about the symbolism of the *Titanic*. They will then read a nonfiction article about a 17-year-old survivor of the disaster. After completing a worksheet about the literal and figurative meanings of the article's title, "Into the Dark Water," students will use their answers to help them respond to a writing prompt. Last, they will write an essay exploring the symbolic meanings of a *Titanic* lifeboat.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

- to understand and apply the concept of symbolism
- to identify literal and figurative meanings of language in a nonfiction text
- to gather information and ideas from multiple texts and media types
- to participate in class discussion
- to write a reflective essay

MATERIALS

Click the links below.

- student copies of the article “Into the Dark Water” from the April 23, 2012, issue of *Scope*
- image of a [diamond ring](#)
- image of a [light bulb](#)
- [Scope video “Titanic: The Ship of Dreams”](#)
- [Scope worksheet “Layers of Meaning”](#)
- [answer key](#) for video and worksheet

1 CLASS DISCUSSION: SYMBOLISM

Duration: 10 minutes

Ask students what a symbol is. (*something that stands for or suggests something else*) Project the image of a diamond ring and ask students what it is literally, and what it could symbolize. (*Literally, it’s a diamond ring, i.e., a piece of jewelry; it could be a symbol of love or of an engagement to be married. It could also be a symbol of wealth.*) Then project the image of a light bulb. Ask, “What is this literally? What could it be a symbol of?” (*Students will probably say it symbolizes a good idea. They might also suggest electricity, the electric company, etc.*) Prompt students to think of other symbols.

2 VIDEO VIEWING AND DISCUSSION

Duration: 15 minutes

Tell students that they will be reading a *Scope* article about the sinking of the *Titanic*. Invite them to briefly share what they know about the ship and the disaster. Explain that, like the items they discussed in Step 1, the ship can be seen as a symbol—it represents something beyond itself. Show students our video “*Titanic: The Ship of Dreams*,” pausing to discuss the questions that are presented in it. (See the answer key, linked to above, for suggested answers to the questions in the video.)

3 CLASS READING: NONFICTION

Duration: 30 minutes, or one class period

Explain that authors often use symbols in their writing. In a work of literature, people, places, objects, and even colors can suggest ideas. Words and phrases can have figurative meanings beyond their literal meanings (dictionary definitions). Draw students’ attention to the “As You Read” box on page 6. Ask them to predict what went “into the dark water.” Then have them read the article and the sidebar individually or as a class.

4 “LAYERS OF MEANING” WORKSHEET

Duration: 10 minutes

Distribute the “Layers of Meaning” worksheet and have students work in pairs to complete it.

5 WRITING PROMPT

Duration: 20 minutes

Ask students to write one to two paragraphs in response to the writing prompt on page 10: *What are the literal and figurative meanings of the headline “Into the Dark Water”? In other words, what does the “dark water” symbolize?* Students should support their responses with details from the article and the sidebar. This can be an in-class or at-home assignment.

6 ESSAY WRITING: EXPLAINING A SYMBOL

Duration: 30 minutes, or one class period

Have students apply their understanding of symbolism by writing about the symbolism of a lifeboat from the *Titanic*. Ask them to write an essay responding to this prompt: *A lifeboat on the Titanic symbolizes different things to different people. Identify three symbolic meanings of a Titanic lifeboat and explain them using information from the article, the sidebar, and the video.*

Guide students with these questions before they start to write:

- What is a lifeboat literally? (*a small boat carried on a ship to use in case of emergency*)
- What might a lifeboat symbolize to a survivor of the *Titanic*? (*life, salvation, good fortune*)
- What might a lifeboat symbolize to someone who wanted to board but could not, or who lost a loved one in the disaster? (*death, desperation, loss*)
- What might a lifeboat symbolize to someone like Benjamin Guggenheim, who chose to go down with the ship? (*sacrifice, courage, offering life to someone else*)
- What might a lifeboat symbolize to J. Bruce Ismay? (*regret, mistakes, shame, humiliation*)
- According to the “code of the sea,” women and children took spots on lifeboats ahead of men. In view of this information, what might a lifeboat symbolize? (*Students might respond that it symbolizes gallantry or hope for the future because it allowed children to grow up. Or, they might say it symbolizes sexism or unfairness.*)

For advanced students:

Optionally, have students research the percentages of first-, second-, and third-class passengers who survived the *Titanic* disaster, and why a larger percentage of first-class passengers survived. Students may draw on their research for their essays.