

Escape From the *Hindenburg*

It was the greatest airship the world had ever seen. And then disaster struck.

About the Story

Lexile: 800L (captions)

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

Learning Objective: After reading the play, students create an advertisement drawing on key ideas and details from the play and text features.

Key Skills: character, foreshadowing, inference, text features, key ideas and details

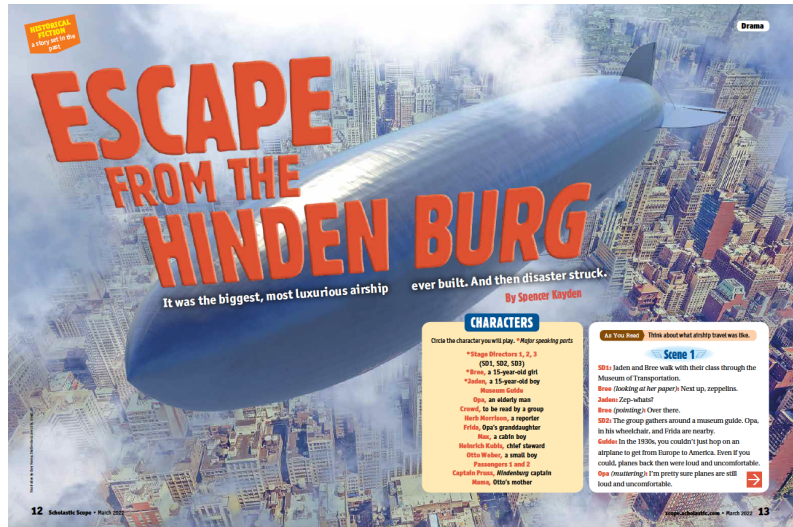
Essential Questions:

- How has transportation changed over time?
- How does transportation affect our lives?
- What impact can a disaster have on the world?

Standards:

The article and lesson support these Common Core anchor standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.5, R.7, R.10, W.2, W.9, SL.1, SL.2, L.4, L.6

For more standards information—including TEKS—go to Scope Online.



Your Teaching Support Package

Find your full suite of support materials at [scope.scholastic.com](https://www.scholastic.com).

Audio:

- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- "The Flaming Sky"
- "Where Were You on May 6, 1937?"
- "Would You Ride on That?"
- "Searching for the *Titanic*"

Skill Building Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Preparing to Write: Your Airship Ad
 - Close Reading and Critical Thinking
 - Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
 - **Core Skills Workout:** Inference
 - Choice Board
 - Quiz*
 - Contest Entry Form
- *Available on two levels

Step-by-Step Lesson

Close Reading, Critical Thinking, Skill Building

1. Preparing to Read

10 minutes

Do Now: Journal. (5 minutes)

- Project the following journal prompts on your whiteboard. Have students choose one prompt to respond to in their journal or on a piece of paper:
 - *If you could travel back in time, when and where would you visit and why?*
 - *If you could travel into the future, would you? Why or why not?*
 - *If time travel were possible, do you think it should be allowed? Explain.*
 - *Write the first paragraph of a story in which the main character travels through time.*
- Invite students to share their responses. Then tell them that they are about to perform a play in which two teens travel back in time to the 1930s for a journey on an airship called a zeppelin.

Preview Vocabulary (5 minutes)

- Project **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice**. Review the definitions as a class. Highlighted words: *fleet*, *mess hall*, *ominous*, *promenade*, *sabotage*, *stifle*. (Optionally, share the interactive link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently beforehand. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded in the slides.)

2. Reading and Discussing

45 minutes

- Have a volunteer read the As You Read box on page 13 of the magazine or at the top of the digital story page.
- Break students into groups to discuss the following close-reading and critical-thinking questions.

Close-Reading Questions

(15 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **In Scene 1, how does Opa react to the recording of the eyewitness account of the Hindenburg disaster? Why does he react this way? Use details from the play to support your answers.** (character, foreshadowing) *When the guide plays a recording of an eyewitness account of the Hindenburg disaster, Opa's face turns pale, and he says he needs to get some air. These details show that Opa feels uneasy; perhaps he is having feelings of sickness or fright. He reacts this way because, as we later learn, Opa is in fact Otto, a child who survived the disaster.*
2. **When Max meets Bree and Jaden in Scene 3, who does he think they are?** (inference) *Max thinks that Bree and Jaden are employees on the ship whose job is to wait on the Hindenburg's passengers and officers.*
3. **What does the sidebar "Ship of Wonder" help readers understand?** (text features) *The sidebar helps readers understand why people were so fascinated with the Hindenburg: its massive size, its luxury, and its ability to fly low overhead as it transported people across the ocean in record time.*
4. **The sidebar titled "The Mystery: What Happened?" provides important background information that helps readers better understand which lines in the play?** (text features) *In Scene 2, Jaden reads a sign in the museum that says of the Hindenburg crash, "Some people believe a spark ignited leaking hydrogen. Others say it was sabotage." The sidebar makes clear why hydrogen was used in the first place, and its downside—flammability. In Scene 4, Heinrich Kubis reprimands Otto for creating a static charge on the carpet with his toy car. The sidebar helps readers understand what a static charge is, how easy it is to form one, and why it was so dangerous to have them occur on an airship. Lastly, in Scene 7, SD1 describes the weather upon the Hindenburg's arrival, saying, "Ominous clouds fill the sky. Lightning flashes and thunder rumbles as the airship approaches New Jersey." The sidebar explains that experts believe it was this storm's electricity that caused the leaking hydrogen to catch fire.*

Critical-Thinking Questions

(5 minutes)

The following questions can be shared in printable or interactive form.

1. **How has air travel changed since the 1930s? What effect do you think the Hindenburg disaster had on how we travel?** *Students may offer that air travel has changed in many ways since the 1930s. Based on the information in the play, it seems that in the 1930s, airplanes didn't travel between Europe and America, perhaps because they couldn't make it that far. Therefore, the way to cross the Atlantic was on a boat—until zeppelins came along. And while it took an*

ocean liner five days to cross the Atlantic, a zeppelin could make the trip in two and a half days. But today, you can fly across an ocean in a plane in mere hours. In terms of fuel, planes of today use gas, as opposed to the hydrogen airships used. The play also notes that for those who traveled on the Hindenburg, the price was very high—a one-way ticket was \$8,000 in today’s money. Today, air travel is more common and much less expensive. It’s likely that the Hindenburg disaster brought an end to travel by airship; after the disaster, people no longer saw zeppelins as exciting and enjoyable but rather as dangerous and associated with tragedy.

2. **Based on details in the play, do you think Bree and Jaden travel back in time to the Hindenburg, or are they in some interactive part of the museum, as Jaden proposes?** *Some students may say that their experience must have been an interactive part of the museum—there was an ambulance at the scene of the crash that said “Museum of Transportation” on the side. Others may say that the fact that Bree and Jaden are in the photographs from history, and that Bree walks back to the silver door and opens it to find only a concrete wall, suggest otherwise.*
3. **In Scene 5, Jaden says, “What if what we do here in 1937 somehow leads to something else happening—something even worse? One small change could begin a chain of events—” Is there something in history that you would change if you could? What might happen as a result of that change?** *Answers will vary.*
4. **People often compare the Titanic and the Hindenburg. What similarities and differences exist between them?** *Students familiar with the Titanic may offer that both dramatic disasters involved enormous, luxurious modes of travel across the ocean. The public was fascinated by both of these transportation wonders at the time of their creation, and people remain fascinated by both of their demises today. One key difference is that the Titanic’s sinking happened on her first voyage, while the Hindenburg had safely crossed the ocean dozens of times before. Also, a larger percentage of passengers survived the Hindenburg disaster than the Titanic disaster. Another difference is that while the Hindenburg disaster effectively brought about the end of travel by airship, the Titanic disaster did not bring about the end of travel by ocean liner.*

3. Skill Building and Writing

30 minutes

- Have students complete **Preparing to Write: Your Airship Ad**. This activity will help them organize their ideas in preparation for the writing prompt on page 18 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page.
- Alternatively, have students choose a culminating task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of differentiated activities.

Connected Readings from the *Scope* archives:

- [Narrative Nonfiction: "The Flaming Sky"; Poem: "Where Were You on May 6, 1937?"; Essay: "Would You Ride on That?" \(October 2016\)](#)
- [Narrative Nonfiction: "Searching for the *Titanic*" \(December 2020/January 2021\)](#)