

# Attack at Sea

The sinking of the *Lusitania*, through the experience of a 12-year-old passenger

## About the Story

**Lexile® Measure** 950L

For qualitative complexity factors, go to Scope Online.

**Learning Objective:** to analyze the author's use of descriptive language

**Featured Skill:** author's craft

**Additional skills covered in this lesson plan:** mood, figurative language, critical thinking

### Essential Questions:

- What can be learned from past disasters?
- What are the costs of war?
- How does living through a disaster affect people?

### Standards:

The article and its suite of support materials support these Common Core Anchor Standards: R.1, R.2, R.3, R.4, R.5, R.7, W.2, SL.1, SL.2

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



## Your Teaching Package

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

### Audio:

- Article read-aloud
- Text-to-speech
- Vocabulary

### Video:

- Behind the Scenes: "Attack at Sea"

### Differentiated Articles:

- Lower-Lexile version
- Spanish language version

### Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- "Searching for the *Titanic*"
- "The Pigeon Hero of World War I"

### Activities to print, project, or share digitally:

- Video Discussion Questions
- Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice
- Discussion Questions
- Featured Skill: Author's Craft
- Choice Board
- **Core Skills Workout:** Summarizing,\* Text Features, Text Structure,\* Nonfiction Elements
- Lesson Plan Slide Deck
- Quiz\*

\*Available on two levels

# Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

## 1. Prepare to Read (10 minutes)

### Preview Vocabulary (10 minutes)

- Project the Google Slides version of **Vocabulary: Definitions and Practice** on your whiteboard. Review the definitions and complete the activity as a class. Highlighted words: *hoist, ingenious, munitions, optimism, opulent, torpedoing*. Audio pronunciations of the words and a read-aloud of the definitions are embedded on the slides. Optionally, print the PDF version or share the slideshow link directly to your LMS and have students preview the words and complete the activity independently before class.
- Watch the Behind the Scenes video, in which author Kristin Lewis offers insights into the writing process. Have students respond to the **Video Discussion Questions** (available in your Resources tab) in small groups or pairs.

## 2. Read and Discuss (45 minutes)

- Invite a volunteer to read the As You Read box on page 6 or at the top of the digital story page.
- Read the article once as a class. (*Differentiation: Share the lower-Lexile version or the Spanish version of the article.*) Optionally, have students listen to the audio read-aloud while they follow along. The **audio read-aloud** is located in the Resources tab in Teacher View and at the top of the story page in Student View.
- Divide students into groups to read the article again and respond to the following **Discussion Questions**, also located in the Resources tab.

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### Discussion Questions (30 minutes)

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

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1. **Read the introduction of the article. How do the last two paragraphs differ from the first three? (mood)** *The first three paragraphs describe a lively scene in New York City just before the*

*Lusitania's launch, as well as the ship's beauty and power. These paragraphs create a joyful and exciting mood. That mood shifts in the last two paragraphs, when Kristin Lewis writes that "there was something Elsie could not have known," that a German war submarine would, in just six days, "tear the Lusitania apart." By letting the reader know that tragedy will strike later in the story, Lewis creates a mood of doom and suspense.*

2. **When Lewis writes that the German U-boat U-20 "could creep up on any ship," she is personifying the U-boat. That is, she is assigning it a human characteristic. Where else in the article does Lewis personify U-boats? What effect does this use of personification create?** (figurative language) *In the section "The Unsinkable Ship," Lewis writes that German U-boats "prowled the waters near Great Britain, lurking unseen beneath the waves." This personification highlights how hard U-boats were to detect, and how terrifying it must have been to travel in areas where U-boats were known to be.*
3. **What is the mood of the section "A Nightmare"? How does the author create this mood?** (mood) *The section has a chaotic, desperate, and frightening atmosphere. Lewis writes, "Glass shattered. Fire broke out. Passengers screamed in terror," with each idea in a separate sentence to emphasize that many terrifying things were happening at once. She describes people becoming tangled in ropes and trying, but failing, to get the lifeboats into the water, which creates a feeling of desperation and anxiety. The feeling of terror intensifies when Lewis describes the Hook family clutching the railing of the ship and "waiting for the right moment to jump into the cold sea."*
4. **Why do you think the passengers and crew of the *Lusitania* were so confident that the ship would be safe?** (critical thinking) *Lewis writes that the ship was a symbol of the developments in science and technology that were making life safer as well as more exciting and more convenient. People probably put too much trust in the ship's ability to outrun U-boats and their torpedoes. Plus, as noted in the caption on page 7, few expected the Germans to target a civilian ship.*
5. **Why is it important to study historic disasters like the sinking of the *Lusitania*?** (critical thinking) *Usually, there is something to be learned from disasters of the past—something that could help us avoid similar disasters in the future. Mistakes or decisions that lead to a disaster might be repeated if we don't explore them. By studying historic disasters, we might be able to learn something about how to prevent a disaster in the future, or we might learn something about coping with or recovering from a tragic event.*

### 3. Write About It: Author's Craft (45 minutes)

- Have students complete the **Featured Skill Activity: Author's Craft**. This activity prepares them to respond to the writing prompt on page 10 in the printed magazine and at the bottom of the digital story page:

**Choose one element of the article to focus on: the Lusitania, the early 20th century, the German U-boat, or the torpedo. Compile a list of descriptive words, phrases, or lines the author uses for your chosen element. Then write a poem or create a visual art piece reflecting this powerful imagery and emotion.**

- Alternatively, have students choose a task from the **Choice Board**, a menu of culminating tasks. (Our Choice Board options include the writing prompt from the magazine, differentiated versions of the writing prompt, and additional creative ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of a story or article.)

### Support for Multilingual Learners

These questions are designed to help students respond to the text at a level that's right for them.

#### Yes/No Questions

Ask students to demonstrate comprehension with a very simple answer.

1. Did the *Lusitania* plan to cross the Atlantic Ocean? *Yes, it did.*
2. Were Americans warned that the *Lusitania* could be a target for German U-Boats? *Yes, they were.*
3. Did most passengers on the *Lusitania* take the warnings seriously? *No, they didn't.*
4. Was the *Lusitania* attacked? *Yes, it was.*
5. Did a lot of people lose their lives when the *Lusitania* sank? *Yes, they did.*

#### Either/Or Questions

Encourage students to use language from the question in their answer.

1. Did the *Lusitania* depart from New York City or Washington, D.C.? *The Lusitania departed from New York City.*
2. Was the *Lusitania* a submarine or an ocean liner? *The Lusitania was an ocean liner.*
3. Was the *Lusitania* a simple ship or a fancy ship? *The Lusitania was a fancy ship.*
4. Could the *Lusitania* cross the ocean in a few months or a few days? *The Lusitania could cross the ocean in a few days.*

5. Did the *Lusitania* sink off the coast of Ireland or off the coast of New York City? *The Lusitania sank off the coast of Ireland.*

### Short-Answer Questions

Challenge students to produce simple answers on their own.

1. Why were Elsie and her family taking a voyage on the *Lusitania*? *Elsie's mother had recently died, and her father decided to move the family back to his home country of England.*
2. Why didn't the *Lusitania*'s passengers listen to the warnings from the German embassy? *The war seemed far away to Americans, and they didn't think that Germans would really target a nonmilitary ship. Plus, the Lusitania's captain and crew told passengers that the ship couldn't be sunk, that it was too fast for anything to catch it.*

### Language Acquisition Springboard

Fill in the five "W" words while reading, then use the answers to generate questions after reading.

**Who?** (Which person or people is this article mainly about?) *Elsie, Frank, and George Hook*

**What?** (What event does this article describe?) *the sinking of the Lusitania*

**When?** (At what time did this event occur?) *May 1915*

**Where?** (In what place or location did this event take place?) *off the coast of Ireland*

**Why?** (What was the cause of this event?) *Europe was at war and the ship sailed into waters near England where German submarines were patrolling. One of these submarines torpedoed the Lusitania.*

### Connected readings from the Scope archives:

- Narrative Nonfiction: ["Searching for the Titanic"](#)
- Narrative Nonfiction: ["The Pigeon Hero of World War I"](#)