



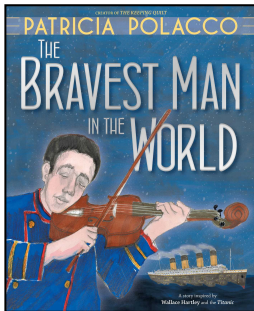
## Cruchley's Collection

Diana Cruchley is an award-winning educator and author, who has taught at elementary and secondary levels. Her ideas are practical, with a range of opportunities for classroom use.

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### THE BRAVEST MAN IN THE WORLD



PATRICIA POLACCO, SIMON AND SCHUSTER, ©2019, ISBN 978-1-4814-9461-8

Wallace Hartley is the man who played the violin as the Titanic sank. He was praised as the “bravest man in the world” because he was offered a space on a lifeboat, but instead stayed to calm the scared passengers by playing as the ship sank. The story is told by Jonathan Harker, a stowaway befriended by Hartley, to his grandson who doesn’t want to practise the piano.

### TEACHING IDEAS

#### Discussion: What is Bravery?

This book lends itself to a discussion about bravery. The boy in the story associates “brave” with strong - is that true? What makes William Wallace Hartley a brave man? Is it that he chose death rather than the safety of a lifeboat? Does it make him even braver that he played for the remaining passengers to soothe them as they went down? (It is said that they played “Nearer my God to thee” - there are many links to the music to play a few bars for the students.)

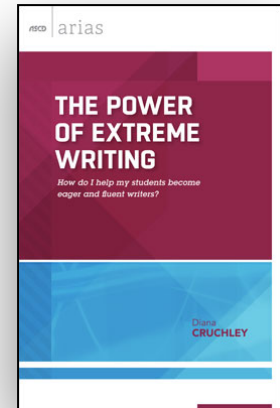
For his sacrifice William Wallace Hartley became a hero to the world as the story of the band playing while the ship sank “made the news.” Is it the sure death that made him brave, or the playing of the violin, or the fact that people told his dramatic story?

There are gradations of bravery. Is it brave to stand up to a bully? Is it brave to intervene if someone is being bullied or hit? Is bravery at all wise? If someone is drowning is it brave to turn your boat around to go and rescue them? Is it brave to push someone off the tracks of an oncoming train? Is it brave or foolish to push the other person off and be killed yourself? Is it brave to jump on top of a grenade to save your platoon? If you act on instinct is it more or less brave to think about it first and still do it? What is the difference between moral bravery and physical bravery? The captain of the Titanic went down with the ship. Is that bravery when he could have gotten onto one of the half empty life-boats? Is “doing your duty” the same as being brave? Lots of possible discussion.

## Extreme Writing

There should always be 3 prompts for an Extreme Writing inspiration. There are 4 here but only choose any 3. Otherwise students waste time making a decision. (See my book *The Power of Extreme Writing* for a complete description of the process.)

1. The boy hated the taste of liver. Write stories about foods you hate to eat. Why do you hate them? When do you have to eat them? etc.
2. The boy is learning to play the piano, but his grandfather played the violin professionally. Write stories about the part music plays in your life. Do you play an instrument, belong to a choir, sing in church, sing, favourite bands?
3. “Practice, practice, practice” the stowaway boy is told. “Practice makes perfect” and “Practice makes permanent” are common expressions. Write about things you practice a lot, including both things from school and things outside of school in order to “get good at them.” Is there anything in your life currently that you can think you should practise more, and why?



## Ship Vocabulary and Irish Slang

The steerage characters on this book about the Titanic were Irish, so the vocabulary that could be explored could be the language of the ship, and the slang of the crew.

Words worth exploring might be *steerage*, *busker*, *mooring*, *consumption*, *toady*, *steamship*, *stowaway*, *galley*, “*street sprookin*”, *grog*, “*toffs*”, *scullery*, *coppers*, *listing*, *starboard*, etc.

## A Date That Will Live In Infamy

In the story, the character says, “April 15, 1912, a date that will live in infamy in my heart for the rest of my life.”

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour on December 7, 1941, President Roosevelt was looking over his speech and changed “a date which will live in world history” to “a date that will live in infamy.”

Do you think the author meant the parallel? What is “infamy.” Is the use of the words appropriate in both cases? Why

## More Brave People

There are many heroes on the Titanic, of most of whom we will never know by name. But one of the heroes we know was Jack Phillips, the ship’s telegraph operator who, although relieved of his duties by the captain, remained on the ship, continuously sending out SOS signals, even as the telegraph operator’s room was flooding, until he drowned and the telegraph went silent. Discuss which of the two was the most heroic and why? Equal and why?

## The Telegraph and the Titanic

Prior to the telegraph, ships had to be within viewing distance to communicate - by flags. A second option was to send up flares to signal distress. On December 12, 1901, Marconi from a site in St. John's Newfoundland (the Canadian connection) heard the three little clicks ("S" in Morse Code) sent from Cornwall England and the telegraph was born.

Explore with students the consequences of telegraphy - which included the rapid settlement of the hinterland of the USA and the expansion of the railroad system.

The latest Marconi wireless radio system was onboard the Titanic with two Marconi operators. It is said that this invention saved 700 passengers on the ship.

At the time the distress signal was CQD. SOS had not yet been adopted but was being talked about. It is said that as he sent out the last messages, his supervisor is said to have said, "Maybe you should try that SOS. It may be your only chance to use it."

The BBC has a great "*Titanic in Her Own Words*" - which shows photos and videos while you listen to voices say what the words of the SOS wireless were saying during the sailing and the sinking.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqstKa3qcTw>

There are many excellent websites for students to study the Titanic and its sinking. What were the consequences in terms of regulation after the sinking? What did the WhiteLine shipping company have to do to repay for the losses and the deaths? Why was the ship considered unsinkable? How are passengers trained for evacuation these days? What are modern ways of calling for help - 911 is pretty universal in North America, but Australia uses 000 and England uses 999.

## Patricia Polacco

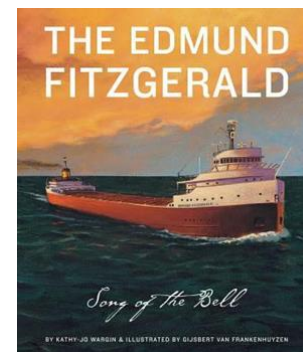
Patricia Polacco is the author of 68 books and counting. Many of her books are non-fiction and inspired by her Polish/Ukrainan background. There are no teaching ideas specifically on her website, but many sites with teaching ideas for a unit on Patricia Polacco's books.

## Inquiry: Famous Disasters at Sea

It might make a good "rapid research" inquiry topic for students in pairs to find the basic when, where, why, how for the disasters. They need to also create ten interesting sentence facts about the disasters.

They could also pose questions themselves for all disasters: What are the most common causes of marine disasters? Were any changes to the "rules" of the sea made after the disaster? Why do we particularly remember these disasters? How many people died? How do we know these disasters occurred?

It helps if the students generate the questions themselves. At the end create a chart: Questions down one side, disasters across the top. With each question have students chime in anything that found that would help to answer the question. This is genuine evidence-based research of the kind for which scholars get doctorates.



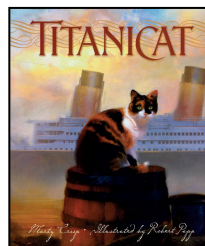
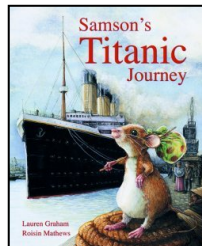
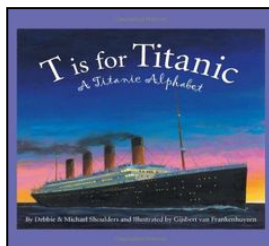
- The Mary Rose, 1545
- The Spanish Armada, 1588
- The Vasa (Swedish), 1628
- The Merchant Royal, 1641
- The Scilly Naval Disaster, 1707
- The Black Swan, 1804
- The Tek Sing, 1822 (China)
- The HMS Birkenhead, 1845
- The Titanic, 1912
- The Kiche Maru Typhoon, 1912 (Japan)
- The Great Lakes Storm, 1913
- The Lusitania, 1915
- The Halifax Explosion, 1917
- The Bismarck, 1941
- The Wilhelm Gustloff, 1945
- The Edmund Fitzgerald, 1975
- The Exxon Valdez, 1994

I have teaching ideas for *The Edmund Fitzgerald* at [dianacruchley.com](http://dianacruchley.com)

## Other Picture Books About the Titanic

There seem to be innumerable books about the Titanic written with children in mind. : pop-up books, colouring books, detective books, etc. Two of them would be particularly useful. *Titanicat* is the story of a genuine survivor of Titanic who by a twist of fate did not get on the ship. (I have teaching ideas for this at [dianacruchley.com](http://dianacruchley.com).)

The other is *T is for Titanic*. Its an ABC book for words from the Titanic. I have always had success with selecting a topic under study in Social Studies and then having students working to create an ABC book of short paragraphs about that topic. If you have lots of time, students can work in pairs to create the book with each student doing 13 letters, but it can also be done where the class generates a list (or you do) of words that apply - and then individually finds facts and write an interesting paragraph about the the word as applied to the topic. ABC's of Egypt, Haida, Japan, etc.



## The Word "Titanic"

If your students are studying Ancient Greece, or generally interested in the gods they may have seen in Swords and Sorcery type movies with Superheroes, they will be interested in the origins of the word "titanic." Titanic means huge - although now it also has connotations of disaster.

The Titans were the original dieties of the Greek mythology. They were the children of Heaven (Uranus) and Earth (Gaea). They in turn gave birth to the more generally known Greek and Roman gods: Jupiter, Venus, Diana, Mars, etc.

After explaining the origin of the word, ask students to generate the longest list they can of words meaning very large: huge, gigantic, enormous, vast, colossal, mammoth, immense.

## Character Description

Ask students to listen for, and then discuss the qualities of Hartley: What does his actions tell us, and his words. *He's kind, a good teacher, he's accomplished, he's willing to share, he's generous, he's brave, he's calm, etc.* Use this as a lead to writing a character description from a book they are reading.

## Taking a Look at Infectious Diseases

Germ is a generic word used to describe fungi, bacteria, and viruses that cause disease.

This might be a chance to address the issue of killer infectious diseases and vaccinations. Our stowaway's mother died of consumption, more commonly known now as TB (tuberculosis). TB is caused by a bacteria in the lungs and is spread through the air by coughing and sneezing. Many famous writers and artists died of consumption: George Orwell, Frederic Chopin, Andrew Jackson, Henry David Thoreau, Franz Kafka, Louis Braille, Jane Austin, etc. Students might be interested to know that TB was still so widespread in North America that teachers in the 1950's had to provide a doctor's certificate proving they did not have it before they could begin teaching. TB is still prevalent around the world, and is treated with a combination of drugs over a 6 month period until all the bacteria die.

What is the difference between bacteria and viruses? When did we get vaccines for various childhood killers: smallpox, measles, mumps, polio? Why doesn't the flu vaccine work on all flu? Why are some vaccines good for years, and others have to have an annual shot, one every 5 years, one every 10 years and so on. Given the pandemic of covid it might be really important that students understand what vaccines can do and can't do. (This kind of class discussion can ameliorate the "fake" information circulating the Internet.)



On the other hand, environments that are too sterile and in which people are scared to touch things are ones in which it is easy to develop allergies. Early and mild exposure to things like peanuts can prevent life-threatening mustering of the defence immune system in our bodies. "Eat a pound of dirt."

## Music: Songs About the Titanic

There are many songs about the sinking of the Titanic. Of course, *My Heart Will Go On* from the 1997 movie *Titanic* with Celine Dion (Canadian connection) while not precisely about the sinking is probably currently the strongest connection. Other versions include *Titanically* (by Rankin and Tyson). There are at least a half dozen more but one your students will probably enjoy singing the most is the Boy Scout/ Girl Scout version. Try <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rP1gD9xXkU> for a version of of the Titanic Song sung by two girlscouts with the words crossing the screen.

## Canadian Connection: The Nova Scotia Titanic Exhibit

The survivors of the Titanic were taken to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and one of the world's largest collections of the memorabilia from the Titanic is located there. There is considerable information about the artifacts available on line.