

WHITE STAR LINE  
 FIRST CLASS PASSENGER

# Navigating English with *Titanic*

Vocabulary, Metaphors, and  
 Meaning in the Deep Ocean

RMS TITANIC  
 SAILING FROM SOUTHAMPTON TO NEW YORK  
 APRIL 10, 1912

# THE JOURNEY OF THE TITANIC:

A TIMELESS TALE OF LOVE AND TRAGEDY

**Departure (April 10, 1912):**  
The RMS Titanic, deemed "unsinkable," leaves England for America. Upper and lower classes board with wildly different expectations.

**The Sinking (April 15):**  
The rigid social structure collapses as the ship goes down. Only 705 survive, primarily from the upper classes.

1997 - PRESENT DAY

**The Collision (April 14):**  
Rose, a wealthy 17-year-old trapped by societal inertia, meets Jack, a poor, free-spirited artist. They fall in love just before the ship strikes an iceberg.

**The Aftermath (1997):**  
85 years later, a 100-year-old Rose tells her story, revealing that Jack saved her "in every way that a person can be saved."

SOUTHAMPTON  
TO  
NEW YORK

APRIL 15, 1912



# Passengers & Dynamics



## First Class

**Rose DeWitt Bukater:** 17 years old. Trapped by the inertia of her life. Core motivation: Escape.



**Caledon 'Cal' Hockley:** Arrogant, wealthy heir. Core motivation: Control and status.



**Tommy Ryan:** Irish immigrant seeking a new life. Observant of class divisions.



## Third Class

**Jack Dawson:** Charming, talented artist living a rootless existence. Core motivation: Making every day count.

The ship's physical decks isolated the wealthy from the poor—and their language was just as strictly separated.

# The Sound of Wealth: The Transatlantic Accent



## The Phenomenon

- Characters like Rose, Cal, and Ruth speak with an accent that sounds neither fully American nor fully British.

## The Explanation

- This is the "Transatlantic" (or Mid-Atlantic) accent. It was a manufactured, posh accent taught in elite American finishing schools and boarding schools in the early 20th century.

## The Contrast

- Jack speaks with a natural, regional American voice (representing his working-class roots), highlighting the massive social gap between him and Rose. The accent served as an auditory status symbol.

# Scene Deconstruction: "Do You Love Him?"

## TITANIC

Jack: You love him?

Rose: Pardon me?

Jack: You love him?

Rose: You're being very rude. We are not having this conversation.

**Formal Register:**  
An old-fashioned, highly polite way to say "Excuse me?" or "What did you say?"

**Dropped Auxiliary:**  
Native speakers often drop "Do" in informal questions.

**Present Continuous for Emphasis:** Using the continuous tense to shut down an action right now ("This is not going to happen").

# Hazard Radar: False Friends & Nuances

## Target: RUDE

**Learner Trap:** Looks like the Spanish word *rudo* (tough/rough).

**True English Meaning:** Impolite, having bad manners.

**Example:** "You are being very rude."

## Intensifier Note

Rose calls Jack "so annoying." In spoken English, "so" acts as a powerful intensifier, often replacing "very" to add emotional weight.

## Target: ACTUALLY

**Learner Trap:** Looks like the Spanish word *actualmente* (currently/now).

**True English Meaning:** In fact, or to express surprise at reality.

**Example:** "They are very good, actually."

# The Language of Social Class

TITANIC

## First-Class Formal (Latin-Rooted)


- Precarious: Dangerous or unstable.
- Exquisite: Beautifully made.
- Impugn: To criticize or attack.
- Suitable: Appropriate or acceptable.
- Melancholy: Sad or depressed.

## Third-Class Informal (Germanic/Slang)


- Bum a smoke: Ask for a cigarette.
- Nut case: A crazy or irrational person.
- Full of shit: Speaking nonsense or lying.
- Sort out: Fix or organize a problem.
- Chill: Relax or calm down.

Insight: Formal English relies heavily on multi-syllable, Latin-based words. Informal English relies on phrasal verbs, idioms, and slang.


# Rigging the Ship: Phrasal Verbs in Action




**Pull yourself up:** To use your arms to climb up and over an obstacle.




**Get rid of:** To eliminate or throw something away. ("Get rid of this luggage!")



**Fall apart:** To break into pieces, or for a situation to lose control.



**Wind up:** To finish or end up in a specific place or situation.



**Catch up:** To become current or up-to-date on news or gossip.

# The Iceberg Metaphor of Language

## The Tip (Literal Vocabulary)

The physical reality of the story:  
Iceberg, lifeboats, drown, hull, steerage.

## The Waterline (Nautical Idioms)

Expressions born from the sea:  
Tip of the iceberg, go down with the ship, clear the decks, miss the boat.

## The Deep Ocean (Cultural Metaphors)

- Abstract themes: Hubris (fatal arrogance), the illusion of human control over nature, and the collapse of rigid social class structures.



# Deeper Meaning: Figurative Language

## SIMILE

(Comparing using  
“like” or “as”)

Quote: “Water that cold hits you like 1,000 knives stabbing you.”

Analysis: Jack uses violent imagery to make freezing water deeply physical and terrifying.

## METAPHOR

(Calling one thing  
another)

Quote: “A tumbleweed blowing in the wind.”

Analysis: Jack describes himself as a rootless plant, representing his drifting, unattached life.

## OXYMORON

(Contradictory terms  
together)

Quote: “Poor little rich girl.”

Analysis: Highlights the irony of Rose’s situation: immense material wealth, but total emotional misery.

# Synthesis: How Language Mirrors the Ship

## The Inevitable Collision

Just as the unyielding steel of the Titanic shatters against the chaotic force of nature, the rigid social language of First Class breaks down in the face of raw human emotion and disaster.

## The Ship & First Class

Rigid, structured, and artificial. Spoken in strict, Latin-based, highly formal English. They believe their rules are unbreakable.

## The Ocean & Third Class

Fluid, chaotic, and natural. Spoken in flexible, informal, phrasal-verb-heavy English.

# Making Connections: Discussion Prompts

## 1. Personal Metaphor

When have you felt like you were 'navigating an iceberg' in your own life or career? How did you avoid it?

## 2. Sociolinguistics

Does the way someone speaks (their accent or vocabulary choices) still dictate their social class today?

## 3. Modern Hubris

The Titanic was the ultimate symbol of technological arrogance. What modern invention or technology represents our "unsinkable ship" today?

## 4. Register Switching

Have you ever had to instantly switch between "First Class" (formal) and "Third Class" (informal) language? Give an example.

# Comprehension Check: Incoming Messages

True or False: If a situation is described as precarious, it means it is safe, stable, and completely under control.

Multiple Choice: If someone tells you to “get rid of” a piece of luggage, they want you to: A) Put it in your cabin B) Throw it away / eliminate it C) Clean it.

Short Answer: Jack drops the auxiliary verb when he asks, “You love him?” What is the grammatically complete version of this question?

Meaning: What does it mean if a project leader says, “I am going to go down with the ship”?

*Answers logged on the next page.*

# Captain's Log: Answers & Glossary

## Quiz Debrief:

1. *False. Precarious means dangerous and unstable.*
2. *B) Throw it away / eliminate it.*
3. *"Do you love him?"*
4. *It means they will accept failure and face the consequences alongside their team.*

## Voyage Vocabulary:

- *Inertia: Tendency to remain motionless or unchanged.*
- *Hubris: Fatal pride or arrogance.*
- *Uncouth: Lacking good manners; unrefined.*
- *Wind up: To finish or end up in a place.*
- *Bum a smoke: To ask for a cigarette.*



A woman's heart is a  
deep ocean of secrets.

— Rose Dawson Calvert

Language, like the ocean, has endless depths. Keep diving below the surface.