

World War I

PRIMARY SOURCE READING

A Dark Moment in History

When England tried to block Germany from trading with the rest of the world, Germany answered by declaring the waters around England a war zone. The Germans said they would destroy as many ships as they could, including those that were not being used as warships. Newspapers warned that people traveling by ship through the war zone did so at their own risk. On May 7, 1915, a German torpedo struck the British ship Lusitania, killing nearly 1,200 people. In the following eyewitness account, Isaac Lehmann, a civilian traveler, described his experience aboard the ill-fated vessel.

The Sinking of the Lusitania

All of a sudden we heard a noise like the boom of a cannon. I rushed through the smoking room to the deck and turned and saw the torpedo making direct for us. The time from the noise of the report until it struck us was less than a minute.

I went to the other side of the deck. A great many people got into it [a boat] and there were three or four men at each rope to lower the boat, one man standing there with a hatchet in his hand to cut the blocks. One side started lowering the boat and the other did not, and as a result, before anybody knew what had happened, the other fellows let go and the rope broke which held the lifeboat and threw everybody into the sea, the boat finally breaking from the davits itself and dropping into the water.

After I had seen this I rushed down the deck to the entrance which is known as the grand entrance and ran down to D deck to my state-room known as D 48, to get a life preserver. When I reached there the boat had commenced

to settle. Somebody certainly had been in my room already and taken my life preserver. I don't know whatever possessed me, but I looked in my dress suit case and got hold of my revolver, as I figured this would come in handy in case there was anybody not doing the proper thing.

I walked out on B deck and met the ship's doctor and the ship's purser, who told me that there was not a chance for the boat to go down. This was the last I saw of these men. I understand they have been drowned.

I rushed up to A deck and returned again to that end of the deck nearest the smoking room on the Irish Coast side. I stood on one of the collapsible boats, which lay on the deck covered with canvas. There were quite 30 or 40 people in the boat already, and I asked why this boat was not launched and put down into the sea. I turned and looked at the front part of the ship, and she was so far settled down in the water that there was no chance that the *Lusitania* would not sink.

One man, who had an axe in his hand, answered that orders had been issued by the Captain not to launch any boat. My reply was: "To hell with the Captain! Don't you see the boat is sinking? And the first man that disobeys my order to launch the boat I shoot to kill!"

I drew my revolver, and the order was obeyed.

A boat was just about being started on its way down when the ship gave an awful lurch. The boat in receding smashed all the people who were trying to get into it . . . up against the smoking room, killing pretty much all who could not move. I was knocked down as well and hurt my leg severely, but I succeeded in crawling out and was able to hold onto the rails when the water from the funnels commenced pouring over us.

A terrific explosion occurred in the front of the steamer. Then I noticed that the lifeboat

which had killed these people had gone back into its original position.

By this time the ship was sinking fast. I was thrown high into the water, free and clear of all wreckage, and I then went down twice with the suction of the steamer. The second time I came up I was 400 or 500 feet away from the ship. I clung to an oar, and just then I saw the *Lusitania* take her final plunge. It sounded like a terrible moan.

Immediately after she sank there were hundreds of people struggling in the water, praying and crying for help. There was wreckage all around—old chairs, wood, all kinds of smaller items. The water was not so cold and it was a lovely day, the sun shining and not a ripple in the water.

From *Voices from America's Past*, vol. 3, *The Twentieth Century*, edited by Richard B. Morris and James Woodress. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1963.

■ UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ After you have finished reading the selection, answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. According to this account, what kind of warning did the Germans give the passengers of the *Lusitania* before releasing the torpedo?

2. What mistakes did Isaac Lehmann feel the crew made after the torpedo hit the *Lusitania*?

3. Why do you think Isaac Lehmann felt he might need a gun as the ship was sinking?

4. Lehmann mentions several examples of the *Lusitania*'s crew refusing to believe that the ship might actually sink. What does he suppose happened to these crew members?

5. After Lehmann gave the order to launch the lifeboat, what happened?

6. Briefly describe the scene in the water after the *Lusitania* sank.

ACTIVITY

Imagine that you are a member of the *Lusitania*'s crew. Using details from Isaac Lehmann's account, write a letter to a friend or loved one describing what happened during the sinking of the ship.

chief on his sombrero, and the other Rough Riders followed his lead.

4. Possible answer: The men climbed the hill on foot, wading through tall grass. Their progress required strenuous effort. The author says that the charge was a miracle of self-sacrifice and a triumph of courage.

ACTIVITY

Students' ballads will vary, but should draw upon details provided in the selection.

BIOGRAPHY

1. He trained to be a doctor, then joined the Army Medical Corps.
2. He violated orders by entering an area where victims were quarantined.
3. He persuaded residents to cover rain barrels, where infected mosquitoes thrived.
4. He rid the Panama Canal Zone of mosquitoes so workers could safely build the canal.

ACTIVITY

Students' speeches should mention that Gorgas risked his health to study yellow fever, the measures he took to eradicate it from Havana and the Panama Canal, and that he was rewarded by being promoted in rank and appointed Surgeon-General.

CHAPTER 21

LITERATURE

1. Chrisfield, under fire, escapes into a house where he finds a lone enemy soldier and tosses a grenade at him. Andrews falls back from his fellow soldiers to gaze at a puddle, is hit by gunfire, and lies against a muddy bank, sinking into the water.
2. Possible answer: because he feels more than ever removed from the reality of the war around him; he is sinking away from it. Also, he probably feels relief that for him the war is over.
3. Chrisfield runs through a field of stubble and sprouting clover; he notices white clouds in a blue sky; Andrews watches frogs in a puddle.

4. Students may list the following images: the lieutenant's red hair and savage green eyes, the whip-like sound of rifles and the stuttering of the machine guns, white clouds in the blue sky, houses the same color, the young enemy soldier sitting with his head resting on his hands, the frogs' triangular heads and tiny jewelled eyes, and the "little stream of red" creeping into the "putty-colored water."
5. No, the author's tone is dispassionate and objective. He reports on Chrisfield's joy at killing a soldier as unemotionally as on Andrew's feelings of relief at sinking into the puddle.
6. The author's coldly objective description of horrible events seems to be leading the reader to reflect on the horrors of war, especially the absence of normal human responses to such an event as killing another person.

ACTIVITY

Students' fictional accounts will vary, but should be modeled after the selection.

PRIMARY SOURCE

1. There was no warning.
2. The crew did not throw life rafts overboard before the boat sank. The officers and men in command did not issue orders to lower the boats.
3. Students may mention that when people panic they do foolish (and selfish) things. Lehmann's motive might have been to protect himself or those who could not protect themselves.
4. He assumes they were drowned.
5. Students may mention that Lehmann got an argument from one man who claimed the captain had given a contradictory order, which caused Lehmann to threaten the man with his gun. As the lifeboat was about to be lowered, the ship suddenly lurched. The lifeboat smashed against the smoking room, killing the people who were trying to board it.
6. Students may mention that there were hundreds of people in the water, most of them crying and moaning; there was

wreckage all around; it was a beautiful sunny day, and the water was calm and not very cold.

ACTIVITY

Students' letters should contain some of the information from the selection, including a description of the torpedo and the ensuing mayhem as passengers and crew members attempted to escape the sinking ship. They may mention Lehmann's actions, the actions of the crew, and the smashing of the lifeboat.

BIOGRAPHY

1. She was the first woman to be elected to Congress; she was the only member to vote against U.S. entry into World War II.
2. world peace and the rights of women
3. She laid the groundwork for the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.
4. She led 5,000 women in a protest against the Vietnam War.

ACTIVITY

Students should mention that Rankin was the first woman to be elected to Congress, her success in giving women the right to vote, and her famous opposition to U.S. entry into both world wars.

CHAPTER 22

LITERATURE

1. Millay is comparing men and their lovers to people and their love for justice.
2. people in general and Americans in particular
3. She means that justice has not been served in the Sacco-Vanzetti case.
4. Students may feel the poem is ironic, melancholy, angry, disgusted, or cynical.
5. justice
6. She makes the point that justice in theory and justice in practice are two different things. She points out the hypocrisy of people fighting to uphold the idea of justice while settling for injustices such as the death sentence of Sacco and Vanzetti.

7. Many students will say that bias is a factor in the justice system. Others may respond that the American justice system works fairly well in terms of equality for all people. Accept any reasonable response.
8. Students will probably see that the parenthetical element in the title of the sonnet clues them in to the subject of the poem. Without this information they might not have realized that the poem was written in reference to the Sacco-Vanzetti case.

ACTIVITY

Students' poems will vary widely in subject matter and complexity. The poems should follow the A-B-A-B rhyme scheme.

PRIMARY SOURCE

1. In his early days he used the cane as part of his manly appearance. It was an affectation. But in front of the Senate investigating committee, a much weaker man, he leaned on the cane to support himself.
2. Fall's condition had obviously deteriorated. He was a broken man. He needed to be helped to the stand.
3. He seemed rich, but he was not. He seemed brave, but he was a coward. He seemed to have honor, but he was a liar.
4. He wanted them to believe he was a rugged pioneer and that he symbolized the Old West.
5. Fall's background in the law gave him education and insights into how to deal with the public; it gave him power and confidence. But he used his knowledge of the law and his public office to commit illegal acts.

ACTIVITY

Students' portraits need not be technically proficient but should show their understanding of the differences the senator's downfall rendered in him physically. In the "before" picture, they might show Fall with a cocky stance, big smile, and dapper clothing. For the "after" picture, they might show Fall with hollow cheeks, a stooped figure, and downcast eyes.